

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

Guy Bridgewood BA (HONS) MArch PGDip ARB
Senior Urban Design Officer
Wiltshire Council

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Application No: PL/2026/02930

Proposal: Residential development for up to 40 dwellings, associated works, infrastructure, ancillary facilities, open space and landscaping. Construction of a new vehicular access off Windsor Drive

Site Address: Land off Windsor Drive, Devizes

Case Officer: Adrian Smith

Reference:

Files indexed 01.06.2026

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (Abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Design Guide – Wiltshire Council Supplementary Planning Document adopted 25th March 2024 (abbreviated WDG)
- Any relevant 'Made' and not expired Neighbourhood Plan document. including often this as an Annexe /seperate Neighbourhood Plan Design guidance document
- 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)

Note: Proposed update to NPPF expected March 2026 and incorporation of NDG, NMDC Parts 1 & 2, and BfHL/SfHL in a 'Design and Place making Planning Practice Guidance' document (DPPPG) expected shortly also.

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 NPPF recognises the role of design review in ensuring high standards of design and we encourage major development proposals to be independently assessed at an early stage in the process. The NPPF indicates "significant weight" is be given to designs "which help raise the standard of design more generally in an area". The draft NPPF intends to increase this to "substantial weight". Where a project has a design review, we will consider the panel's recommendations in our planning process and decisions. The Council's Urban Design Team can provide further information on this process on request.

Observations

The site lies outside the Devizes settlement boundary (2020) and is not identified as a draft allocation in the emerging Wiltshire Council Local Plan (January 2023). It should therefore be considered a speculative site. At this early stage no detail or specific house designs have been submitted and my observations are therefore related to the layout in outline.

It is noted that another application has been submitted for the site by Robert Hitchens immediately to the north east, PL-2026-01963.

Objection

- 1) The proposed layout is overly reliant on cul-de-sacs, creating dead ends where turning heads and far ends are not visible from the junction with Windsor Road. This is contrary to the Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG 5.1.8), which states that cul-de-sacs should be short and have their far end visible from a through-road junction.

This approach would also conflict with Core Policy 57 (vii) and (ix), as it would undermine legibility and accessibility. The reliance on vehicle reversing and turning at the ends of cul-de-sacs to serve dwellings and refuse vehicles, together with the proliferation of communal bin collection points, has the potential to create avoidable inconvenience for residents. Such an arrangement aligns with *Building for a Healthy Life* examples of “what red looks like” (pp. 18–19), rather than the preferred “what green looks like” (pp. 16–17), which advocates well-connected streets at the edges of developments. The cul-de-sac-led structure also undermines the ability of the proposed street network to function as a clear and legible hierarchy, as primary and secondary routes frequently terminate rather than forming connected through-routes.

BfHL (p.17) also discourages extensive use of private drives, which can frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement, particularly along site edges.



Recommendation

To comply with the WDG and Core Policy 57, an internal loop should be formed removing the long cul-de-sac and improving legibility and permeability. Private drives should be removed where possible and if required take the form of an edge lane, please see design guidance noted in SfHL p.53-59. The lane should form part of a connect route for pedestrians and cyclists into development from the south west corner.



- 2) The DAS identifies legibility as a key objective; however this is undermined by the deliberate use of curving streets to create an 'organic' layout. This approach conflicts with best practice guidance, which emphasises direct and clearly aligned routes to aid navigation and wayfinding. As set out in *Building for a Healthy Life* (pp. 57–61) and WDG 4.2 and 5.1, legibility is best achieved through straighter, more direct streets.

The immediate local context of Windsor Drive should not be used as a design precedent.

Recommendation

Amend streets to be straighter to aid legibility and navigation.

- 3) The play area is situated in an undesirable location being located next to Windsor drive and lacking sufficient screening. This risks creating a play space which is not well used as it is unlikely to encourage activity, play or social interaction. Due to the location this could end up aligning closely with 'red' examples in BfHL of poorly performing incidental spaces, rather than the preferred green approach of well-overlooked open spaces that contribute to legibility, neighbourhood identity and encourage activity.

Please see a 'green' example from BfHL below which shows a street which is deliberately wider incorporating green space and play between homes. Worth noting this also adds variation to the streets, creating a place of memorable character which aids legibility for people.



Recommendation:

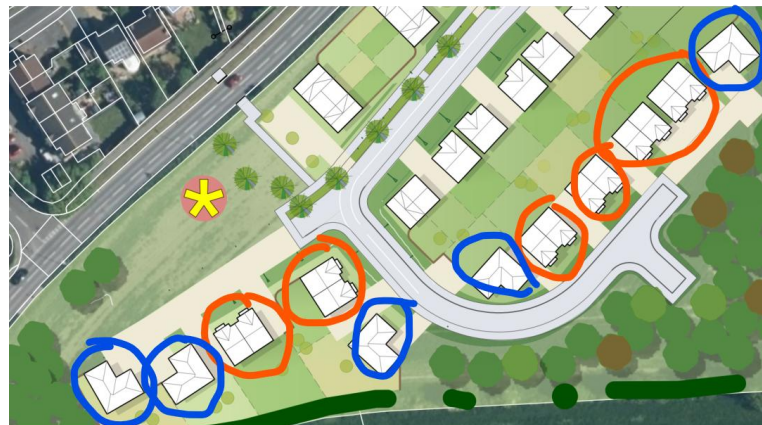
It is recommended that the play area is repositioned to a more appealing location. One possible solution could be to adopt a strategy like the above precedent and organise homes around a green area which incorporates green and blue infrastructure as well as a play area. Introducing greater multi functional landscape areas into the development would help improve legibility by creating a break in the streetscape. This would also be an attractive and memorable landscape feature to orientate houses around, please refer to p57 of BfHL. Please see screenshot/markup below indicating a multifunctional green space at the heart of the scheme.



- 4) As with point 3, more information is required to demonstrate the streets are contributing to the character and place in accordance with WDG section 5 Movement or BfHL 'what green looks like' pages 52/53 and pages 64/65, 'Well defined streets and spaces' and 'Healthy Streets'. The Design and Access Statement describes a hierarchy of primary, secondary and private drives, but this is not clearly expressed in the indicative masterplan, where routes of similar width, alignment and enclosure perform different roles. The proposed street hierarchy remains descriptive rather than functional, with insufficient differentiation between street types in terms of enclosure, frontage and alignment.

The avenue trees are welcomed however trees should not be limited to the avenue alone and are encouraged on all the streets unless there are clear justifiable reasons why this would be inappropriate. Please see NPPF section 136. Worth noting trees play an important role in climate mitigation allowing shading to both street and adjacent homes.

Currently the design also relies on the similar house types in different conditions which is also contributing to a degree of homogeneity in the street scene. See below in which the same two types are being used in different street conditions and where the character could be different.



Recommendation:

- More street trees should be introduced.
- Greater difference between the character areas to be introduced, as noted with point 3 this could be done by incorporating a larger green area on the main avenue street.

To ensure greater variation in street character it is suggested that the houses towards the west adopt a different character. One possible solution could be a farmstead typology which would be reflective of the rural transition on this boundary.

Furthermore, the current layout does not adequately respond to pedestrian desire lines. To avoid frustrating pedestrian users, private driveways should connect, this could be for pedestrians only and not vehicles but clear legible sightlines should be present. See also SfHL Edge Lanes/Private Driveways (page 53).

While the DAS describes a hierarchy of street types, there are no clear parameter plans to secure how these will differ in width, enclosure, frontage or character. As such, the hierarchy is not embedded within the masterplan and may not be realised at reserved matters stage.

- 5) The design move to place buildings perpendicular to Windsor Road is understood for numerous reasons however it does create design challenges which the applicant should aim to address. There is a risk that the gables indicated below could be blank facades which would not be acceptable as they either front onto the main access street into the scheme or onto Windsor Drive and therefore this should be addressed. The potential for blank gables risks aligning with 'what red looks like' in BfHL page 55. This is further noted within the WDG, point 4.2.8 'Where buildings are on a corner both public elevations should be designed as 'frontages' and have windows from habitable rooms in them'.



Recommendation:

Please see below a scheme in Cambridge which successfully turns a corner and has gables that address the side street, note how the entrance has moved around the corner in this situation and a balcony has been provided which helps provide activation. Parameter plans should be included which specify key strategic design moves including active gables to these locations as this is key to creating successful placemaking in this instance.



- 6) Both *Building for a Healthy Life* and the Wiltshire Design Guide (Sections 6.3 and 6.5) expect sustainable drainage to be integrated into streets and open spaces as multifunctional green and blue infrastructure using a combination of wetlands, rain gardens, small ponds, and permeable surfaces, rather than appearing as isolated or engineered features. At present, it is unclear how SUDS will meaningfully contribute to placemaking or street character.

Recommendation:

SUDS should not be engineered features and currently the basin indicated could form an overly engineered and unattractive feature which detracts from the quality of placemaking required by CP57. As noted SUDs should be better integrated into the streets.

- 7) The provision of woodland planting along the southern and eastern boundaries is welcomed in line with Wiltshire forming part of the newly established Western Forest, a National Forest initiative that aims to significantly increase canopy cover across the region. The objectives of National Forests are a material planning consideration under NPPF (2024) paragraph 152.

Currently the landscaping along Windsor Drive appears insufficient to create a substantial and effective buffer to the road. The space between hedge and homes also needs to be better defined as this risks becoming a low quality leftover space.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that woodland planting be added along Windsor drive that would form an attractive and effective buffer to the road. The space between property and hedgerow needs to be better defined by the material submitted.

- 8) Currently the scheme is not offering any wider connections, particularly to the public right of way on the eastern boundary.
The current layout also limits future adaptability, restricting the potential for onward connections to adjacent land and preventing the formation of a coherent wider movement network.

Recommendation:

The scheme should make better connections to the existing PROW and this would also create connections to future schemes to the north/ north east if they are progressed.

- 9) The arrangement of buildings and frontage conditions raises concerns in relation to the Building for a Healthy Life “Back of pavement, front of home” principle, particularly where boundary treatments and active frontage are not clearly defined. Boundaries to blocks are indicated with a brown line but this is ambiguous and detail is required to confirm the material quality and structure of this. The DAS refers to CA1 ‘Fringe development’ having soft boundary treatments so this should be clarified.

Recommendation:

The submission of parameter plans which define boundary treatments is recommended.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposed layout does not yet demonstrate compliance with CP 57, the Wiltshire Design Guide, or *Building for a Healthy Life*. While the DAS states that a ‘well-connected movement network’ is proposed, this is not supported by the indicative layout. The reliance on cul-de-sacs, limited connections to the wider network and absence of clear through-routes indicates that connectivity is constrained rather than well-integrated. Furthermore legibility is undermined creating a street network that is not easily understood. The street hierarchy described in the Design and Access Statement is not convincingly expressed in the layout, and opportunities to create well-defined streets, meaningful landscape focal points and high-quality public spaces have not been fully realised. In addition, the siting of the play area, the limited integration of SUDS, and the lack of clear connections to surrounding routes and public rights of way further weaken the scheme’s ability to deliver a cohesive and well connected place. The absence of sufficient design parameters for key frontages and streets also creates uncertainty that the reserved matters stage would secure an appropriate level of quality. As such, the scheme in its current form fails to achieve the standard of design and placemaking required and should be revised to deliver a more legible, connected and characterful development which responds positively to its context and accords with design guidance.