

West Ashton Parish Council

Please reply to The Acting Parish Clerk, Carol Hackett, 23 Orchard Close, West Ashton, Wiltshire. BA14 6AU
Email: clerk@west-ashton.org.uk

Russell Brown (Planning Officer)
Wiltshire Council
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

11th May 2026

Dear Mr Brown,

West Ashton Parish Council objects to Planning Application PL/2026/02193. The Parish Council requests that this letter be placed on the application file, and that particular note is taken of the context within which this application sits. Detailed objections to PL/2026/02193 are given at Annex A to this letter. The background and context are explained below:

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The application site is at Lively Farm, Yarnbrook Road, West Ashton, situated in open countryside, outside the defined settlement edge of West Ashton. The application admits that the site is in the countryside but fails to fully appreciate all of the factors which affect the complete area of Lively Farm, as shown on Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Lively Farm



Lively Farm also sits within the core zone of the Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC and within the Yellow Zone for habitat impacts. Flowers Wood is located within 60m of Lively Farm and Bechstien bats are known to be present. There is good woodland connectivity to Clanger Wood which is an important site for bats. Whilst individual Planning Applications can take

small measures to reduce the impact of development in accordance with the Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy, we believe that it is an important factor, when discussing Lively Farm.

Applications Received in 2026:

The barn at Lively Farm currently has the benefit of a prior approval for its conversion to two semi-detached dwellings under Class Q (change of use of existing building) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), reference PL/2025/08586, granted on 19 January 2026.

The present application seeks full planning permission to demolish the barn and replace it with two new detached self-build dwellings. This is a fundamentally different form of development from the prior approval. It does not constitute a conversion of an existing building but rather the demolition of an agricultural structure and its replacement with new residential development in open countryside.

A previous Planning Application (PL/2026/00531) sought permission for 9 self-build dwellings on the field immediately adjacent to the site of this application. It used, as one of its main arguments, the fact that the change of use of the adjoining barn now meant that the area was opened up for development. We disputed this claim in our comments on the application.

Conflict with the Neighbourhood Development Plan:

The extant West Ashton Neighbourhood Plan (Made June 2021), and its recently submitted update, is fully in accord with the Wiltshire Core Strategy. It states that the additional 2,600 dwellings, known as Ashton Park, which will be built at the northern end of the Parish, will become a part of Trowbridge and the remaining West Ashton village will be treated as a small village within the Trowbridge community. The Vision Statement includes "Development in the main village will be limited to small scale infilling sufficient to meet local needs". Since Lively Farm is adjacent to but not within the settlement edge this development cannot be considered as infill. Thus, developing any, or all, of Lively Farm will be in direct conflict with the West Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan. The applicant states that the "Tilted Balance" is in his favour due to Wiltshire Council's failure to meet planning targets. With 2,600 additional dwellings already approved for our parish we believe that our Neighbourhood Plan should remain in force despite these claims.

Conflict with the Wiltshire Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan:

No consideration of any part of Lively Farm should take place without due consideration of the Sunnyside Travellers Site. The applications received fail to acknowledge any impact that it may have. Lively Farm currently acts as an essential green Gap between the Travellers Site and West Ashton village. Any development of Lively Farm will remove this Gap and will cause great concern to the villagers of West Ashton. It will inevitably result in large walls or fences being erected between the Travellers Site and the development. This is in contravention of the Wiltshire Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan.

Summary

We are very concerned that, if this development approval for 2 dwellings is given, further Planning Applications will be received not only for the 9 dwellings in the field mentioned, but for the development of all, or large parts, of Lively Farm.

Should you be minded to approve this application, we request that the application be referred to the Western Area Planning Committee for determination (rather than decided under delegated authority), so that the Committee can take the full background and context given above into account.

DETAILED GROUNDS OF OBJECTION TO PL/2026/02193

1: The Prior Approval Does Not Establish the Principle of New Residential Development in the Countryside

1.1 The Planning Statement places heavy and repeated reliance on the extant Class Q prior approval as having established the principle of residential development at this site (paragraphs 7.4, 7.5, 7.41, 8.3). This is a mischaracterisation of the legal and planning effect of a Class Q consent.

1.2 A Class Q (change of use) prior approval is a form of permitted development. It operates within a carefully defined set of limitations and conditions: the building must be capable of functioning as a dwelling through conversion, not through rebuilding. The consent attaches to the existing structure. It does not grant permission for new development on the land, and it does not establish a principle of new residential development in the countryside.

1.3 Demolishing the barn removes the very structure to which the prior approval attached. Once demolished, the Class Q (change of use) consent cannot be implemented. The applicant cannot use a consent that depends on the existence of a building as a fallback once that building has been destroyed. The fallback position advanced by the agent is therefore either legally incapable of implementation simultaneously with the proposed new-build scheme, or it is a device to obtain full planning permission that could not otherwise be justified.

1.4 In any event, even a genuine fallback position only carries the weight that its deliverability merits. The barn is described in the Planning Statement at paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 as a steel portal-framed structure with bolted connections, corrugated concrete roofing and masonry gable elevations. Whether this structure is genuinely capable of residential conversion under the constraints of Class Q (change of use) — particularly the requirement that conversion be achieved without operations that amount to the construction of a new building — has not been independently verified. The Parish Council invites Wiltshire Council to obtain and publish a structural assessment of genuine Class Q (change of use) deliverability before affording the fallback position significant weight.

2: Conflict with the Development Plan — Location Outside Defined Settlement Boundary

2.1 The application site is outside the defined limits of development for West Ashton and is in open countryside for the purposes of the Wiltshire Core Strategy [Core Policy 2 of the Core Strategy states that outside defined limits of development, residential development will not be permitted other than in specific circumstances. None of those specific circumstances apply here: this is not affordable housing, not essential rural worker accommodation, and not the conversion of an existing building.

2.2 Core Policy 1 directs new housing to Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Large and Small Villages with defined boundaries. West Ashton is a small village with a population of fewer than 500 people. Core Policy 29 (Trowbridge Community Area) reinforces the requirement that development in this community area must accord with the settlement strategy.

2.3 The site is therefore in direct conflict with the spatial strategy of the adopted development plan. The Planning Statement acknowledges this conflict at paragraph 7.4 but seeks to dismiss it as 'academic'. The Parish Council submits that conflict with the development plan is not academic: it is the starting point for decision-making under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3: The Tilted Balance Does Not Automatically Favour Approval

3.1 The Planning Statement invokes the tilted balance under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF 2024 on the basis that Wiltshire cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, citing a Planning Inspectorate finding of 2.42 years supply. The Parish Council accepts that the tilted balance is engaged. However, the tilted balance does not mean that permission must be granted: it means that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies unless any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

3.2 The Parish Council submits that the adverse impacts in this case are substantial:

- Conflict with the spatial strategy of the development plan
- The creation of an incompatible land use boundary with an established and DPD-allocated traveller site (see 5 below)
- A location with no realistic prospect of sustainable transport — entirely car-dependent (see 4 below).
- The precedent risk for further development of the wider agricultural field (see 6 below)

3.3 Two dwellings make a negligible contribution to Wiltshire's housing need. The social and economic benefits claimed in the Planning Statement for a two-dwelling development — job creation, support for local services — are similarly negligible. When weighed against the material adverse impacts identified above and the granted permission for 2,500 homes, the balance does not fall clearly in favour of approval.

4: Car Dependency and Transport Unsustainability

4.1 The Planning Statement at paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 essentially concedes that future occupants of the proposed dwellings will be entirely dependent on private car travel for all daily needs. It seeks to justify this by reference to the rural nature of the area and paragraph 83 of the NPPF.

4.2 Core Policies 60 and 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seek to reduce reliance on the private car and to locate new development where sustainable transport alternatives exist. The site has no bus stop within reasonable walking distance and no cycling infrastructure. Every trip by every occupant of these dwellings for every purpose will require a private vehicle. This is precisely the type of isolated, car-dependent development that the spatial strategy is designed to prevent.

4.3 The agent's reliance on paragraph 83 of the NPPF — which acknowledges that rural settlements require car-based interconnection — is a misapplication of that paragraph. Paragraph 83 is concerned with the vitality of existing settlements, not the justification for new isolated development. It does not provide a general permission for car-dependent housing in open countryside.

5: The Adjacent Traveller Site — An Omitted Material Consideration

5.1 The Planning Statement makes no mention of the traveller site at Sunnyside, Yarnbrook Road, which directly adjoins the application site and the agricultural field within which the barn sits. This is a significant and material omission.

5.2 The Sunnyside site received planning permission in June 2022 for two additional pitches and two day rooms (Wiltshire Council reference PL/2021/09453), bringing the total to six pitches. Conditions on that permission permit up to twelve caravans on the site at any time, of which up to six may be static caravans. The site is in active residential use by gypsy and traveller households.

5.3 More significantly, the Sunnyside site at Yarnbrook Road is proposed as a formal allocation — Policy GT2: Sunnyside, Yarnbrook Road — in Wiltshire's emerging Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document (DPD), which was submitted for examination in November 2024 and is currently being examined. The DPD covers the period 2024 to 2038. This means that Wiltshire Council, as planning authority, has itself identified this site as a long-term location for gypsy and traveller accommodation.

5.4 The proposal to erect two new permanent market dwellings immediately adjacent to this allocation gives rise to the following distinct concerns:

(a) Amenity of proposed occupants. The Planning Statement devotes considerable attention to the high quality of amenity future occupants would enjoy (paragraphs 7.52–7.56) but makes no assessment whatsoever of the impact on those occupants of living immediately adjacent to an active traveller site with up to twelve caravans. This assessment has simply not been carried out. The noise, light, vehicular movements, dogs and general activity associated with a traveller site are material considerations that must be addressed before the application can be properly assessed.

(b) Incompatible land use juxtaposition and prejudice to DPD allocation. Introducing permanent market housing on the boundary of a DPD-allocated traveller site creates a foreseeable and irreconcilable future conflict. Future residents of the proposed dwellings will have standing to object to the traveller site's continued operation and any future intensification. This would directly undermine Wiltshire Council's ability to meet its statutory duty to provide traveller accommodation under the Housing Act 1985 and the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2023). The LPA is being asked, in effect, to approve development that would prejudice its own emerging statutory plan.

(c) Self-build marketability. The agent places very significant weight on the self-build nature of the proposal as a material consideration in the planning balance. The proximity of a traveller site will materially affect the marketability of these plots to prospective self-builders and reduce the weight to be attached to this element of the applicant's case.

5.5 The Parish Council formally requests that the LPA's planning officer obtain a written response from the Spatial Planning team responsible for the Gypsies and Travellers DPD before determining this application, addressing whether the proposed residential development is compatible with Policy GT2 and whether it would prejudice the DPD allocation.

6: Precedent for Further Development of the Agricultural Field

6.1 The barn sits within a larger agricultural field. The Planning Statement says nothing about the extent or ownership of that field, nor about the risk that approval of full planning permission

for new residential development in this location which, by the Applicants own argument, would establish a precedent for further applications.

6.2 The Parish Council is concerned that approval of this application would materially change the planning status of the wider site. Future applicants would be entitled to point to the grant of permission for new-build residential development in this field as a material consideration supporting further development. This is not a speculative concern: the pattern of using a Class Q prior approval as a stepping stone to full permission, and then using that full permission as a precedent for further development, is well documented in the planning appeal record.

6.3 The Parish Council requests that the planning officer's report explicitly addresses this precedent risk and sets out what, if any, policy safeguards would prevent further residential development of the wider agricultural land in the event that this application is approved.

7: Self-Build Conditions — Enforceability

7.1 The agent places very substantial weight on the self-build nature of the proposal, citing the Self-Build and Custom House Building Act 2015 as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the statutory duty on Wiltshire to meet self-build demand, and multiple appeal decisions (paragraphs 7.14–7.30 of the Planning Statement). The Parish Council does not dispute the policy weight attached to genuine self-build development.

7.2 However, the Parish Council is concerned that in the absence of robust and enforceable planning conditions, the description of development as 'self-build' may not be maintained through to completion and occupation.

8: Character and Appearance — Qualitative Difference from the Class Q Scheme

8.1 The Planning Statement argues at paragraph 7.46 that the proposed dwellings would be 'comparable' to the Class Q scheme in terms of built physical presence and that there would be no material increase in urbanisation at the site. The Parish Council disputes this characterisation.

8.2 The Class Q scheme involved the conversion of an existing agricultural building. The external envelope of a converted barn, with its agricultural form and materials, reads very differently in the landscape from the proposed two new-build residential dwellings, and their accompanying domestic gardens, curtilage fencing, parking areas, domestic lighting and residential paraphernalia. Footprint comparisons do not capture this qualitative difference. The proposed dwellings — however sympathetically designed — are unambiguously residential in character. They will introduce a domestic presence into open countryside that, even if similar in footprint to the barn, is fundamentally different in character from an agricultural building.

8.3 Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that development must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character. The assessment in the Planning Statement of landscape impact is superficial and does not engage with the qualitative change from agricultural to domestic land use.

Yours sincerely,

Carol Hackett

Acting Clerk, for and on behalf of West Ashton Parish Council