



Date: 31st May 2026

To: Isabel Gatier

Development Management, Economic Development and Planning
Wiltshire Council, County Hall
Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

By Email: developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk

REPRESENTATION

Application Reference: PL/2026/02231

Site Location: Land adjacent to Coomb Cottage, Moor Lane, Charlton, Malmesbury, SN16 9DR

Proposal: Change of use of land and buildings from agricultural to Sui Generis mixed use for recreation, education and community purposes, with associated works including the erection of a yurt, composting toilets and parking.

Dear Ms Gatier,

We are writing as directly affected nearby residents regarding the above-referenced planning application. While we are not inherently opposed to the principle of community-spirited or educational initiatives, we hold profound concerns regarding the severe lack of operational detail, insufficient technical evidence, and the immediate threat this development poses to our residential amenity, a private right of way, and the tranquil rural character of Moor Lane.

The application notes that this change of use is retrospective, having commenced on 16th April 2025. The lack of structured oversight over the past year highlights why clear, legally binding operational parameters are now required.

As submitted, the application contains significant weaknesses and omissions that prevent the Council from properly assessing its long-term impacts.

1. Extreme Lack of Operational Clarity and Supporting Evidence

The application relies entirely on vague, subjective terminology within its supporting narrative (e.g., “small group activities,” “low intensity,” and “limited vehicles”). However, the actual application form explicitly states that “Hours of Opening” are not relevant to this proposal.

For a Sui Generis mixed-use development accommodating education, recreation, and community events, omitting operational hours is a major flaw. The application completely fails to quantify:

- Maximum daily or seasonal visitor numbers.
- Frequency of workshops or group events.
- Weekend and evening utilisation.
- Total daily vehicle movements.

Without these metrics, the applicant is effectively asking the Local Planning Authority to grant an open-ended, unregulated commercial/community use on trust. The application lacks necessary technical submissions, such as a Noise Impact Assessment, a Transport Statement, or an Operational Management Plan, leaving the Council unable to evidence-base its decision.

2. Adverse Noise Impacts and Erosion of Rural Tranquillity

The proposal explicitly encompasses activities known to generate distinct noise profiles, including outdoor recreation, forest school groups, singing, acting, and music-making. Yet, the applicant asserts without supporting evidence that the uses "are not significant noise generators."

Moor Lane is a highly sensitive, quiet rural environment with low ambient background noise. In this setting, sound travels significantly further, and "tranquillity" is a preserved planning metric. Group activities, even without amplification, will materially disrupt our residential amenity. The complete absence of an acoustic assessment or an event management plan means that potential noise spikes, evening disturbances, and group gatherings remain entirely unmitigated.

3. Highways Safety, Access, and Infringement on Private Rights of Way

The proposal introduces a dedicated 10-car parking area on previously undeveloped agricultural land. This constitutes an immediate intensification of use along a narrow, rural lane and farm track.

The application claims impacts will not exceed historic agricultural use, yet provides no baseline traffic counts, trip generation data, or swept path analysis to back this up. Agricultural traffic is intermittent and task-oriented; conversely, recreational uses generate highly concentrated arrival and departure peaks, bringing drivers unfamiliar with rural lanes into conflict with backroad traffic, pedestrians, and the users of the adjoining public bridleway.

Crucially, the existing site access point possesses severely substandard visibility splays for vehicles attempting to emerge onto Moor Lane. Visibility is critically restricted looking to the right when exiting the site, presenting an acute highway safety hazard. Forcing public visitors and third-party event attendees unfamiliar with the blind constraints of this narrow rural lane to navigate this unsafe egress creates a severe, unmitigated highway risk, particularly during concentrated peak arrival and departure blocks.

Critically, we have an established right of way over the access drive to our property. Visitors to the application site have already been parking on the verges of this drive, physically obstructing access and

damaging the verges. The application provides zero parking management strategies to prevent overspill or stop visitors from parking outside the designated red-line boundary.

4. Scope Creep, Intensification Risk, and Misuse of Structural Immunity

Because Sui Generis uses do not fall within a standard use class, the wording of the permission defines its legal limits. The current descriptive scope is exceptionally broad. While the current operator's intentions may be well-meaning, any permission granted runs with the land.

We would like to draw the Case Officer's attention to Paragraph 1.5 of the Planning Statement, which highlights the presence of four existing structures (two buildings, a netted tunnel, and a polytunnel) and asserts immunity from enforcement under Section 171B of the 1990 Act. The applicant attempts to use the physical, historic presence of these structures to imply a lack of environmental baseline change. However, this conflates physical structural immunity with an automatic right to change usage class.

These structures were established strictly within a quiet agricultural and horticultural context, which constitutes their lawful baseline impact on the open countryside. Shifting these four structures to actively accommodate an intensified commercial Sui Generis mixed use fundamentally alters their nature. They are no longer passive rural outbuildings; they are being transformed into active operational hubs to host large groups, workshops, and commercial classes. This represents a material intensification of use that leverages unpermitted physical structures to host an entirely separate, non-agricultural commercial enterprise.

Without explicit restrictions, this site could easily morph into a high-intensity commercial venture, hosting large-scale ticketed retreats, commercial workshops, weddings, or festival-style gatherings. The inclusion of a sand-coloured fabric yurt, composting toilets, and parking infrastructure lays the groundwork for incremental "urbanisation" of the open countryside, directly undermining the landscape protection objectives of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Furthermore, the absence of any restrictions on the sale or consumption of alcohol creates an unacceptable risk of the site operating as a licensed entertainment venue, entirely undermining the tranquil baseline of the area.

5. Complete Absence of Existing and Proposed Architectural Plans

A major validation and procedural omission in this application is the complete absence of existing or proposed floor plans and elevations for the various buildings, including the yurt, the netted tunnel, and the polytunnel mentioned in Paragraph 1.5 of the Planning Statement. For a full planning application seeking a change of use of buildings to accommodate public, commercial, and educational functions, the failure to provide detailed structural drawings is unprecedented and legally non-compliant.

Without detailed existing and proposed architectural layouts, it is impossible for the Local Planning Authority, statutory consultees, or nearby residents to determine how these structures are being physically repurposed, adapted, or fitted out internally. The Council cannot evaluate how these outbuildings will safely or appropriately accommodate the proposed groups of people, nor can it

identify if unpermitted internal or external structural alterations have occurred during this retrospective development. The absence of these fundamental plans means the true scale, layout, and visual impact of the building conversions remain completely hidden from public scrutiny.

6. Weakness Around Sustainable Transport Claims

The sustainability argument is exceptionally weak. The site is situated in an isolated location within open countryside, heavily dependent on private car access, and located approximately 1.2km from Charlton via narrow rural lanes and bridleways. The suitability of the location for what could be a major traffic generator is questionable.

The planning statement relies on speculative mitigation like car-sharing and an unspecified minibus scheme. However, no formal Travel Plan has been provided, nor is there any secured enforcement mechanism to ensure users arrive sustainably, meaning the site will generate high private car dependency.

7. Proliferation of Commercial Signage and Visual Clutter

Operating a public-facing Sui Generis hub in the open countryside creates an inevitable commercial demand for branding and wayfinding. Because the application lacks an advertisement strategy, it poses an immediate threat of visual landscape harm along Moor Lane.

Left unregulated, this use will cause a proliferation of roadside clutter, such as temporary banners, promotional A-boards, event flags, and carved wooden signs, to guide unfamiliar visitors to the site. This cumulative clutter introduces an uncharacteristic, highly commercialised aesthetic into a sensitive rural landscape where the street scene should be preserved. To safeguard the area, any authorised temporary event signage must be strictly bound by a mandatory mechanism requiring immediate removal the moment an activity concludes.

8. Internal Contradiction Around Core Policy 48 (CP48)

The applicant relies heavily on Wiltshire Core Policy 48 regarding the conversion and re-use of rural buildings. Yet, much of the proposed use is open-land activity and involves new operational development, including the erection of a yurt, new composting toilet blocks, and a 10-car parking lot. The statement itself undermines this by conceding that 'CP48 would normally avoid new structures.' By introducing major new elements rather than a simple building conversion, the proposal directly conflicts with the strict countryside protection intent of the policy.

Should the Council be minded to grant permission, we request that stringently worded planning conditions be attached to safeguard the area.

Requested Planning Conditions

To protect the area from noise pollution, highways danger, and unmitigated commercial expansion, we request that the following strict, legally binding conditions be attached to any approval:

1. Strict Use Limitation and Land Restoration: The use of the land and structures shall be strictly limited to the low-intensity nature-based education and wellness sessions detailed in the Planning Statement, excluding any other Sui Generis uses such as weddings, parties, commercial venue hire, or public festivals. Upon permanent cessation of this specific use, the yurt and toilet blocks shall be completely removed and the land restored to its former agricultural condition.

2. Strictly Enforced Operating Hours: No activities shall take place on-site, and no visitors shall be permitted access, outside the hours of 09:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday, and 10:00 to 16:00 on Saturdays, with absolutely no operation permitted on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

3. No Evening Events or Commercial Hire: Commercial venue hire, weddings, private parties, and evening functions must be explicitly prohibited.

4. Absolute Ban on Amplified Sound: No amplified music, public address systems, microphones, or external speakers shall be permitted within the yurt or anywhere on the wider open land at any time.

5. Cap on Visitor Numbers and Event Frequency: Maximum daily visitor occupancy must be strictly capped (e.g., a maximum of 15 persons at any one time), with a mandatory logbook maintained for Council inspection.

6. No Overnight Stays: Overnight stays, camping, glamping, or residential occupation of the yurt or land must be strictly prohibited.

7. Strict Parking Cap and Management Plan: On-site parking must be permanently capped at the proposed 10 spaces. A comprehensive Parking Management Plan must be mandated to ensure no visitor vehicles park on the shared access verges or obstruct the right of way or bridlepath.

8. Total Restriction on External Lighting: To protect local wildlife and rural dark skies, no external lighting, floodlighting, or automated security lights shall be installed on the yurt, toilet block, parking area, existing structures or external area.

9. Control of Signage and Immediate Removal Rule: No permanent commercial, promotional, directional, or wayfinding signage shall be erected at the site entrance, within the boundaries, or along the public highway verges of Moor Lane. Any temporary event-specific signage, including directional boards, temporary banners, promotional A-boards, flags, carved wooden signs, or wayfinding infrastructure, shall only be displayed on the day of the permitted activity and must be completely dismantled and removed from public view within 2 hours of the conclusion of that specific activity/event.

10. No Additional Structures: No further temporary or permanent structures, structures disguised as "permitted development," or additional hardstanding shall be introduced beyond the single yurt and toilet block explicitly shown on the proposed plans.

11. Mandatory Travel Plan: A formal Green Travel Plan must be submitted and approved, detailing the secured, operational mechanisms for the proposed minibuss and car-sharing schemes.

12. Annual Review Mechanism: A temporary 12-month trial period condition should be considered to enable the Local Planning Authority to monitor traffic, noise, and neighbour complaints before a permanent use is established.

13. Absolute Prohibition of Alcohol: There shall be no commercial sale, retail supply, or organised public consumption of alcohol permitted anywhere within the application site boundaries at any time.

We trust that the planning department will critically evaluate the lack of empirical evidence supporting this application and act to protect our community from unmitigated development in the open countryside. The application is unacceptable for a number of reasons as set out in this letter and in its current form should not be accepted. If the Council are minded to grant permission, then it will be essential that strict conditions are imposed to control the use and the extent of the building operations.

Please formalise these comments on the planning portal and keep us informed of any updates, amended plans, or committee dates regarding this case.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Neel