

APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/01821
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full Planning Permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Land at Blackmore Farm, New Road, Melksham, SN12 7QY
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Erection of an agricultural building.
RECOMMENDATION:	That Planning Permission be GRANTED

PROPOSAL

The scheme proposes the erection of an agricultural building for cattle to reside throughout the winter months, measuring approximately 18.2m X 7.6m X 4.5m (3.7m to the eaves).

The building is proposed with the south elevation open and will be finished with the following materials:

- Walls: Concrete Panels and Yorkshire Boarding
- Roof: Concrete Fibre Cement
- Gates: unspecified

Trees are proposed to be planted adjacent to the road. The provided application form indicates that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is applicable and that the pre-development biodiversity value is 0.4 at 05.03.2026.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is undeveloped agricultural land, part of a larger parcel associated with Blackmore Farm, east of classified C-road 'New Road' in Melksham.

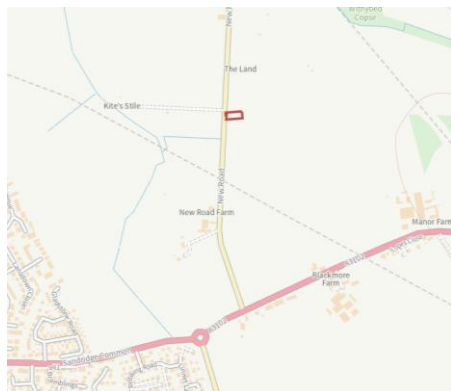


Figure 1: map view of site (red) & setting Figure 2: aerial view of site in owned parcel (blue) Figure 3: street view (google, 2024)

The site benefits from existing agricultural access from the adjacent road and is partly visible from that publicly accessible location. Public Right of Way (PRoW) 'MELW60' is located to the other side (west) of the adjacent highway; whilst the site is visible from parts of the that PRoW, the PRoW does not enter the site at any point. The market town of Melksham benefits from a defined framework boundary and made neighbourhood development plan (NDP); the site is outside of the framework boundary, in open countryside for planning purposes, but within the NDP area.

The site is not listed, in a conservation area, in a national landscape, or ecologically sensitive area. Natural England classifies, at a strategic level, the land as being Grade 3 Agricultural Land, and the Environment Agency classifies the site as being in flood zone 1 – at the lowest risk of flooding from rivers and seas. The Councils strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA) has identified the site as not being at high risk of flooding from groundwater or surface water sources.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Relevant planning history at the site:

None

Recent, relevant planning history near the site (inter alia):

Plot 4, New Road (directly north)

- 20/06715/FUL granted a *retrospective application for siting of 2 temporary shipping containers to store tractor and tools* on 24.11.2020 with a conditioned requirement for removal on 24.11.2022

The Land, New Road (less than 100m north)

- 19/11033/FUL granted a *retrospective application for a shipping container to store agricultural equipment, feed and bedding for animals* on 17.04.2020 with a conditioned requirement for removal on 17.04.2022

Land to the East of New Road (less than 250m north)

- PL/2025/09917 resulted in the refusal of *Outline permission for the erection of up to 2 self-build dwellings and associated infrastructure, all matters are reserved except for access* on 13.03.2026 refusal reasons relating to in-principle, landscape, drainage, ecology, and highways matters.

New Road Farm (less than 300m south)

- PL/2023/03858 approved the *conversion of rural building to form single, two bed dwelling* on 15.09.2023

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Though considered as a whole, applicable Development Plan policies are listed below along with relevant legislation and guidance.

[Wiltshire Core Strategy \(WCS\)](#)

- CP1: Settlement Strategy
- CP2: Delivery Strategy
- CP15: Spatial Strategy for the Melksham Community Area
- CP41: Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy
- CP48: Supporting Rural Life
- CP50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- CP57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
- CP61: Transport and Development
- CP64: Demand Management
- CP67: Flood Risks
- CP68: Water Resources

Saved Policies of the West Wiltshire Local Plan (WWLP)

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

- Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy 3: Flood Risk and Natural Flood Management
- Policy 13: Biodiversity
- Policy 17: Trees and Hedgerows
- Policy 18: Landscape Character
- Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG)

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

Wiltshire Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)

ISSUES

Taking into account the site context, and description of development, the main issues in the consideration of this application are:

- Principle / Sustainable Development
- Design / Visual Impact and Neighbouring Amenity
- Highway Safety / Access
- Flood Risks / Drainage
- Biodiversity / Geodiversity

CONSULTATION

Melksham Without Parish Council: No Objection

Councils Ecology Team: No Comment

Councils Highways Team: No Objection Subject to Condition

I refer to the above planning application to which no highway objection is raised subject to [a condition] being attached to any planning permission granted [...]

REPRESENTATIONS

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

In accordance with this statutory requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration has also been given to the policies of the NPPF as a material consideration in the assessment.

Principle / Sustainable Development

It is acknowledged that the application site is located outside of a defined settlement boundary, with such development occurring in the open countryside being typically resisted. However in this instance, the proposal is associated with an existing dwelling in the form of an extension and the land subject to change of use of land is minimal when considering the extent of the agricultural land within the small holding. Given that the proposed extension is associated with an existing dwelling, as such the principle is considered to be acceptable, however the suitability of the proposal is subject to the assessment discussed within this report below.

Local plan context

CP1 and CP2 of the WCS relate to the spatial strategy for Wiltshire, setting the policy foundations for sustainable development within the county. CP11 of the WCS expresses that development in the Corsham Community Area should be in accordance with the Settlement Strategy set out in CP1.

CP2 outlines that, other than in circumstances permitted by other policies within the WCS, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development, as defined on the policies map.

- Supporting text found at 4.25 identifies the exception policies within the WCS as being: CP34, CP37, CP39, CP40, CP44, CP46, CP47 and CP48.
- In addition to those exception policies, saved policy H4 of the NWLP provisions explicit exception criteria for new dwellings in the countryside, outside of framework boundaries.

The site is located outside of any defined settlement limits, in open countryside, and proposes residential development; as such, broadly conflicts with the aims of CP1, CP2 and CP11.

CP48 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy provisions some exceptions which includes the 'conversion and re-use of rural buildings'. CP48 sets out sequentially preferable uses with employment, tourism, cultural and community uses being preferred and housing only considered once there is evidence to prove that the foregoing uses are not practical propositions. In isolated locations, CP48 further directs that the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for residential purposes may be permitted where justified by special circumstances.

For the uses specified, CP48 sets out the following criteria which need to be demonstrated:

- *(i) The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.*
- *(ii) The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.*
- *(iii) The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure.*
- *(iv) The site has reasonable access to local services.*
- *(v) The conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long-term safeguarding.*

Saved policy H4 of the NWLP supported some residential development in the open countryside, where the following criteria can be demonstrated:

- *(i) It is in connection with the essential needs of agriculture of forestry or other rural based enterprise*
- *(ii) It is a replacement for an existing dwelling [...]*

Saved Policy H4

The scheme is not for a replacement dwelling and the submission has not demonstrated that the new dwelling would be in connection with the essential needs of agricultural or forestry or other rural based enterprise.

The scheme does not meet the requirements under Saved Policy H4.

CP48 Sequential Uses

The application has been submitted with a design and access statement (prepared by Willis & Co, dated 13.05.2025) and viability assessment for commercial use (prepared by Huw Thomas

Commercial, dated 29.06.2021) which includes the following summarised points which are relevant to established whether re-development from agricultural to a preferred alternative use could be achievable:

[...] The unemployment level in the area is low, so it is likely to be difficult to persuade potential staff to travel a long distance to working this location. The lack of amenities will also deter potential staff from this location. There are no local amenities close to the property. To access the nearest amenities would mean a car journey to the village of Box due to the steep gradient. [...] Tourist use is not a viable use [...] the building is in a relatively isolated position. There are a number of community and cultural spaces in Box. There is not a demand for community and cultural uses in this location and the site location is in a relatively [inaccessible] location for a community space. [...]

[...] The property at Merkins Farm has no potential to be used as a viable commercial unit. The particular areas of concern are:

- Very poor and restricted access.*
- Very poor quality existing building that really needs demolishing rather than converting.*
- No local amenities or facilities.*
- No access to public transport.*

Key observations within the statement have not been supported by recent data and, overall, the submission lacks clear evidence to demonstrate that the market has been appropriately tested for any of the sequentially preferable uses.

The submission has not demonstrated that the residential scheme would meet aims for the conversion and re-use of rural buildings as set out under exception policy CP48. For completeness, however, assessment against criteria (i) to (v) of CP48 has been made and the result of that assessment is summarised below.

CP48 Conversion Criteria

The development does not relate to the re-use of a heritage asset and as such criteria (v) of CP48 is not applicable.

CP48(i)

The application has been submitted with a structural report (prepared by BTA, dated 01.11.2024) which includes the following summarised conclusion:

[...] The building is suitable and adequate for its present use without the need for significant repairs [...] This conversion work will include the following structural elements:

- The addition of a new mezzanine first floor [...]*
- Insulation and zinc sheeting to the barn roof [...]*
- Insulation and linings to the external walls, fitted from inside, with the walls remaining in place.*
- DPM, insulation, and finishes to the ground floor, laid above the existing concrete floor slab.*

The building can be converted into a habitable dwelling without reconstruction of the main structural elements of the building.

The structural report indicates that the existing agricultural building could be converted to a habitable dwelling without reconstruction of the main structural elements of the building and with insulation etc. to be fitted from the inside; however, plans provided demonstrates that there would be an increased width and height (albeit marginal) outside of the frame which suggests that the design has not been fully instructed by the structural report.

The application has not demonstrated why there has been departure from guidance contained within the structural report and as such it is not possible to determine precisely how much demolition and rebuilding would be required, or whether the structural frame would be retained. Based on review of the plans alone, however, the increase in height and width along with the altered position of fenestration indicates that development would result in an entirely new envelope, which would result in significant modification to all elevations and to the roof.

The scheme as proposed has not demonstrated that development would only be limited to necessary extensions and modification. Even if the existing frame were to be retained and no additional foundations required, the amount of demolition proposed, coupled with the level of new development to the building envelope does not demonstrate a genuine conversion of the existing building but instead indicates substantial reconstruction, which is tantamount to a new build.

Furthermore, whilst it is acknowledged that the design of the scheme could be viewed as somewhat functionally agricultural, the significant level of demolition and re-building proposed, along with design choice, position and level of fenestration proposed, means that the essential characteristics of the original building will not be retained. Overall, the scheme does not comply with criteria (i) of CP48.

CP48(ii)

There are some existing dwellings positioned sporadically along both sides of Doctors Hill; however, those which can be seen further north-west are within (albeit to the edge) of the main cluster of buildings associated with Ashely and those to the south are more closely related to the hamlet of Kingsdown. The barn proposed to be converted is physically detached from either rural settlement and, in contrast to other residential units accessed from the hill, is in a more distinctly rural position.

The change of use of the barn to residential in this location would be visually discordant; an issue that would be exacerbated by the proposed size/shape of the intended residential curtilage which would be seen as an incongruous encroachment into the surrounding agricultural land. There would therefore be some localised visual harm arising from the change of use; however, the scale of the scheme is such that it is unlikely to cause significant harm to the wider landscape setting.

Overall, it is possible that the scheme could reasonably be conditioned to meet the broad aims of criteria (ii) of CP48; however, separate, careful consideration on matters relating to design and NL/greenbelt impacts needs to be made.

CP48(iii)

There is existing vehicular access to the site and, taking fully into account the representation received from the Councils highways team, the vehicular access is adequate to serve one dwelling. There are no significant concerns that the scheme would not meet the aims of criteria (iii) of CP48.

CP48(iv) and Isolated Location

In terms of access to local services, the degree of separation, when comparing the site to existing dwellings along Doctors Hill, is greater by virtue of there being no direct access from the barn to any existing pavements or PROW. Future occupants would not benefit from a safe and convenient pedestrian or cycle access to public transport options and local facilities; notwithstanding that the site can accommodate off-street parking for vehicles, the site is not in a sustainable location and a dwelling in this location would be contrary to the aims of criteria (iv) of CP48.

That the site is adjacent to (and benefits from existing vehicular access from) Doctors Hill does, however, allow for some degree of functional connection between the barn and the built form of rural settlements. The site is therefore not considered to be in an isolated location insofar as the requirements of CP48 and paragraph 84 of the NPPF apply.

Tilted balance

Notwithstanding the above, the Council have accepted that the requisite housing land supply cannot be demonstrated and as such, for applications including housing provision, the policies which are most important for determining the application should be considered out-of-date.

The NPPF directs, under paragraph 11, that in these circumstances planning permission should be granted unless one or both of the following apply:

- (i) *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- (ii) *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF goes on to further express that:

In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits,

provided the following apply: (a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and (b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.

For the avoidance of doubt, there is no NDP affecting the application site; the requirements of paragraph 14(a) of the NPPF have not been met.

Paragraph 11d(i)

The site is located within flood zone 1, has not been identified as being in an area at high risk of surface or ground water flowing, is not located within (or in close proximity to) a Ramsar, SPA, SAC or CWS and is not a (or near to a) designated heritage asset.

The site is in the consultation zone for Bath & Bradford on Avon SAC and within the in the Cotswolds NL and on land designated as Green Belt.

Conflict with policies within the NPPF associated with protecting ecological, NL and Green Belt designations would demonstrate a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; these matters will therefore form the primary assessment of harm.

Paragraph 11d(ii)

The scheme is not for major, or significant, development and the scheme would not result in the creation of isolated homes in the countryside; however, the site is in an unsustainable location and the proposed residential development at the site would introduce a discordant feature which would not necessarily add to the overall quality of the area.

Taking the site and scheme specific matters into account, should no strong reason for refusing the development be found when assessing the scheme against NL and Greenbelt policies within the NPPF, further assessment of benefits and harm will be focussed on compliance/conflict with the aims of paragraphs 91, 115, 129, 135 and 139 of the NPPF.

Development in the Greenbelt

Chapter 13 of the NPPF relates to protecting Green Belt land and expresses how the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.

Paragraph 142 expresses that:

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

Paragraph 143 expresses that the Green Belt serves five purposes, including:

(a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

(c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Paragraph 153 directs that *inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt.*

Paragraph 154 instructs Local Planning Authorities to regard development in the Green Belt as inappropriate unless set exception apply, summarised below:

- (a) buildings for agriculture and forestry*
- (b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments [...]*
- (c) the extension or alteration of a building [...]*
- (d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces.*
- (e) limited infilling in villages*
- (f) limited affordable housing [...]*
- (g) limited infilling or complete redevelopment of previously development land [...]*
- (h) other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*
 - (i) mineral extraction*
 - (ii) engineering operations*
 - (iii) local transport infrastructure [...]*
 - (iv) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*
 - (v) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
 - (vi) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order*

As discussed in the previous section of this report, the application submission has included a structural report and other supporting detail which demonstrates that some scheme to convert the existing barn could potentially meet the exception criteria (h)(iv) of Paragraph 154; however, the degree of demolition and rebuilding being proposed under this explicit scheme exceeds that which would genuinely be considered a conversion.

The development proposed would be tantamount to a new dwelling in the Green Belt; the application therefore does not meet any exception criteria of Paragraph 154.

Paragraph 155 further provisions that *development of homes [...]* would not be regarded as inappropriate if all of the following exception criteria is met:

- (a) the development would utilise grey belt land [...]*
- (b) there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed*
- (c) the development would be in a sustainable location [...]*
- (d) where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' [...]*

Notwithstanding that there is a barn at the site, an agricultural building is not previously developed land (PDL) insofar as assessing a proposal under the policies of the NPPF; the development will therefore not utilise grey belt land and the scheme consequently fails to meet the exception criteria of Paragraph 155.

Given the above, it has been demonstrated that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is, by definition, harmful.

The identified harm to the Green Belt, arising from the proposed development, demonstrates a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

Impact on the National Landscape

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF places great weight on the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and NLs.

Policy CP51 of the WCS requires development to protect, conserve and enhance landscape character, expressing that any proposals for development within AONBs shall demonstrate that they have taken account of the objectives, policies and actions set out in relevant management plan(s).

Criteria (i) of Policy CP57 expresses that development should enhance local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced.

The site is within the Cotswolds NL; detail within the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidance identifies the wider character area as 'Enclosed Limestone Valley'.

Part 4.1 of the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines relates to *development, expansion and infilling of settlements including residential [...]* and identifies the following potential landscape implications and strategies/guidelines which have some relevance to the scheme:

Potential landscape implications
- Encroachment of built development into the valleys intruding into the landscape
- Erosion of distinctive form, scale and character of smaller settlements along the valleys including their relationship to the landscape and springline.
- Loss of characteristic small scale valley settlements and hamlets and their distinctive identifies due to settlement growth and coalescence
- Proliferation of suburban building styles [...]
- Increase in noise pollution and loss of tranquility
- Loss of archaeological and historical features, field patterns and landscapes.

Landscape strategies and guidelines
- Maintain the tranquil, secluded and often remote and sparsely settled character [...]
- Maintain the open, undeveloped slopes of the valleys
- Avoid development that will intrude negatively into the landscape and cannot be successfully mitigated [...]
- New development should be concentrated within existing built up areas, and be of a density reflecting the characteristic linear settlement form.
- Control the proliferation of suburban building styles and materials
- Existing buildings should be carefully conserved and where converted to new uses buildings must retain their historic integrity and functional character [...]

- | |
|--|
| - Plant trees and hedges within and around new development [...] |
| - Retain existing trees, hedges etc [...] |

The existing building, including later additions, has a functionally agricultural character and is not considered to have any clear historic or architectural value; as such, there is no objection on grounds of visual amenity with regards to the proposed demolition.



Figure 6: extract of photo from viability assessment



Figure 7: extract of photo from structural report

The proposed change of use and development associated with the creation of one residential unit, when seen in long-range views into the NL setting, would not likely become an unacceptably discernible feature; the introduction of a dwelling in this rural location would, nonetheless, alter the character of the site. The wider agricultural land offers a pleasant transition between the rural settlements of Ashley and Kingsdown, and whilst the modest scale of the development will not result in coalescence of those rural settlements, there remains some potential for NL harm in a localised context.

Visibility of the site from publicly accessible locations, in short-range views, is currently limited by virtue of existing natural screening; the building can, nonetheless, be partially seen from Doctors Hill, and, given the local topography, there are also sections along the A4 where the site and surrounding agricultural land can be viewed.

The development proposed, whilst retaining some functionally agricultural styling insofar as the wall/roof materials and form of the building, fails to respond positively to the site context. In particular, the style, scale and location of fenestration proposed introduces design elements that are discordant. The level and design of the fenestration would give an overriding impression of a building in domestic, not agricultural use; especially considering how the extensive areas of glazing will result in the emission of artificial light in an otherwise unlit area.

There is potential for the site to become more visually prominent over time, if planting were to change, and, whilst it is acknowledged that conditions can reasonably be applied to secure landscape mitigation, overall, the domestic use of the land and encroachment of residential development into the agricultural setting is undesirable. The design of the dwelling proposed would not enhance the immediate setting and the proposal would, in a localised context, negatively impact the tranquility of the NL setting.

Design and Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CP41 of the WCS relates to sustainable construction and low-carbon energy and encourages development including building conversions to incorporate design measures to reduce energy demand.

Policy CP57 of the WCS requires high quality design and place shaping for all new development including extensions, alterations and changes of use.

Section 9.2 of the WDG sets expectations around private amenity space, providing the following minimum standards (subject to site specific constraints) for gardens, applicable to houses:

Type of private amenity space	1 storey houses	2 storey houses	3 storey houses
Minimum rear garden area	Equal footprint of dwelling	Equal footprint of dwelling	Equal footprint of dwelling
Minimum length of garden	9m if north facing, 5m otherwise	12m if north facing, 10m otherwise	15m if north facing, 10m otherwise

Technical housing standards deal with internal space within new dwellings. Setting requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home. There are set criteria for measuring and the following summarised nationally described space standards are applicable for assessment of the proposed 3-bedroom, 2-storey house:

Bedrooms	Bed spaces	Minimum gross internal floor area	Required built-in storage
3 bed	4 person	84	2.5
3 bed	5 person	93	2.5
3 bed	6 person	102	2.5

The councils SPD on 'waste storage and collection' provides guidance for developers and includes the following summarised points relating to the external storage of waste:

- (5.4.1) Waste storage areas should be appropriate located [...] within the boundary of the property [...] These storage facilities should not obstruct sight lines for pedestrians, drivers and cyclists and should not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular access to buildings.
- (5.4.2) External storage spaces must be on hard standings, and they should be away from windows [...]
- (5.4.3) Rear-garden storage is preferable where possible provided that there is a suitable route to the collection point [...]

The scheme does not include the provision of renewable energy solutions, which is regrettable; however, if the scheme were to be permitted it would be done with the understanding that permitted development (PD) rights for the installation of renewable energy solutions are intact;

therefore, the applicant would be able to utilise PD provisions should they wish to include renewable energy solutions at the site in the future.

The development proposed will result in the creation of 1 no 3 bedroom dwelling, external design has been discussed in the previous section of this report. Internally, each bedroom proposed meets space-standard requirements for double bedrooms, there will be sufficient space for the required built-in storage to serve the dwelling, and the full internal floor area is not less than the minimum requirement. Furthermore, whilst not explicitly shown on plans, the size of the site is such that sufficient room for waste storage inline with guidance would be possible to achieve, and adequate amenity space is similarly achievable.

The site does not have any immediate neighbouring dwellings, and there is no extant planning permission for residential development on the adjoining land. Given the rural context, the scheme would not result in overlooking from external sources and there are no existing structures that would restrict the availability of natural light to the proposed habitable rooms.

The submitted location plan appears to show that the applicant owns the land surrounding the application site; however, the extent of the wider holding is not clear. As the proposal is not for a rural workers dwelling, the relationship between the proposed new residential unit and the surrounding agricultural land requires careful consideration. The position of the dwelling and extent of curtilage proposed is such that it will effectively be encircled by land which will remain in agricultural use; as such, there is a risk that future occupiers may experience noise, odour, and general disturbance arising from typical farm activities. These factors have the potential to lead to a poor-quality residential environment. Ideally, such amenity considerations would be addressed at the design stage; however, it is recognised that further assessment and, if necessary, mitigation could be secured through appropriately worded conditions (requiring the submission and approval on noise and odour management/mitigation).

Ecology / Biodiversity

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a way of creating and improving natural habitats and ensures that development has a measurably positive impact on biodiversity, compared to what was there before development.

Policy CP50 of the WCS outlines that Wiltshire's natural environment is one of its greatest assets and identifies protection measures necessary for consideration when assessing the impact of development on biodiversity and geodiversity.

The site is within a consultation zone for bats associated with the Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and there is potential for the site to be used by protected species. The application has been submitted with a preliminary ecological assessment report (prepared by Greena Ecological Consultancy, dated 24.02.2025) and information relating to BNG matters. Following initial consultation with the Councils ecology team, it was made clear that some BNG detail was missing and that the original submission was, unfortunately, therefore invalid. The missing detail was duly provided, and accepted, on 26.09.2025 and necessary re-consultation was carried out.

The Councils ecology team's most recent representation confirms that that a HRA has been carried out and concluded that the application is not likely to have significant impacts on the SAC; the application has been screened out of appropriate assessment. The representation concludes that there is no ecological objection subject to conditions being applied; the recommended conditions would be necessary should permission be granted.

Highways Safety / Access

Policy CP61 of the WCS requires new development to be served by safe access to the highway network. Policy CP64 of the WCS relates to demand management measures which includes car parking management and standards.

Representation from the Councils highways team indicates that the access is sub-standard but that development would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or a residual cumulative impact on the road network; their representation concludes no objection subject to condition.

No explicit comment is provided within their representation regarding off-street provisions; however, the recommended condition relates to the provision, and retention, of parking spaces. This condition would be necessary should permission be granted.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This scheme relates to housing development and, whilst proposing one dwelling only and consequently representing only a very minor increase to the overall housing supply for Wiltshire, would result in a net increase to the number of residential units should the development be completed which, given the current HLS situation, is a benefit afforded great weight. Granting permission will also bring about environmental benefits by virtue of the scheme providing an uplift in habitat value in line with BNG requirements.

There are concerns regarding residential amenity harm to the occupants of the dwelling, by virtue of the rural agricultural setting; however, submission and approval of further detail to allow the matter to be fully considered can be conditioned and necessary mitigation (should harm be identified) would be possible to implement as part of discharging such a condition.

The Parish Council raised an objection to the scheme on grounds of the site being in open countryside (outside of the settlement framework), within a NL setting, and in the Green Belt. These matters have been discussed in the body of the report and findings are summarised below:

Notwithstanding the scale of the development, the introduction of a new dwelling, along with the introduction of domestic paraphernalia associated with the proposed residential use of the land, in this location would result in some erosion of the openness of the Green Belt which is in conflict with the purpose of the designation. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated that would clearly outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt and, as such, this harm is afforded substantial weight.

Given that the development has not demonstrated compliance with local plan exception policies for residential development in the open countryside, there is also identified harm associated with the creation of new dwelling outside of a framework boundary, exacerbated by the location being unsustainable by virtue of there being a lack of convenient pedestrian links or other reasonable alternatives to private car use for future occupants to utilise.

Furthermore, whilst the building would not form an unacceptably prominent feature in long-range views of the NL setting, a dwelling in this location would result in some localised harm to the NL setting; particularly taking into account that the fenestration proposed is discordant with the rest of the design and would result in the emission of an incongruous level of artificial light.

Overall, the benefits of the scheme are significantly outweighed by the substantial harm identified and the application is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That planning permission be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard 3 years
2. Approved plans
3. The development hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until the first 5m of the access, measured from the edge of the carriageway, has been consolidated and surfaced (not loose stone or gravel). The access shall be maintained as such thereafter.
REASON: In the interests of highway safety

INFORMATIVES TO APPLICANT:

- The application involves an extension to the existing/creation of a new vehicle access/dropped kerb. The consent hereby granted shall not be construed as authority to carry out works on the highway. The applicant is advised that a licence will be required from Wiltshire's Highway Authority before any works are carried out on any footway, footpath, carriageway, verge or other land forming part of the highway. Please contact our Vehicle Crossing Team on vehicleaccess@wiltshire.gov.uk and/or 01225 713352 or visit their website at <http://wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-streets> to make an application.