

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2026/01361

Proposal: Hybrid planning application comprising 2No. severable components seeking: (i) full planning permission for the development of a Class E(a) foodstore and associated customer car parking / access / service arrangements, in addition to: (ii) outline planning permission for a drive thru unit with EV charging hub and associated customer car parking / access / service arrangements.

Site Address: The Bike School, London Road, Devizes, SN10 2JG

Case Officer: Jonathan James

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 27th February 2026 on the application webpage.

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (abbreviated WCS), 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)
- Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan (Made July 2015) (DANP); and

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.

Observations

The site comprises brownfield (previously developed) land, located outside the Devizes settlement boundary (2020) however the site forms part of an existing allocation in the WCS and the WLPR for 8.4 hectares of employment land for business space and incubator workspace function on Land at Horton Road, Devizes.

The site has previously been the subject of Pre-Application enquiry (ENQ/2025/01219), responses to which I will refer to in my comments below.

Objections

The proposed design fails to meet the design and place-shaping standards set out in CP57, for the following reasons:

- 1) The allocation requires that development at this location should respect the local landscape and townscape character, ensuring that the entrance to Devizes creates a positive and high-quality gateway. Visually intrusive buildings should be avoided, particularly where they face the AONB or key approaches into the town.

In the Pre-Application response, the Landscape Officer also strongly advised that any proposal should support the aims of the Western Forest initiative and incorporate substantial tree planting along the A361 verge.

The allocation further requires a sensitive edge treatment incorporating existing hedgerows and a minimum 5-metre buffer. However, the current scheme significantly reduces the existing verge to below 5 metres along most of the north-western boundary.

As a result, the proposal fails to provide the high-quality, landscaped gateway envisaged in the allocation. Instead, the reduced verge, lack of substantial tree planting, and weakened hedgerow buffer risk creating a visually intrusive and poor-quality entrance to Devizes.

- 2) Tree group G1, located along the southern boundary, makes a positive contribution to the Horton Road streetscape and provides effective visual screening of the proposed development – as shown on the Existing Section B-B.

The Arboricultural Report notes that G1 is to be removed to facilitate the current layout. However, WDG expectation 6.2.7 requires that existing significant trees and hedgerows are retained within areas of public open space wherever possible.

Given its wider landscape and visual amenity benefits, tree group G1 should be retained, with the development layout adjusted to ensure it sits outside the root protection area. This would help to lessen the impact of the galvanised mesh enclosure to the refrigeration plant – which will be approximately 2.4 metre high adjacent to Horton Road.

In addition, tree group G2 could also be retained and enhanced through supplementary planting, and incorporated within the 5-metre buffer required by the site allocation, further strengthening landscape structure and compliance with policy expectations.

- 3) According to the Transport Assessment, the proposal meets Wiltshire's current maximum parking standards for non-residential uses. However, the layout results in a visually parking-dominated scheme.

Addressing the issues outlined in points 1 and 2 by introducing tree-lined edges would help screen the parking areas from the wider context. In addition, opportunities should be explored to incorporate landscaping - such as 2 metre wide landscaping strips, trees, rain gardens, shrubs, and other planting - within the parking courts. This approach aligns with best practice guidance and would help soften the visual impact of the parking areas.

The Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy (FRDS) also highlights that the majority of the site is currently covered by impermeable surfacing, meaning the development presents a clear opportunity to improve surface permeability. The Proposed Drainage Preliminary Layout within the FRDS identifies permeable block paving to some car parking areas but not to parking spaces 62 to 91. Ideally, all car parking bays should use permeable block paving to provide visual contrast with the asphalt areas, enhance character and legibility, deliver SuDS benefits by reducing surface-water runoff, and contribute to a more attractive and sustainable public realm.

We draw the Applicants attention to the DEFRA SuDS National Standards (June 2025) principles, in particular the integration of SuDS features at the plot and street level. 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.

- 4) The Proposed Site Plan (Overall) identifies an area to the north of the site as an approximate easement overlay based on a 1962 conveyance plan. However, the supporting information does not clearly explain the purpose of this easement. As the area aligns with the existing access - which, according to the Transport Assessment, is to remain unaltered - and is shown connecting to a proposed road within the approved commercial development on the adjacent site, further clarification is required regarding the intended function and implications of the easement.
- 5) The proposed foodstore has a relatively generic appearance, though the Design and Access Statement states that it draws on the character of nearby commercial buildings. The use of non-reflective materials and a contemporary dark grey-toned palette – perhaps referencing local geology and natural materials such as dark flint and slate - is noted. However, this approach results in a frontage that sits in stark contrast to the lighter, more varied character of its surroundings.

The applicant may wish to explore a lighter grey finish or corten steel cladding, as these materials could create a design that better responds to the local context. Supplying fully rendered 3D imagery of the building within its surroundings would also help shape and inform the design response and would further support the assessment of the proposal.

Although a materials schedule has been submitted, this should be accompanied by physical material samples. These samples should ideally be presented within a coordinated on-site materials panel to allow proper assessment of colour, texture, and quality. This should include samples for the proposed external hard surfaces, windows, doors, rainwater pipes, cladding and roofing elements. This can be appropriately conditioned.

- 6) Within the outline planning application area, sub-stations are proposed at the site entrance alongside the EV charging hub. These installations should be screened using natural stone (or orangey-red brick) walls, which are a distinctive element of the local streetscape. Incorporating this traditional material would create a more attractive frontage, soften the visual impact of the infrastructure, and help integrate the development more sensitively into its surrounding context.
- 7) The proposed foodstore and drive-thru unit replicate uses also identified on the neighbouring site, suggesting that the allocation is being brought forward in a piecemeal manner rather than through a cohesive masterplan. This fragmented approach also leads to the creation of multiple separate

access points, rather than a unified and well-planned entrance and exit arrangement for the allocation as a whole.

- 8) The site includes a 3-metre-wide shared pedestrian and cycle route along its southern frontage. The Transport Assessment states that this route will connect the development to nearby residential areas on the eastern side of Devizes and to central Devizes via active travel modes. The provision would be strengthened by incorporating a formal crossing on Horton Road, enabling users to safely navigate what is expected to become a significantly busier route as a result of the proposed facilities on the remainder of the allocated site.