

**FULL PLANNING APPLICATION.
CASE OFFICER REPORT**

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2025/09184
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full Planning Application
SITE ADDRESS:	Trowbridge Fire Station, Hilpertons Road, Trowbridge, BA14 7J.
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Retrospective application for the installation/siting of a portacabin with dimensions: 14.8m(L) x 4.2m(W) x 3m(H) to support training operations, to include boundary and landscaping works.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks retrospective permission for the permanent siting of a mobile office portacabin being utilised as office accommodation for the training of the fire crew. The structure is in place, but its use has not commenced.

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The site is part of the active Trowbridge Fire Station, located off Hilpertons Road in the Principal Settlement of Trowbridge and the office portacabin is located to the east of the site.

The fire station is an established service facility and contains the necessary training equipment required by the fire crews, including a nearby high-level training tower. To the immediate east of the site are a number of residential properties along Hilpertons Road, to the south lies Furlong Gardens, where there is more residential development, and to the west lies the Ambulance Station. To the north of the site lies the main spinal highway route serving Trowbridge from Hilpertons. The site is part located within the Trowbridge Conservation Area and is also within the grey zone of the adopted Trowbridge Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy (TWBMS). The plan snippet below taken from the council’s system shows these described features, with Conservation Area being coloured green. The yellow cross marks the location of the portacabin office.



RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
N/A

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Wiltshire Core Strategy:

- Core Policy 29 Spatial Strategy for Trowbridge.
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping.
- Core Policy 58 Ensuring conservation of the historic environment.
- Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.
- Core Policy 51: Landscape.
- Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment.
- Core Policy 61: Transport and New Development.
- Core Policy 64: Demand Management.
- Core Policy 67: Flood Risk.

Trowbridge emerging Neighbourhood Plan (Status: Designation of Trowbridge Neighbourhood Area).

Wiltshire Design Guide: Appendix D – Design Guidance for Householder extensions

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide

Emerging Wiltshire Local Plan:

At Full Council on 19 May 2026, the elected members of Wiltshire Council agreed to withdraw the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan. The said Plan has no material weight for the purposes of this application.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The consultation process was undertaken twice to accommodate the proposals.

First Consultation Process. 02.12.2025

Trowbridge Town Council: Objected on the grounds of design and appearance.

Representations.

Five comments of support and objection were received, raising the following points:

-Supportive in principle of the training use of the portacabin, request that the fenceline be extended to afford privacy for residents at Furlong Gardens. Trees removed in the past and so there is an overlooking end window within the portacabin.

-No.28 Hilpert Rd, disappointed the portacabin is in place, contrary to Conservation Area and Listed Buildings policy, considerations consist of overlooking and the bad state of maintenance of the structure. Complaints of not being neighbour notified were also received.

-Historic England not consulted, impact on amenity of the two side windows overlooking the rear of properties along Hilpert Road.

-Inconsistencies of stated size of the portacabin and drainage concerns. Inaccuracies within size of the portacabin.

Second Consultation Process. 12.02.2026.

Trowbridge Town Council. No objections and commented as follows.

'No objection, with revised plans addressing previous objections.

Representations.

Four comments of support and objection were received, raising the following points:

- Resident at Furlong Gardens was supportive of the scheme and thanked both the planning officer and Fire Station Building Control Officer for their work on this matter.
- No.28 Hilperton Rd maintains objections, disappointed the portacabin is still in place, contrary to Conservation Area and Listed Buildings policy, considerations of overlooking and bad state of maintenance of the structure. Complained of not being neighbour notified and reports that the suggested planting would be too slow in growth and requests a faster growing species of tree.
- No.27 Hilperton Rd appreciates the personal visit and time taken by the Fire Station officer to visit their property and to discuss the areas of concern. Neighbours consider the use of Prunus Lusitanica as inadequate and would prefer Pleached Trees instead.
- Use of electronic alarm sound more intrusive than the previous bell sound.
- Areas of tree growth to be maintained by the fire service.

PRINCIPLE OF THE PROPOSAL.

The principle of the proposed scheme is acceptable for the reasons as discussed below.

ASSESSMENT

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 adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015).

Design and Impact upon the upon the character and context of the area.

Core Policy 57 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that all new development is of high design quality, reflecting local context, character, and distinctiveness.

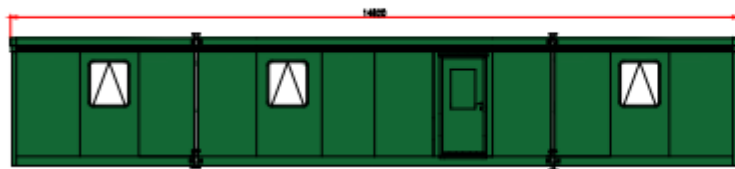
The proposals can be viewed within the plan snippets taken from the submitted plans:



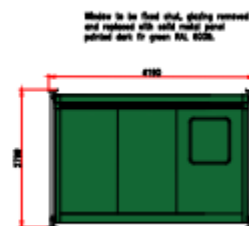
Location Plan



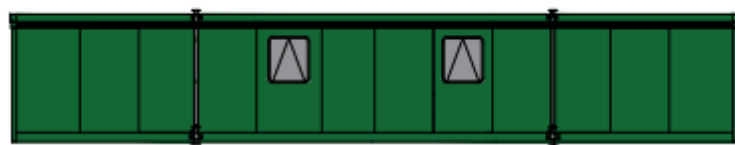
Proposed Site Plan



ELEVATION 1 (WEST)



ELEVATION 2 (SOUTH)



ELEVATION 3 (EAST)



ELEVATION 4 (NORTH)

Proposed Elevations & colour of mobile office portacabin.

This mobile office portacabin application is retrospective with the building already being in place, located as shown above in the proposed site plan. Whilst it is on site its use has not commenced and the reason the structure was brought on site prior to the granting of permission, was explained by the fire service as it had to be removed from its previous location at the fire station in Devizes within a tight timescale.

The design of the portacabin is that of a standardised rectangular flat roofed structure, currently having a grey finished appearance, which would be re-finished in a fir green colour as shown above.

This colour has been chosen so as to not be so visually prominent within its surroundings.

The overall condition of the building is in good order and is not: *“old, dirty and covered in moss. It is in very poor condition”* as has been commented on by a neighbour.

The following officer photograph shows its overall condition:



The building would be used as office space for the training of the fire crew and also as an area where the crew could change their clothes in privacy. Whilst the northeast section of the fire station is within the Conservation Area, the building is sited outside the Conservation Area and is set within the context of an active fire station which is in everyday use.

At the time of the case officer's site visit there were various pieces of fire training facilities and equipment on site; this included a high-level training tower not too distant from the subject office building.

The application proposal would also complete the installation of a timber high level fence line towards the southern aspect of the site, together with the planting of tree / landscaping, to collectively assimilate the development into its surroundings. The use *Prunus Lusitanica* is the recommended and preferred choice by the Council's Tree Officer.

Therefore, in summary, having regard to the above, the proposal complies with the design principles set out in Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Appendix D of the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Amenity Effects

Point vii of Core Policy 57 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that developments do not adversely affect neighbouring properties. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraph 135(f), stresses that planning decisions should ensure developments provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The aspect of amenity is an important consideration for the portacabin, and in particular its outlook on the rear of properties backing on from Furlong Gardens. The portacabin has a window within its rear door and although the use of the portacabin would be for non-residential use, there would be some potential to effect neighbouring amenities, consequently the glass is to be removed, and a solid metal panel would be put in its place. Likewise, the part constructed new fenceline would be extended across the width of rear gardens with proposed tree landscaping as previously discussed, also taking place.

The portacabin plans show two side windows on the east side elevation that have the potential to overlook the rear gardens of numbers 27 and 28 Hilpert Road. These two windows shall be subject to a planning condition to secure the installation of obscure glazing to safeguard these neighbour's amenities.

The proposed change of colour for the external walling and the proposed landscaping around the portacabin would also help the visual amenities and outlook from numbers 27 and 28 Hilpert Road.

It is noted that the separation distance between this office building and No.27 is 30 metres, which is a sufficient distance so as to not harmfully impact on amenities.

The applicant's commitment to extend the boundary fencing is welcomed.

The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 57 point vii. in respect of safeguarding residential amenity and Appendix D of the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Highway Matters.

Core Policy 57 (xiv) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development must meet the requirements of Core Policy 61. This policy requires proposals to be capable of being served by safe access to the highway network. Core Policy 64 seeks to ensure compliance with parking standards set out in the Local Transport Plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraph 115 and 116, requires that development proposals do not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

The proposed development would continue to use the established site access which would not be altered and would not have any adverse impact on highway safety. Adequate parking and turning provision are provided within the site and such access arrangements are acceptable.

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Core Policies 57 (xiv), 61 and 64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the NPPF, and the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan.

Heritage Impacts

From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Section 66 requires that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Act requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings are conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance and encourages proposals which improve the condition of heritage assets at risk.

There are listed buildings to the north of the site which include numbers 27 and 28, with the portacabin being 30 metres away from the nearest listed building at number 27. Whilst visible from this nearest heritage asset, the portacabin is sited in an appropriate location within the fire service facility and is read within the context of a working fire station and the other associated fire safety and training facilities and equipment that are on site – and the office would support the essential fire training service that represents a very significant public benefits that would outweigh any wider setting harm the portacabin causes to the nearby listed buildings and/or conservation area.

The stated mitigation measures as previously described would reduce the impacts further.

All of the stated mitigation measures as detailed within the submitted plans, would need to be conditioned; and that any visual harm impacting the stated heritage assets would be materially offset by the public benefits in accordance with Paragraph 215 of the NPPF which states that:

'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.

There is no legislative requirement to consult Historic England as the listed buildings are Grade II listed and not Grade II star or Grade I.

Conservation Area Impacts

The NPPF, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 and Core Policy 58 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy highlights the fact that the Local Planning Authority has a duty to pay special attention to the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The portacabin is not located within the Trowbridge Conservation Area but is located adjacent to it.

Overall, it is appraised that the portacabin would have a neutral impact on the character and setting of the Conservation Area, following careful consideration being given to CP58 of the Core Strategy, the NPPF and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990, the siting and use of the portacabin would not lead to harm to the nearby heritage asset and that any such harm would be substantively outweighed given its association with an essential public service, which manifests as a significant public benefits that would outweigh any such harm.

Drainage Matters.

The applicant's agent has confirmed that the portacabin would not be connected to the mains sewage system due to the nature and infrequent use of the building. In terms of roof water and surface water run-off, such water would be channelled to existing storm drains.

Ecology Impact Adopted WCS CP50 requires no net loss of biodiversity on site. The site is located within the grey hatched zone of the Trowbridge Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy Area. However, the proposed development is very modest in nature and considered unlikely to result in harm to bats or their habitat. It is also noted that there is no mechanism for significant effects from recreational pressure since the proposal is not for housing. Accordingly, the proposal is acceptable in this regard. As such, the development complies with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain. This application is exempt from the requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain under Schedule 7A, Section 4(2)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by the Environment Act 2021, because the proposal is subject to the de-minimis exemption.

Other Matters.

A neighbour at No.28 Hilperton Road has commented that she did not receive a neighbour notification letter during the consultation process. No. 28 Hilperton Road does not share a boundary with the application site and was not a notifiable party.

Comments were also received in regard to the Fire Station's use of an electronic alarm with the sound being more intrusive than the previous alarm by all accounts. This comment is not however a material consideration for this office / portacabin proposal.

CONCLUSION

The negotiated development is acceptable in terms of its design, scale, and relationship with the surrounding area including the fire station. It would not result in any unacceptable harm to the character of the locality, the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, or the interests of highway safety, heritage, or ecology.

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Local Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION: That retrospective planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions.