

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/00272
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	3 High Street, Semington, Trowbridge, BA14 6JR
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	The retention of an outbuilding to be used as a small-scale home business providing beautician services in addition to its use for purposes ancillary to the dwellinghouse.
RECOMMENDATION:	That Planning Permission be GRANTED

SITE CONTEXT

3 High Street (the 'site') is a residential property adjoining the eastern aspect of High Street and is situated towards the northern edge of Semington (designated as a Large Village in the Wiltshire Core Strategy).

The site is occupied by a historic two-storey house (which immediately adjoins the High Street), a recently constructed outbuilding (which is the subject of this planning application) and associated amenity space to the rear with a small shed at the very end of the garden.

The subject outbuilding is a single-storey structure having a footprint of 16.5sqm that used as a beauty salon (as well as for ancillary domestic uses) and 3.5sqm shed. It has a shallow mono-pitched roof and measures about 3m long, 6.7m wide and 2.5-3.2m high. It is formed of timber cladding and a tiled roof which broadly match those of the host dwelling. The outbuilding can be accessed through the host dwelling or via a side gate which connects to the public footpath (SEM26). The site does not feature any on-site parking.

The application site is subject to the following planning policy designations/constraints:

- The site is located within notable proximity of several grade II listed buildings, including:
 - Brook Cottage and its associated Stable and Carriage House and Gate Piers are immediately to the north.
 - Brook House is circa 45m to the west.
 - The Somerset Arms is circa 30m to the south.
 - The Manor House and its associated Walls and Gate Piers are circa 55-65m to the south.
- The north site boundary adjoins public footpath SEM26.
- The national Flood Map for Planning shows that the site lies within Flood Zone 2. However, the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment confirms the site lies outside Flood Zone 2.
- The site lies within an area at high risk of groundwater emergence (groundwater levels are either at or very near (within 0.025m of) the ground surface).
- The site frontage adjoins an area at low to high risk of surface water flooding.

PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks retrospective planning permission for the retention of the outbuilding (as described above) and its use as a beauty salon (falling under Use Class E(c)) as well as for ancillary purposes to the primary residential function of the host dwelling. It also features an adjoining shed that provides storage incidental to the host dwelling. The salon is named 'The Cottage Clinic' and further detail on the nature of the proposed use is set out in the applicant's Supporting Planning, Heritage Statement and Flood Risk Assessment, which is summarised below:

- A small home-based beautician business operating on a flexible basis and serving a limited number of local clients.
- Operating hours of 09:30-17:30 Monday to Friday.
- One part-time employee.
- More information on the business is available on the company website: [The Cottage Clinic | Home of Aesthetics in Wiltshire](#).

PLANNING HISTORY

No records of relevance.

Planning Legislation:

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Development Plan:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (adopted January 2015):
 - Core Policy 1 Settlement strategy
 - Core Policy 2: Delivery strategy
 - Core Policy 15: Melksham community area
 - Core Policy 34: Additional employment land
 - Core Policy 41: Sustainable construction and low-carbon energy
 - Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
 - Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment
 - Core Policy 61: Transport and new development
 - Core Policy 64: Demand management
 - Core Policy 67: Flood risk
- Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2038 (made March 2025):
 - Policy SEM 2: Support for rural businesses and workspace
 - Policy SEM 8: Design and local distinctiveness
 - Policy SEM 12: Sustainable construction

Material Considerations (Policy):

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024
 - Section 2. Achieving sustainable development
 - Section 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 9. Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 12. Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- Emerging Wiltshire Local Plan (Regulation 24)*:
 - Policy 1: Settlement strategy
 - Policy 2: Delivery strategy
 - Policy 4: Addressing climate change
 - Policy 64: Additional employment land
 - Policy 71: Transport and new development
 - Policy 73: Transport: demand management
 - Policy 85: Sustainable construction and low carbon energy
 - Policy 95: Flood risk
 - Policy 98: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
 - Policy 99: Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment

* The examination of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan has been paused and the weight to be afforded to any part of the emerging plan can be no more than very limited. A decision on how to proceed will be made by the Council in May 2026.

Material Considerations (Guidance):

- Planning Practice Guidance
- National Design Guide (January 2021)
- Wiltshire Design Guide (March 2024)
- Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026: Car Parking Strategy
- Wiltshire Waste storage and collection: guidance for developers SPD

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Semington Parish Council: No objection

Wiltshire Council Drainage: No objection.

Wiltshire Council Highways: No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

Nine comments have been received including eight supporting comments to the proposal and one objection.

The supporting comments collectively express strong support for the business, particularly in regard to the service quality and the convenience of the location, as well as the design of the outbuilding in terms of its siting, scale, appearance and access.

The objection raises concerns over the retention of the outbuilding, stating it is too close to the boundary, too tall, poorly designed, and harmful to the setting of nearby historic buildings. Concern is also raised about materials, lack of proper waste provision, drainage, tree impacts, and proximity to an oil tank.

The objector does not object to the proposed use, but asks that conditions be imposed to control parking, client numbers, deliveries, and commercial waste, if permission is to be granted. They dispute claims that most clients walk to the premises and highlight existing parking pressures on the High Street.

ASSESSMENT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In accordance with this requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the development plan and the material considerations listed above.

Having regard to the planning context and nature of the proposal, the following key matters are considered pertinent to the assessment of the proposal and are addressed in turn:

- Principle
- Design
- Heritage
- Neighbouring amenity
- Transport
- Flooding and drainage
- Other matters

Principle

Core Policy 1 establishes the settlement hierarchy for Wiltshire and the scale of development appropriate for each settlement type. It defines Large Villages as settlements with a limited range of employment, services and facilities and states that development at Large Villages will be limited to that needed to improve employment opportunities, services and facilities.

Core Policy 2 makes provision for 178ha of employment land over the plan period which comprises the various allocations set out in the community area policies. It also states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development within the limits of Large Villages.

Core Policy 15 establishes the spatial strategy for the Melksham Community Area and identifies that Semington is a Large Village.

The above policies are broadly echoed by draft Policies 1 and 2, albeit these draft policies merit very limited weight as the examination of the emerging Local Plan has been paused.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy SEM 2 states that employment development should respect the character of its surroundings, avoid harming the inherent qualities of the area and safeguard residential amenity and road safety. It supports proposals that enable working from home provided there will be no unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties.

The proposal would retain the use of the outbuilding that was constructed in July 2021 and has been used as a 16.5sqm beauty salon (Class E(c)) ancillary to the primary residential function of a dwelling.

The salon allows the applicant to essentially work from home and offer beautician services to the public at a location within the built-up area of a Large Village where there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In addition, having regard to the below sections, officers are satisfied the proposal respects, preserves and safeguards the local character, inherent qualities, residential amenity and road safety of the area.

Furthermore, officers agree with the applicant's supporting statement that a sequential test is not required for this proposal, and that it provides the local community a service that supports the village economy and accords with section 6 of the NPPF.

The level of community support is, to some extent, evidenced by the positive representations submitted by local clients.

Having carefully assessed the application, officers have concluded that it is acceptable in principle. However, given the residential character of the locality, it is necessary to impose conditions to ensure that the use remains compatible with its context. The applicant's supporting statement proposes three planning conditions:

- *The garden room shall be operated as a beautician's clinic only and shall not be used for any other commercial purpose. At no time shall it be sold, leased or operated independently from the main dwelling and nor shall the common ownership of the beauty salon and main dwelling be severed.*
- *Clients shall only be present at the business between the following times: 09:30 to 17:30 Monday to Friday and not at all on Saturday, Sundays or Bank Holidays.*
- *The use shall be limited to a single practitioner and to a maximum of one client on site at any one time.*

Officers support the imposition of restrictive planning conditions and some of the suggested conditions require to be worded differently (see conditions 2-4).

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Policies 1, 2 and 15, made Semington Neighbourhood Plan Policy SEM2 and the NPPF.

Design

Core Policy 57 requires that all development be of high design quality, create a strong sense of place and complement its context, including through enhancing local distinctiveness and responding positively to local characteristics. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 98 of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan.

The Wiltshire Design Guide advises that detached outbuildings placed in front of properties will not normally be acceptable and that they should be single storey in scale.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy SEM 8 requires that proposals reflect the character and local distinctiveness of Semington as set out in the Semington Parish Character Statement.

Having regard to the Character Statement, the site falls within the historic core of the village which is described as a linear settlement comprising four distinct areas. The site lies within area 2. *The village centre from the tree-lined Brook House “gateway” to the curve and dramatic vista of Semington House at Pound Lane.* An area which the statement describes as characterised by the continuous building frontages, the pub, village hall and green which collectively telegraph Semington’s historic development and community life.

The subject outbuilding is positioned to the rear of the historic two-storey host dwelling and sits immediately alongside a larger, more visually prominent pitched-roof outbuilding. In this context and given its modest scale and the softening effect of its weathered timber cladding (as shown below), the structure has a limited presence in public views. It reads as a diminutive addition in relation to both the host property and the wider street scene (thereby preserving the character of Semington described above). Its rearward siting and single-storey height also accord with the guidance contained within the Design Guide.



Image of the street scene with the subject outbuilding in the background.

With regard to the objection, concerns have been raised about the siting, footprint, height, form and materials of the outbuilding and their perceived impacts. The applicant, however, identifies a lawful fallback position: if the building was to be repositioned 2 metres from the boundary, it would fall within permitted development rights under Schedule 2, Part 1, Class E of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO). The objector accepts this position and advocates relocation of the structure to comply with the GPDO.

It is important to note, however, that the GPDO would also allow an incidental outbuilding to be erected immediately adjacent to the boundary, provided it does not exceed 2.5 metres in height. In this context, the elements of the current proposal that fall within the Council's reasonable control are its use and the outbuilding's 3.2-metre ridge height.

In terms of understanding any PD fallback, the courts have ruled (*Mansell v Tonbridge & Malling BC* (2017)) that the basic principle is that for a prospect to be a real prospect, it does not have to be probable or likely, a possibility will suffice.

Permission is required for what has been proposed and whilst regard has been given to the PD provisions, the proposal has been fully assessed on its merits.

The proposed use has been assessed as being acceptable, and, for the reasons outlined above, officers are satisfied that the building's siting, design, including its form, use of materials and its height, are all appropriate.

Having regard to the above, the subject building is considered to represent a high standard of design that is appropriate to its context. It therefore accords with the design principles of Core Policy 57, draft Policy 98, Neighbourhood Plan Policy SEM 8 and the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Heritage Effects

Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard be had to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

WCS Core Policy 57(i) and (iv) require that development proposals be sympathetic, respond positively to and conserve the historic environment.

WCS Core Policy CP58 states that development should protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the historic environment. The policy requires that heritage assets and their settings be conserved and/or enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 99.

Paragraph 207 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected by development, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the asset's significance.

Paragraph 212 clarifies that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation, irrespective of the level of harm.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy SEM 8 applies as above and its supporting text identifies locally listed buildings (non-designated heritage assets) in the Parish.

The application site is located in relative close proximity to several grade II listed buildings, most notably Brooks Cottage, its coach house, and entrance immediately to the north. For clarification, there are no locally listed buildings within the immediate vicinity. The applicant's Heritage Statement identifies these assets and concludes that, owing to the outbuilding's modest design and scale, its ancillary use, and the separation and relationship between the structures, the development would not materially affect the setting or significance of the listed buildings. Officers consider the Heritage Statement proportionate to the scale of the proposal and broadly agree with its conclusions.

Having regard to this justification and the design assessment above, the proposal is considered to conserve the historic environment. As such, the proposal complies with section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Core Policies 57 and 58, draft Policies 98 and 99 and section 16 of the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenity Effects

Adopted WCS Core Policy 57(vii) requires that development be compatible with the adjoining uses and protect the residential amenity of existing and future users of the site and its surroundings, including in respect of natural lighting, privacy, outlook and pollution sources. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 98.

The Council's adopted Design Guide states that minimum garden areas for all houses should be equivalent to the footprint of the house and that a back-to-back separation distance of minimum 20m should be respected. The guide also refers to the BRE Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight as an appropriate source for assessing proposals. Appendix D of the guide states that extensions should not be unduly overbearing or obtrusive to neighbouring properties.

Given that the proposal comprises commercial floorspace for a professional service operating ancillary to the residential use of the dwelling, officers are satisfied that the use would not generate a substantive level of noise or activity that would materially harm local amenity.

The suggested conditions outlined by the applicant's own Supporting Statement (restricting the nature of the use, opening hours and the number of clients) with some tweaks would provide an appropriate and proportionate degree of control and would define the terms of any permission.

The outbuilding's position adjacent to a neighbour's outbuilding, together with its modest height, lack of south-facing windows, and the screening offered by the full-height boundary wall and established planting along the northern boundary, ensure that it would have a negligible effect on neighbouring outlook, natural light or privacy. The development would also maintain an adequate amount of private amenity space for the host property.

Having regard to the above, the proposal is compatible with the surrounding development and achieves an acceptable standard of residential amenity in accordance with Core Policy 57(vii).

Transport Issues

WCS Core Policy 61 states that development should promote sustainable transport, achieve safe and suitable access and have an acceptable impact on the local highway network.

WCS Core Policy 64 requires that development proposals comply with parking standards set out in the Local Transport Plan.

The Council highways officer advises that the proposal would result in only a modest increase in vehicle movements compared with a standalone dwelling (with no such ancillary use). The use would only generate a requirement for one parking space at any given time, with the host dwelling requiring two. As the property has no on-site parking, this demand can only be met with off-site provision. Highways note that High Street is subject to a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) limiting parking opportunities and, as a result, traffic levels are low. Given this, and the availability of on-street parking elsewhere/nearby, the proposal is considered acceptable in highway terms.

Although concerns regarding parking and traffic have been raised by one local resident, there is insufficient evidence to justify a refusal on transport grounds when tested against the NPPF.

The development is therefore considered to comply with Core Policies 61 and 64 and the NPPF.

Flooding and Drainage

WCS Core Policy 67 requires that development proposals safeguard people and property and avoid increasing flood risk on-site or elsewhere. Proposals that require a sequential test are required to have regard to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as appropriate. All development must also incorporate sustainable urban drainage measures unless site-specific or environmental conditions make such measures unsuitable.

Paragraphs 173-177 and 181 of the NPPF outline the sequential and exception tests. The sequential test aims to steer development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Paragraph 174 states that the authority's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) provides the basis for applying the test. Where it is not possible to locate the development in an area at lower risk of flooding, the exception test may have to be applied, subject to the vulnerability class of the proposed development. Paragraph 181 states that development in areas at risk of flooding should only be permitted where, informed by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and the outcome of the sequential and (where relevant) exception tests, it can be demonstrated that:

- The most vulnerable development located in the areas of lowest flood risk;
- The development is appropriately flood resistant and flood resilient;
- Sustainable drainage systems are incorporated where suitable;

- Any residual flood risk can be safely managed; and
- Safe access and egress are achievable for the lifetime of the development.

The Drainage Team advise that the proposal would not result in a significant increase in impermeable area or corresponding flood risk when compared to the existing baseline.

Turning to the sequential test, the proposal constitutes 'non-major development' and, although the site appears within Flood Zone 2 on the national mapping, the SFRA identifies it as lying within Flood Zone 1 (land that has the lowest risk of flooding). As the SFRA provides the basis for applying the sequential test, and it places the site in Zone 1, the sequential test is not considered necessary. Even if the test were to be required, the development represents a very small-scale and ancillary 'less vulnerable' use (meaning the proposal is not required to satisfy the exception test). Given this and the Drainage Team's advice, adopting the sequential test would be disproportionate for this proposal.

In light of the above, the proposal is not considered to pose an unacceptable flood risk to people or property, nor would it increase flood risk elsewhere. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Core Policy 67 and the NPPF.

Other Matters

The concerns raised by the objector in relation to principle, design, transport and residential amenity have been noted and considered. They also raised concerns over the waste collection arrangements of the business. However, owing to the scale and nature of the business, it would generate only a very limited amount of additional waste that would still fall within the normal threshold of a domestic property as set out in the Council's waste storage and collection: guidance for developers SPD. Furthermore, officers did not observe any signs of unsatisfactory waste management when visiting the site.

CONCLUSION

The proposed beauty salon is situated in a sustainable location, very small scale in both operation and design, subject to appropriate operational measures and would have a limited and acceptable impact in respect of local character, neighbouring amenity, transport, flood risk and all other matters. It therefore complies with the aforementioned sections and policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, emerging Wiltshire Local Plan, Semington Neighbourhood Plan, NPPF and the Wiltshire Design Guide. As such, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. The retrospective development hereby permitted is based on the following approved plans and documents:

Location Plan, Block Plan, Floor Plan and Elevations ref. 25/97/S1 (dated December 2025)

Planning, Heritage Statement and Flood Risk Assessment [with exception of the recommended conditions that have been updated by conditions 2-4 below]

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2. The development hereby approved shall be used as a beauty salon/clinic (Use Class E(c)), and for ancillary purposes associated with the host dwelling, and shall not be used for any other commercial purposes. At no time shall the building used as a salon be sold, leased or operated independently from the main dwelling.

REASON: To clarify the proposed use and its ancillary scale and relationship with the host dwelling in the interests of the Wiltshire spatial strategy, neighbour amenity and highway safety.

3. The use hereby permitted shall only take place between the hours of 09:30 to 17:30 from Mondays to Fridays. The use shall not take place at any time on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank or Public Holidays.

REASON: To maintain appropriate levels of amenity in accordance with Core Policy 57.

4. There shall be a maximum of a single practitioner/beautician and one client associated with the hereby approved salon use at any one time.

REASON: To maintain appropriate levels of residential amenity and transport movements and parking in accordance with Core Policies 57, 61 and 64.