

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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

Date: 06.07.2026

Application No: PL/2026/03045

Proposal: Outline planning application for the erection of up to 49 dwellings with associated access, public open space, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure (all matters reserved except access).

Site Address: Land off Damask Way, Warminster

Case Officer: Steven Sims

Reference:

Application files indexed 29/06/26

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)
- 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 2026) (referenced in the NPPF) (abbreviated BfHL)
- Streets for a Healthy Life: A companion guide to Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England) (abbreviated SFHL)
- Sustainable Placemaking Guidance, Parking, What works where: 2nd edition (Homes England 2026)

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 to 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.

Objection

Reasons

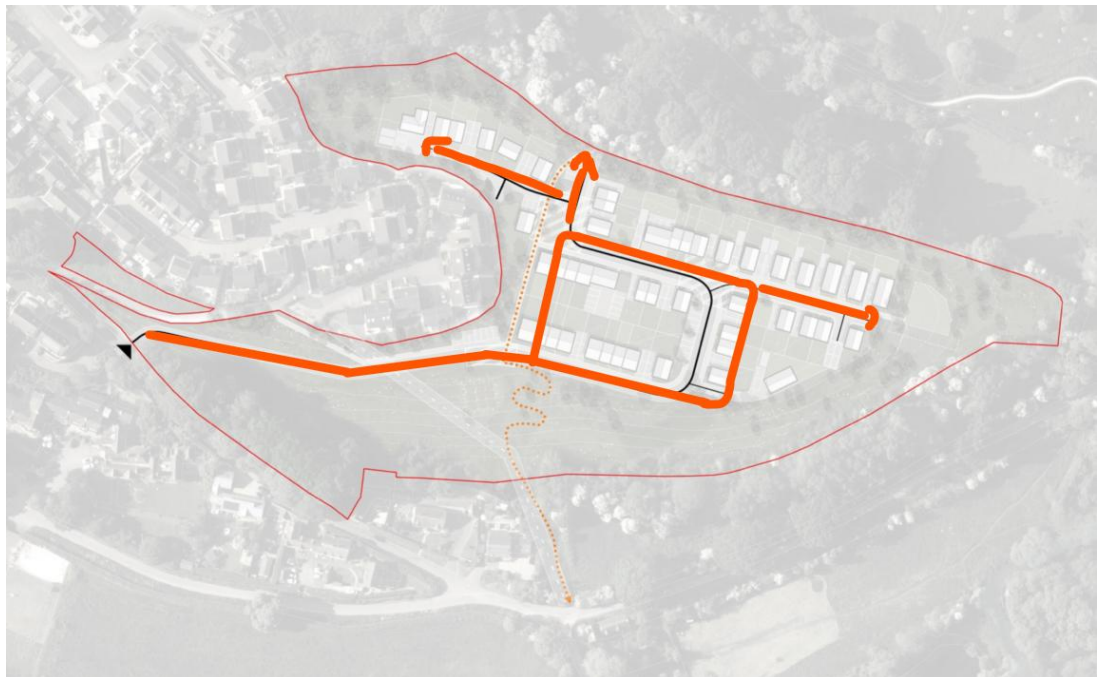
- 1) The generally straight alignment of the streets is welcomed as it improves legibility in developments, however, concerns remain regarding the overall movement structure.

The illustrative masterplan is largely based on a branching cul de sac arrangement with a number of terminating streets and private drives. Several of these terminate beyond the view of the principal route through the site. This approach is contrary to Wiltshire Design Guide paragraph 5.1.8, which advises that cul de sacs should be short and that their ends should be visible from a through route.

The arrangement also raises concerns in respect of Core Policy 57, particularly relating to legibility and ease of movement. The street hierarchy is weakened by the frequency with which routes terminate rather than forming connected streets. The resulting layout relies heavily on turning heads and communal bin collection points.

Building for a Healthy Life identifies disconnected street patterns and excessive use of turning heads as examples of 'what red looks like'. By contrast, 'what green looks like' promotes connected and permeable movement networks.

It is recommended that opportunities are explored to create a more connected layout. A loop road arrangement is one possible solution and may assist in improving navigation and strengthening the street hierarchy. Please see markup below.



- 2) The proposed street geometry appears to incorporate a number of large corner radii. Building for a Healthy Life identifies large corner radii as an example of poor street design as they can encourage higher vehicle speeds and reduce pedestrian priority.

It is recommended that tighter radii are introduced where practicable. This would help reinforce low vehicle speeds and create a more pedestrian friendly environment. Raised tables, and locally narrowing carriageways as well as other traffic calming measures should also be considered throughout the scheme.

- 3) BfHL (p.18) discourages use of private drives, which can frustrate pedestrian and cycle movement, particularly along site edges. Clear justification for why these are being used should be provided. If required, guidance in SfHL for Edge Lanes and Private driveways should be consulted to ensure a high quality design solution in line with CP57.
- 4) Although the Design and Access Statement describes a hierarchy of primary and secondary streets, this is not clearly expressed in the indicative masterplan, where there are two types of similar width and alignment. The street trees are welcomed where shown however trees should not be limited to the where shown alone and are encouraged on all the streets unless there are clear justifiable reasons why this would be inappropriate. Please see NPPF section 136. It is worth noting that the preference is also for trees in the public realm and not private front gardens.

Trees also play a positive role in climate mitigation shading both homes and the public realm.

More information is required to demonstrate the streets contributing to the character and place in accordance with WDG section 5 Movement or BfHL 'what green looks like' pages 62 and pages 78-83, 'Well defined streets and spaces' and 'Healthy Streets'.

- 5) The retention of the Public Right of Way is welcomed, however it currently appears to function as a narrow movement corridor rather than a meaningful public space. This feels like a missed opportunity and the route could become a principal green spine through the development. This would improve legibility, strengthen ecological connectivity and create a more distinctive and memorable place in line with BfHL guidance (please see p.55 'A Memorable Character' and p.79 'Healthy streets').

The applicant refers to an amphibian corridor, although limited information has been provided on how this would function in practice. It is recommended that the Public Right of Way and ecological corridor are brought together into a wider green and blue corridor. This should incorporate habitat creation, pedestrian routes and sustainable drainage features.

Please see example below of a green corridor in Cambridge in which SUDs are integrated between homes with pedestrian links across. It is worth noting play spaces or small play areas could be incorporated into the green corridor also.



- 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. In line with other points regarding the PROW and need to define the street hierarchy, it is recommended further SUDs are integrated into the streets.
- 7) The LAP is welcomed. However, consideration should be given to locating the play area closer to the Public Right of Way and principal pedestrian route. This could improve accessibility, increase activity within the green corridor and strengthen its role as a focal point within the development.

The proposed location of the play area appears somewhat peripheral to the main pedestrian desire lines and areas of activity. As a result, there is a risk that it may become underused and fail to function as a well integrated community space.

Places for sitting can provide social opportunities also which would be of the benefit of the placemaking for the site. There are strong opportunities for seating which would have great views also on this site.

- 8) The nature of proposed boundary treatments is currently unclear. Where plots front public spaces, streets or pedestrian routes, boundaries should be robust and attractive. In accordance with the Wiltshire Design Guide, masonry walls are generally preferred over extensive lengths of close boarded fencing in prominent locations.

A boundary treatment parameter plan should be submitted which identifies the extent, type and materiality of all boundary treatments across the scheme.



Side gables include large windows to habitable rooms. Boundary walls include perforated brickwork. The Tannery, Holt.

- 9) The use of a parking court is welcomed to limit on street parking however the access to it is through a flat over garage arrangement which comes with design challenges that need to be addressed.

Whilst FOGs are not inherently unacceptable, *Parking: What Works Where* advises that they should be used sparingly due to their 'inherent risk of providing no active frontage or surveillance on the ground floor' (p.52). The guidance supports their use primarily within narrow mews streets and cautions against long rows of FOGs, blank ground floor frontages and garage-dominated elevations (pp.52-58). Furthermore the opposite side of the road facing FOGs should have homes with active frontages, i.e windows and doors.

It is recommended that FOGs in this scheme are relocated to quieter, more secondary streets and active frontage should be provided opposite. Large open voids should also be avoided on the ground floor.

With regards to the Flats over the accessway to the parking court, it is recommended that other design solutions are explored to provide access. One possible solution could be to access through gaps in the buildings which would then allow for more active frontage at ground levels to the street.

Please see example from Bradford on Avon below.



If relocating the entrance is not possible, clear justification should be provided. In such circumstances, the outline proposals should identify a range of design measures to ensure that flats over garages don't make a negative contribution to the street scene. Where garages serve the flats above, garage doors should utilise materials and detailing consistent with those used elsewhere within the development in order to create a cohesive appearance and discourages undercroft areas from becoming storage spaces. Balconies above garages are also encouraged as they can increase natural surveillance and create a more active frontage in accordance with *Parking: What Works Where*.

With regards to rear parking courts PWWW also has relevant guidance, including the need for planting and trees every 4 bays as well as the need for high quality surface materials and boundary treatments (p.59 PWWW). These design features should be included in the scheme and design quality should be captured on parameter plans.

Conclusion

Overall, whilst the proposal includes several positive elements which are welcomed, there remain significant urban design concerns regarding the illustrative masterplan. In particular, the proposed street network relies heavily on cul de sacs, private drives and turning heads, resulting in a movement structure that lacks the level of connectivity, legibility and permeability expected by Core Policy 57, the Wiltshire Design Guide and Building for a Healthy Life. The distinction between primary and secondary streets is not currently well expressed and further work is required to demonstrate how the movement network, public realm and landscape framework will contribute to a distinctive sense of place.

There are also opportunities to strengthen the role of the Public Right of Way as a multifunctional green corridor, better integrate sustainable drainage within streets and public spaces, provide a more prominent location for the play area and secure a robust approach to boundary treatments and parking design. Further information is also required regarding the design principles that will guide the use of private drives, parking courts and flats over garages to ensure a high quality and active street environment is achieved.

There remains scope for these matters to be addressed through revisions to the plans. The applicant should demonstrate more clearly how the scheme will deliver a connected, attractive and distinctive place that responds positively to the expectations of Core Policy 57, the Wiltshire Design Guide and Building for a Healthy Life.