

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2026/02717

Proposal: Full planning permission for residential development (Use Class C3) comprising 135 dwellings with associated private amenity space and car/cycle parking, a comprehensive landscaping scheme to include publicly accessibly amenity space, sustainable drainage features, new tree planting and associated works. Alterations to the existing Home Farm access from Boreham Road, including demolition of a section of boundary wall, and new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian routes through the site. All associated infrastructure works.

Site Address: Land at Home Farm, Boreham Road, Warminster

Case Officer: Russell Brown

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 27th April to the 12th May 2026 on the application webpage.

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (Abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Pre-Submission Draft 202-2038 (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)
- Warminster Neighbourhood Plan (Made March 2016) (abbreviated WNP)
- Warminster Neighbourhood Plan 2 (Regulation 14 consultation) (abbreviated WNP2)

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.

At Full Council on 19 May, the elected members of Wiltshire Council agreed to withdraw the emerging WLP. It will now be subject to a legal process to finalise its withdrawal - which is likely

to happen in July or August (2026). The said Plan has no material weight for the purposes of the application.

Observations

The application site comprises greenfield land located outside the Warminster settlement boundary, as defined in 2020. The site is not allocated within either the adopted neighbourhood plan or the emerging Wiltshire Council Local Plan (January 2023).

As such, the proposal conflicts with the spatial strategy of the development plan and should be regarded as speculative development.

The site has, however, been considered in the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan Review Site Assessment Report – Updated Final Report (June 2025) (WNPR). The current pre-application proposal exceeds the scale of development identified in the WNPR, which indicates a potential allocation of approximately 90 dwellings. Notwithstanding this, if the principle of development were to be accepted, the following comments are provided on the scheme.

The site was previously subject to application 16/10502/OUT for a development of similar scale, which was withdrawn. A more recent pre-application enquiry (ENQ/2025/01241) generated urban design comments that remain relevant to the current proposal, with key points referenced in this report.

Objection

The development proposals would not meet the high-quality design and place shaping requirements of CP57 for the following reasons:

Layout

- 1) The DAS states that ‘the settlement pattern is dominated by proximity to Warminster to the west’, however it also states that there are ‘*occasional isolated farmsteads scattered throughout the character area*’. This site being at the edge of the settlement and the open countryside presents a clear opportunity for a design response that positively reflects the local rural context.

The rural character of the area is defined by relatively narrow building depths, 1½ to 2-storey building heights, and an irregular pattern of farmsteads and small clusters arranged on varied plot shapes. In contrast, the proposed layout - characterised by regular street patterns, uniform plot dimensions and standardised house types - adopts a suburban development model that does not correspond to this established rural form.

To avoid reinforcing a suburbanised settlement edge, the scheme should instead pursue a looser, more fragmented arrangement that draws on local rural typologies, as illustrated by the example on NDG page 20 (top right). This approach would better integrate the development with both the proposed open spaces and the wider landscape setting.

Recommendation: As the site is highly visible and forms part of the settlement edge the design should more clearly reflect local rural character. A more sensitive response will require a comprehensive analysis of the surrounding context, supported by high-quality design precedents that demonstrate how rural typologies can be contemporarily interpreted.

- 2) The Movement Strategy shows shows a loop road which is in accordance with Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL) ‘what green looks like’ pages 16-17, however, the strategy relies heavily on cul-de-sacs, requiring reversing and turning movements at their ends for both domestic and refuse vehicles, and incorporates numerous bin collection points. This arrangement is likely to

result in operational inefficiencies, inconvenience for residents, and potential conflict between users.

Furthermore, the layout reflects the 'what red looks like' characteristics set out in BfHL (pp.18–19), rather than the 'what green looks like' principles (pp.16–17), which promote connected streets along the edges of development. The use of private drives limits permeability and reduces accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, contrary to these principles.

A continuous edge lane would be preferable in providing active frontages, improved connectivity, and a stronger relationship with the public realm.

Along more sensitive edges, particularly to the north and east, small rear parking courts could be considered as an alternative approach. This would enable a more appropriate relationship with the adjoining public open space (POS) without relying on private drives or continuous edge lanes.

In addition, Streets for a Healthy Life (SfHL) advises that the ends of cul-de-sacs or shared drives should be connected by surfaced pedestrian and cycle routes. This reflects BfHL 'what green looks like' guidance (p.17) on achieving 'edge-to-edge connectivity'. Several cul-de-sacs within the scheme do not currently comply with this advice.

Recommendation: Further consideration should be given to the treatment of development edges. Where possible, turning heads and private drives should be replaced with continuous edge lanes (notwithstanding point 1 above). Where this cannot be achieved, private drives should be connected by surfaced pedestrian and cycle paths to ensure adequate permeability and compliance with national design guidance.

- 3) In some locations, frontage car parking dominates the public realm, significantly limiting opportunities for meaningful landscaping and reducing the quality of the pedestrian environment. This approach reflects the 'red' examples in BfHL (pp. 72-73), where car-dominated layouts result in weaker streetscapes. It conflicts with the 'green' principles (pp. 70-71), which promote greener, healthier, and more visually attractive street environments and should therefore be reconsidered.

Recommendation: Frontage parking is generally mitigated through the provision of green relief spaces at a minimum rate of one planting bay for every four parking bays, however, where frontage parking is arranged in groups and footpath widths fall below the required minimum of 1.8 m, as set out in WDG Expectation 5.4.7, additional planting should be provided to the rear of parking bays to protect pedestrian comfort and improve the public realm.

Landscaping

- 4) The proposed attenuation basin appears as a simple grassed depression with an engineered character, lacking the naturalistic and multi-functional qualities expected of integrated landscape features. This design presents a poor visual impression and does not meet the expectations of CP57 (ii).

In accordance with WDG expectations 6.3 and 6.5, attenuation features should be designed to blend into the landscape, avoiding the appearance of artificial depressions. A more appropriate approach would distribute water volumes across the site using a combination of wetlands, rain gardens, small ponds, and permeable surfaces.

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.

Recommendation: Revise the drainage strategy to ensure full compliance with DEFRA SuDS National Standards (June 2025) and align with WDG expectations for green and blue infrastructure. Incorporate BfHL principles by introducing naturalistic features such as rain gardens, swales, and wetlands to enhance visual quality, biodiversity, and site character.

- 5) Wiltshire is part of the recently created Western Forest which is a new National Forest for the nation whose aims and objectives are to substantially increase canopy cover across its geographical area. The aims and objectives of National Forests are planning consideration under para 152 of the NPPF (2024).

Recommendation: To support the objectives of the Western Forest, comply with NPPF paragraph 152, and strengthen integration with the wider landscape, woodland planting should be introduced along the northern, eastern and southern boundary and within the adjacent open spaces. This will soften the settlement edge, enhance biodiversity, and create a more natural transition to the surrounding countryside.

- 6) As highlighted in the pre-application Urban Design consultation response, the design concept plans within the DAS illustrate a wide and continuous landscape corridor along the eastern edge of the site. However, the Site Layout shows a landscape buffer between the site and Home Farm and Bishopstrow Court that is inconsistent in width, significantly narrower, and visually fragmented, with a more suburban character.

At its narrowest point, the corridor is reduced to approximately 8 metres in width, which undermines its function as an effective buffer and transition to the rural setting and Home Farm and Bishopstrow Court.

This issue could be addressed by omitting plots 1 to 8 and shifting the spine road further west to create a more generous offset. While this would result in a reduction in housing numbers, it would provide a more appropriate sense of separation.

Recommendation: Reconsider the design of the eastern landscape corridor to align with the aspirations of the design concept plans, ensuring a wider, more continuous, and better-defined buffer to Home Farm and Bishopstrow Court

Character

- 7) Character areas should be clearly distinctive and legible. WDG 5.2.10 emphasises the importance of using built form, enclosure, and both hard and soft landscaping to reinforce hierarchy within streets and open spaces. Similarly, *Building for a Healthy Life* (BFHL) advises that streets with clearly differentiated identities are more effective than loosely defined 'character areas'.

While the Design and Access Statement (DAS) identifies three character areas, there is limited differentiation between them. The proposed plan form and resulting built form are largely uniform, with variation primarily restricted to minor material changes. This results in a homogenous suburban character rather than a set of clearly defined and distinguishable places.

A more robust analysis of local vernacular and contextual character is required. This should include a detailed assessment of existing built form, landscape structure, and architectural precedents, and should directly inform the design approach within each character area.

For example, the established character of The Dene to the west is defined by long runs of terraced housing set within relatively generous plots, with deep front and rear gardens. While individually modest, this pattern creates a strong and recognisable character. This contrasts significantly with the dispersed, rural form of development at The Glaze and Home Farm to the east, where buildings are arranged more loosely within a well-treed landscape setting. This distinction is not meaningfully

reflected in the proposed layout. The large eastern block, in particular, fails to respond to farmstead typologies and could be reconfigured into smaller clusters to better reflect this rural pattern.

The DAS states that the Village Core provides a transition from The Dene; however, no substantive analysis of The Dene is presented to justify this response. As a result, the proposed development does not convincingly reflect or reinterpret this context.

Similarly, the Green Edge character area is described as responding to the landscape setting, yet there is little evidence of how the identified farmstead patterns - such as occasional isolated buildings within a dispersed landscape - have influenced the layout or form of development. Overall, the limited appreciation and application of local character has resulted in a generic suburban form, which does not adequately respond to its edge-of-settlement context or the transition to rural landscape.

Recommendations

- Undertake a detailed character analysis of the surrounding context, including The Dene, The Glaze, Home Farm, and Bishopstrow Court.
 - Redefine character areas to reflect clear and meaningful differences in layout, density, scale, and landscape structure.
 - Reconfigure the eastern part of the site to reflect farmstead principles, including smaller building clusters and stronger integration with landscape.
 - Strengthen the transition between urban and rural edges through variations in enclosure, plot structure, and planting strategy.
- 8) Low stone front boundary walls are a defining feature of the historic character of this part of Wiltshire and are particularly prominent along Boreham Road and other historic local streets. Their incorporation within the Green Edge and along the primary route would reinforce local distinctiveness and help integrate the proposed development sensitively within its established context, in accordance with national and local design guidance.

The proposed low stone walls present an opportunity to incorporate natural stone, as referenced in the DAS but omitted from the Materials Strategy Plan. This would assist in anchoring the development more appropriately within its surrounding context.

Recommendation: Strengthen the character and sense of enclosure of the Green Edge and primary route through the inclusion of low stone boundary walls at key entrance points and along the frontages of dwellings.

Appearance

- 9) Some street/street corner return elevations and street/open space corner return elevations have attractively placed and proportioned windows utilising house types that are consciously designed for this purpose (Blemmere and Bowyer for example), but there are the following exceptions below. These would represent 'what red looks like' BfHL (pp 54-55) rather than the preferred 'what green looks like' (pp 52-53), and WDG expectation 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'*.
- Reedmaker – has either ground or first floor WC window only
 - Watchmaker – first floor WC only

The following house types do not incorporate side windows, leading to blank gable elevations addressing the public realm. This is contrary to the principles of high-quality place-making, which require active frontages and passive surveillance.

- Luthier

- Philosopher
- Baker
- Tillman
- Draftsman

The Coppersmith housetype has not been included within the housetype pack.

Recommendation: In order to comply with WDG 4.2.8, the return elevations of the above house types should be redesigned as active and attractive frontages, with habitable room windows provided. This approach would improve the visual quality of the proposed development and strengthen natural surveillance of the adjoining public realm.

- 10) It is unclear from the submitted information whether the proposed landscape buffers/ecological corridors along the site boundaries adjoining the rear gardens of existing dwellings are intended to be publicly accessible or gated to restrict access. Unrestricted public access in these locations could result in security and privacy impacts for neighbouring and new residential properties.

Recommendation: Where landscape buffers/ecological corridors adjoining residential boundaries are intended to be gated or otherwise access-restricted, this should be clearly indicated on the submitted plans.

Materials

- 11) The Site Layout Plan indicates a variety of surface materials aligned with the proposed street tables, cross-over locations, parking bays, and private drives shown in distinct colours or materials. However, the Surfaces Strategy plan shows most surfaces as tarmacadam, resulting in extensive areas of impervious surfacing. This approach reflects the “red” solution shown in Building for a Healthy Life BfHL, pp. 72-73), rather than the preferred “green” approach illustrated on pages 70-71. Further guidance within *Streets for a Healthy Life* (SfHL) and Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG) Expectation 5.6.1 also encourages varied surface treatments to create attractive, safe and legible street environments.

Recommendation: To address this discrepancy, all parking bays, traffic-calming tables, shared surfaces, cross-overs, footways/cycleways and private drives should ideally use permeable block paving. This would provide a clear visual contrast with tarmacadam, enhance character and legibility, deliver SuDS benefits by reducing surface water runoff, and contribute to a more attractive and sustainable public realm. An example of this approach is shown in the bottom-left image on BfHL page 70.

- 12) WDG paragraph 9.3.5 states that “the interface between a private rear plot boundary and an adjacent public or shared space (including highways, public open space (POS) and parking courts) should generally use robust masonry walls or decorative metal or timber railings, as opposed to close-boarded or panel fencing.”

The submitted Materials Plan does not accord with this expectation, as it indicates fencing along some interfaces including plots 15-16. This form of boundary treatment is not considered appropriate where private rear gardens adjoin public or shared spaces and fails to meet the design expectations set out within the WDG.

In addition, it is preferred that side plot boundaries where stone is the primary facing material are formed by stone walls, reflecting the material proposed for the main dwellings.

Recommendation: To ensure compliance with WDG paragraph 9.3.5, all boundaries interfacing with public or shared spaces should be revised to comprise robust masonry wall treatments, with the Materials Plan amended accordingly.

Design Review

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the importance of design review in securing high quality development. Accordingly, major development proposals are encouraged to undergo independent design review at an early stage of the design process. The NPPF states that significant weight should be given to designs that “help to raise the standard of design more generally in an area”, with the draft revised NPPF proposing to increase this to substantial weight. Where a scheme has been subject to independent review and endorsement and can demonstrate how the proposal will raise design standards within the locality, this may attract significant weight in the planning balance.

Where a scheme has undergone independent design review, the Council will take the panel's recommendations into account as part of its assessment and decision-making process. The Council's Urban Design Team can provide further advice on design review options and the value this can add to the development process.