

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2026/01072

Proposal: Outline planning application, with all matters reserved except for the main point of access from Devizes Road, for the demolition of existing building and development of up to 80 dwellings, public open space, drainage, landscaping and ancillary works.

Site Address: Land North of Devizes Road, Hilperton, Trowbridge

Case Officer: Jemma Foster

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 16th February to the 10th of March 2026 on the application webpage, including:

- REDC251029 DAS-01 P2 – Design and Access Statement
- REDC251029 CMP-01 P10 – Concept Masterplan

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (Abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 19) (September 2023) (abbreviated WLPR)
- Wiltshire Design Guide – Wiltshire Council Supplementary Planning Document adopted 25th March 2024 (abbreviated WDG)
- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG December 2024) (abbreviated NPPF)
- National Design Guide (MHCLG January 2021) (abbreviated NDG)
- Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England June 2020) (referenced in the NPPF) (abbreviated BfHL)
- Streets for a Healthy Life: A companion guide to Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England) (abbreviated SFHL)
- Hilperton Neighbourhood Development Plan (Made November 2018) (abbreviated HNBP)
- Hilperton Village Design Statement 2005 (abbreviated HVDS)

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

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.

Objection

The site has previously been the subject of a Pre-Application (ENQ/2022/01801) and an outline planning application (PL/2022/07977), which was refused in December 2023. The current proposals in part are similar in location, form, and layout to that earlier scheme. Consequently, most of the urban design concerns raised during the previous application remain applicable and are not repeated here.

The Planning Statement describes the site as forming “the first phase of an emerging strategic allocation” within Wiltshire Council’s new Local Plan for 600 dwellings (Policy 53 – *Land North-East of Hilperton, Trowbridge*). However, Policy 53 requires that “*a single comprehensive masterplan, phasing and delivery strategy for the development must be prepared and approved by the Local Planning Authority in advance of any planning application being submitted for the whole or part of the allocated site.*” As no such comprehensive masterplan, phasing plan or delivery strategy has been submitted, the proposal is considered speculative at this stage.

The Planning Statement also refers to a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) relating to the policy wording for this site, which is said to have been agreed between the Council and the various landowners. However, no SoCG has been submitted with this application.

Notwithstanding the above, should the principle of development on this site be accepted, I offer the following comments on the proposals. At this outline stage no specific house designs have been submitted, and my observations therefore relate primarily to the site layout.

Comments

- 1) Devizes Road displays a clear and consistent character from its junction with Church Street. It is defined by closely spaced, larger-footprint properties set well back from the carriageway, with generous front gardens edged by mature hedgerows and trees. Individual plots are typically accessed directly from Devizes Road, with only occasional shared access points serving development to the rear.

The DAS recognises these characteristics and proposes a distinctive character area within which *‘a high-quality approach to building design, materials, and landscape treatment is required. Dwellings are set back to reflect the established building line of existing properties to the west. Lower-density detached homes are provided to reflect the suburban character of nearby development, with high-quality design and materials that complement adjacent properties on Devizes Road’.*

However, the Concept Masterplan does not fully reflect the established identity. The introduction of private drives running parallel to Devizes Road creates an unnecessary double-perimeter road, and the indicative built form shown reflects generic suburban development. This arrangement would significantly weaken the existing pattern of large footprint buildings with spacious, landscaped frontages.

Recommendation: The scheme should more closely align with the distinctive character of Devizes Road. Preference would be for a softer edge to the development, perhaps where building plots front the entrance open space behind a low stone wall/hedge and footpath and have their parking to the rear or within small courts (reference the various ‘what green looks like’ placemaking images with the BfHL). Larger footprint buildings could include apartments in this location helping to create an appropriate entrance to the allocation. This approach would help integrate the development more sensitively into its context, consistent with the principles of the WDG and BfHL.

- 2) Regarding the comment above, the frontage to Devizes Road is shown as 30 m from the site boundary to reflect the existing building line. While this approach is reasonable, it is less than the

setback illustrated in the allocation Concept Plan. Opportunities for a greater setback should be explored to enable retention of more existing trees and vegetation. For example, increasing the setback to 50 m to align with the eastern habitat area would allow trees T88 to T96 to be retained and a set back of 65m would allow for trees T32 to T45 to be retained.

The development frontage to the east of the entrance is currently shown at less than 30 m from the boundary and should be set further back to ensure consistency and to enhance landscape buffering.

In addition, the Devizes Road frontage provides an opportunity for community orchard planting in accordance with Policy 53. This would create a valuable facility for both existing and future residents, enhancing the social and community benefits of the proposed development.

Recommendation: Further consideration should be given to the setback and the landscape quality of the entrance open space to ensure the retention of existing trees and vegetation, and to incorporate community orchards in accordance with paragraph 136 of the NPPF.

- 3) Along most of the primary route, a continuous building line is achieved with dwellings set back behind narrow front gardens and parking located in well-overlooked rear courts. However, a group of dwellings along the eastern edge are set back behind on-plot turning, which weakens the sense of street enclosure.

To reinforce the character of the primary street, it would be preferable to replace the on-plot turning with small, well-overlooked parking courts, consistent with the approach used elsewhere. This aligns with the Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL) definition of what 'green' looks like (pp. 70–71). It would also help reduce the length of continuous rear gardens along this edge, which currently reflects a 'red' approach (pp. 42–43) rather than the preferred 'green' approach (pp. 40–41).

Reconfiguration in this area may also create opportunities for additional windows overlooking the habitat area, improving natural surveillance.

Recommendation: In accordance with WDG Expectation 6.2: *More Green and Blue Infrastructure*, existing trees and hedgerows should be retained within public open space wherever possible, rather than positioned behind private gardens. This approach ensures their long-term protection and enhances both the ecological value and visual character of the development.

In line with BfHL Well Defined Streets and Spaces, development should create a cohesive and continuous building line, avoiding staggered or uncoordinated setbacks.

- 4) The northern edge of the site presents an opportunity to create a wide green corridor, as indicated on the Policy 53 Concept Plan. By incorporating the existing hedgerow and mature hedge trees, this corridor can provide valuable east–west connectivity for wildlife as well as an off-street active travel route.

There is also potential to integrate swales and other SuDS features, supporting the enhanced Green and Blue Infrastructure requirements set out in WDG Expectation 6.2.

To maximise these benefits, the preference is to replace the private drives with a continuous edge street located outside the watermain easement. This would enable a consistent, tree-lined frontage along the northern boundary.

Recommendation: Further design guidance relevant to this approach is provided in SfHL, pages 52–59.

- 5) The Policy 53 Concept Plan refers to “smaller parcels allocated for self-build residential [development] could be lower density, with a bespoke design code to account for the conservation area” within the eastern part of the site. However, based on the submitted material, it is unclear whether any self-build plots are included within this application.

Recommendation: The applicant should provide a clearly annotated plan identifying the location, extent, and number of any proposed self-build dwellings within their application.

- 6) The design of the surface water attenuation relies on below ground storage tanks as well as large attenuation basins. The proposed attenuation basins appear as a simple grassed depression with an engineered character, lacking the naturalistic qualities expected of integrated landscape features. This design presents a poor visual impression and does not meet the expectations of CP57 (ii).

In accordance with WDG expectations 6.3 and 6.5, attenuation features should be designed to blend into the landscape, avoiding the appearance of artificial depressions. A more appropriate approach would distribute water volumes across the site using a combination of wetlands, rain gardens, small ponds, and permeable surfaces as indicated in the Landscape Strategy Plan within the DAS

Incorporating these elements at the plot and street level would not only enhance the visual quality of the development but also ensure the drainage strategy aligns with local design guidance and contributes positively to the site’s character.

Below ground tanks would limit locations for tree planting above and should therefore not be included within the development frontage or within the habitat area where woodland planting is expected. Should a below ground storage tank be required within the development frontage preference would be to set the development frontage back further to accommodate a community orchard in line with the comment above.

Recommendation: Revise the drainage strategy to ensure full compliance with DEFRA SuDS National Standards (June 2025) and align with WDG expectations for green and blue infrastructure. Incorporate BfHL principles by introducing naturalistic features such as rain gardens, swales, and wetlands to enhance visual quality, biodiversity, and site character.

- 7) Wiltshire is part of the recently created Western Forest which is a new National Forest for the nation whose aims and objectives are to substantially increase canopy cover across its geographical area. The aims and objectives of National Forests are planning consideration under para 152 of the NPPF (2024).

The development proposals include a 50m wide habitat corridor along the eastern boundary of the site which will provide a dark route for bat flight path and opportunity for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), however, it does not demonstrate significant woodland planting and this will be limited by the proposed drainage requirements

Recommendation: To achieve full compliance with the NPPF and strengthen integration with the wider landscape, significant woodland planting should be included within the 50m green/bat corridor. This will soften the settlement edge, enhance biodiversity, meet the requirements of Policy 53 and the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS) and create a more natural transition to the surrounding countryside.

- 8) Although no detailed house types have been provided, the DAS includes a character section with indicative elevations. This end of Devizes Road is predominantly characterised by red brick and

render, with stone becoming more common toward the western end near the Church Street junction. The use of stone within the scheme is therefore appropriate and contextually justified.

A preference is for stone and render to be used along the Devizes Road frontage and the primary street, with multi-red brick used predominantly within the secondary streets and lanes character areas. Rendered dwellings may be used within both character areas where they serve as key buildings, such as corner-turning plots or those terminating key vistas, as this will support legibility.

Within the DAS, the proposed use of stone walls to front gardens throughout the site is an attractive feature. The elevation shown in the Energy Savings Measures Diagram - incorporating chimneys and a low stone wall with cock-and-hen coping - would be an acceptable response for plots on Devizes Road and the primary street frontages. Corner-turning buildings featuring bay windows would also be encouraged.

Recommendation: At this early stage, further consideration should be given to how the character areas can be clearly differentiated through the careful application of materials. Stone should be established as the primary material to reflect the local character of this part of Wiltshire.

BfHL assessment

The DAS includes a BfHL assessment. This represents an initial step in reviewing the design proposals, and the following section - using the red, amber and green traffic light system - provides preliminary responses for further consideration.

- ✓ Natural connections – the Illustrative Masterplan shows extensive use of private drives along both the northern and southern edges of the development. These create breaks in frontage and limit pedestrian and cycle permeability along the site edges. Along the northern boundary, a continuous edge lane would be preferable, providing clearer movement routes and a more coherent urban structure. On the southern side, the private drives should be replaced with small, well-overlooked rear parking courts. This approach would strengthen the relationship between the built form and the adjacent open space while maintaining good levels of natural surveillance.
- ✓ Walking, cycling and public transport - the development incorporates a comprehensive set of active travel corridors and public transport links. These routes have been designed to allow seamless expansion into the remaining parts of the allocation site as it comes forward. However, the site remains isolated until such time as a Comprehensive Masterplan is approved.
- ✓ Facilities and services – the site will eventually benefit from the inclusion of new facilities as part of the wider allocation including a 2-form entry primary school, 80 place early learning facility and a convenience store. However, the site will remain relatively isolated until a Comprehensive Masterplan is approved and implemented.
- ✓ Homes for everyone - the development will deliver 30% affordable housing, in line with current local policy, providing a mix of tenures including social rent, shared ownership, and market sale. Homes range from one-bedroom to four-bedroom homes. This approach supports housing choice and addresses local needs for both affordable and family-sized homes. Home should aim to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards.
- ✓ Making the most of what's there - the proposals maximise the site's existing landscape assets by retaining boundary vegetation and enriching it with new tree and shrub planting. This enhances both ecological value and visual character. These elements are incorporated into continuous green corridors that reinforce biodiversity and strengthen links to the wider landscape network. However,

several tree groups in the southern part of the site, containing both Category A and B trees, will be removed.

- ✓ A memorable character - the site layout successfully integrates the ecological corridors, the tree-lined primary route, and the central green space, enhancing overall connectivity and establishing a clear focal point for the development. The proposed 'Devizes Road Frontage' creates a welcoming landscaped entrance, which could be further strengthened through orchard planting and the use of traditional boundary treatments to reinforce a strong sense of arrival.

Building designs should reflect the local vernacular by incorporating stone detailing, varied rooflines, projecting windows, chimney stacks, and well-proportioned window arrangements. These elements will help ensure design coherence across the scheme and alignment with the principles set out in the Wiltshire Design Guide.

- ✓ Well defined streets and spaces - the development proposals establish a strong urban structure with outward-facing blocks, active frontages, and opportunities for dual-aspect corner buildings that enhance natural surveillance. However, the relationship between the built form and the adjoining habitat area would benefit from refinement. In particular, the extent of rear gardens along this edge should be reduced to create a more positive and ecologically sensitive interface.

The use of stone walls along prominent front boundaries is a positive feature that reinforces local character and provides continuity with the surrounding context, in line with the recommendations set out in the WDG.

- ✓ Easy to find your way around - the development adopts a relaxed grid layout, organized into distinctive areas such as the 'Devizes Road Frontage', 'Primary Street Frontage', and 'Habitat Area'. These character zones are designed to help residents and visitors form a clear mental map of the site.
- ✓ Healthy streets - the primary street incorporates tree-lined verges and incidental spaces that encourage social interaction and informal recreation. Integrated rain gardens are provided to support sustainable drainage and enhance biodiversity. All lower-hierarchy streets should also be planted with street trees, located within the public realm to ensure long-term maintenance and resilience, and should incorporate sustainable drainage features.
- ✓ Cycle and car parking - the development incorporates several cycle and car parking options, with parking courts benefiting from natural surveillance provided by overlooking habitable rooms. The dwellings on the eastern side of the Primary Street are currently set back behind on-plot turning. This arrangement weakens the street enclosure and diminishes the urban form. Revisiting the layout to bring buildings closer to the street edge, would help create a stronger and more coherent streetscape.
- ✓ Green and blue infrastructure - while the proposal includes attenuation basins, rain gardens, swales, and permeable surfaces, further consideration should be given to reducing reliance on below-ground storage tanks. This could be achieved by incorporating additional green and blue infrastructure in line with WDG principles, distributing water storage more effectively across the site. Potential measures include expanding rain gardens, increasing permeable surfacing, and introducing small ponds along lower-hierarchy streets. This approach would enhance biodiversity, improve surface-water management, and strengthen alignment with the WDG's integrated green and blue infrastructure guidance.
- ✓ Back of pavement front of home - in keeping with Wiltshire's vernacular character, front-of-plot boundaries will feature low stone walls throughout the site (as stated in the DAS, page 27). This

approach reinforces a distinctive sense of place and maintains visual continuity with the surrounding context, as recommended in the WDG. The interface between private rear gardens and adjacent public or shared spaces - including highways, public open space (POS) and parking courts - should generally be defined by robust masonry walls to ensure durability, privacy, and a high-quality public realm.

Observations

WLPR Policy 54 requires the provision of a Country Park to be created and available in perpetuity for public access prior to the occupation of the first dwelling of the North of Trowbridge allocation.