

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION

CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/02925
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Manor House Golf Club, Whitegates, Castle Combe, Chippenham, SN14 7JW
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Insertion of pair of external doors into an external wall of the Golf Club House, to serve Buggy Store. Localised external hard-landscaped alterations to suit new door arrangement. Conversion of two external steps into a ramp, including minor localised alterations to retained low wall, to suit new ramp arrangement.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

PROPOSAL

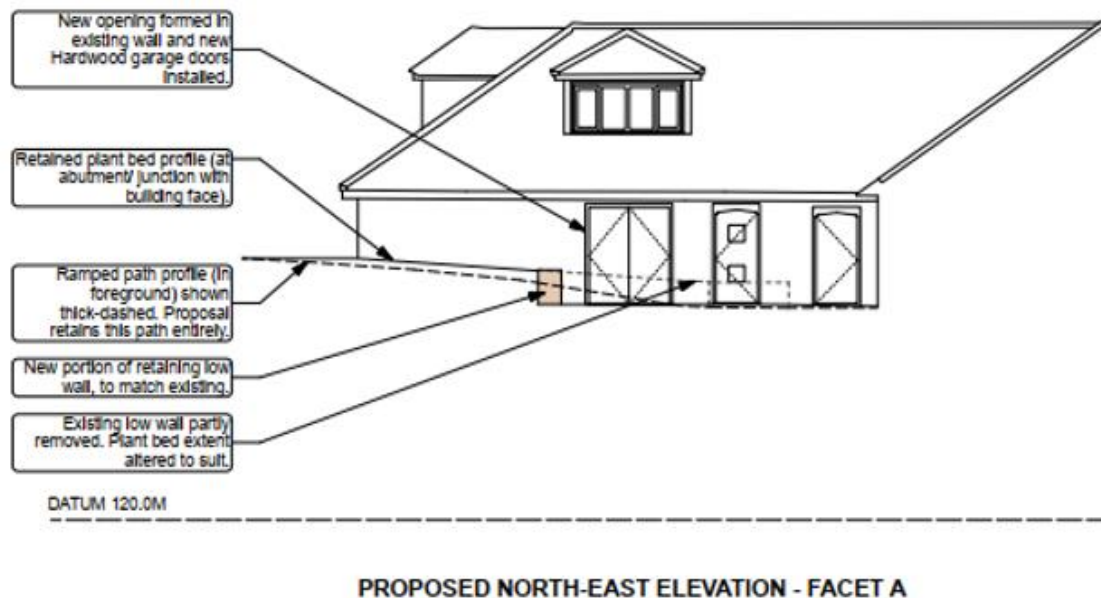
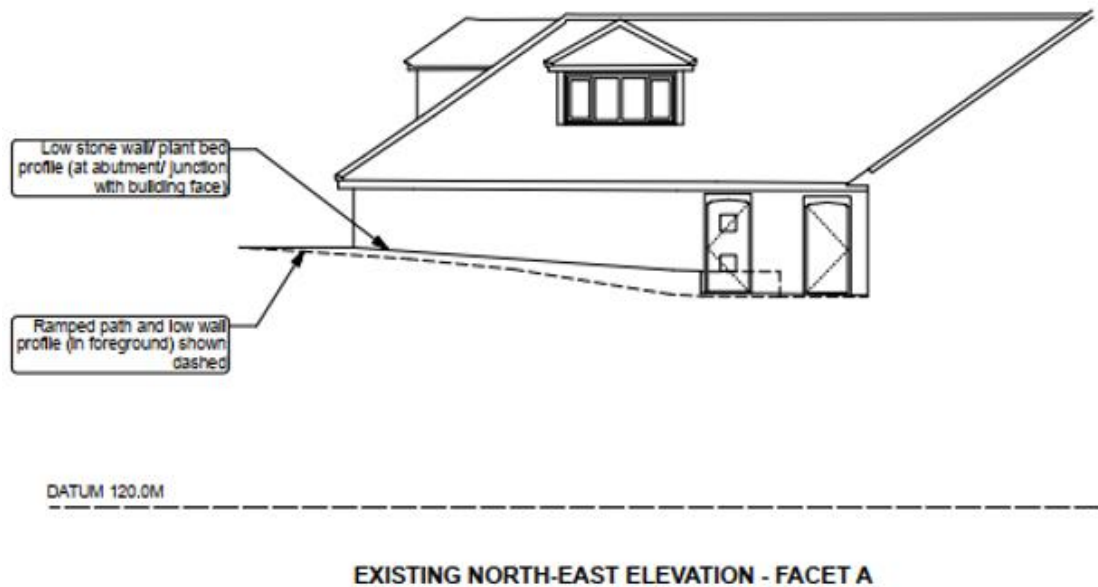
The application relates to the Manor House Golf Club, Whitegates, Castle Combe. The application seeks planning permission for alterations to the existing golf club house in connection with the buggy store, and the works are therefore confined to the immediate vicinity of the buggy store and associated pedestrian access route.

Specifically, the development comprises the formation of a new opening within an existing external wall and the installation of a pair of hardwood doors to provide direct access to the buggy store. Associated external works are proposed, including alterations to the adjacent hard surfacing and the replacement of existing steps with a ramp. Alterations are also proposed to an existing low stone wall and adjacent planting bed to accommodate the revised access arrangement. Extracts of the existing and proposed ground floor plans are below:

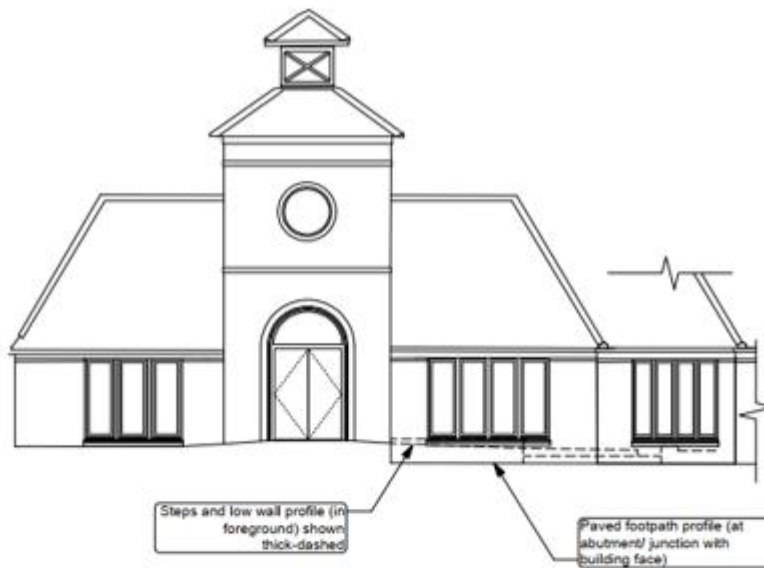


The submitted plans indicate that the new doors and wall alterations would utilise materials to match the existing building and surrounding features. No increase in floor space, changes to the use of the site, alterations to parking provision or changes to the existing access arrangements are proposed.

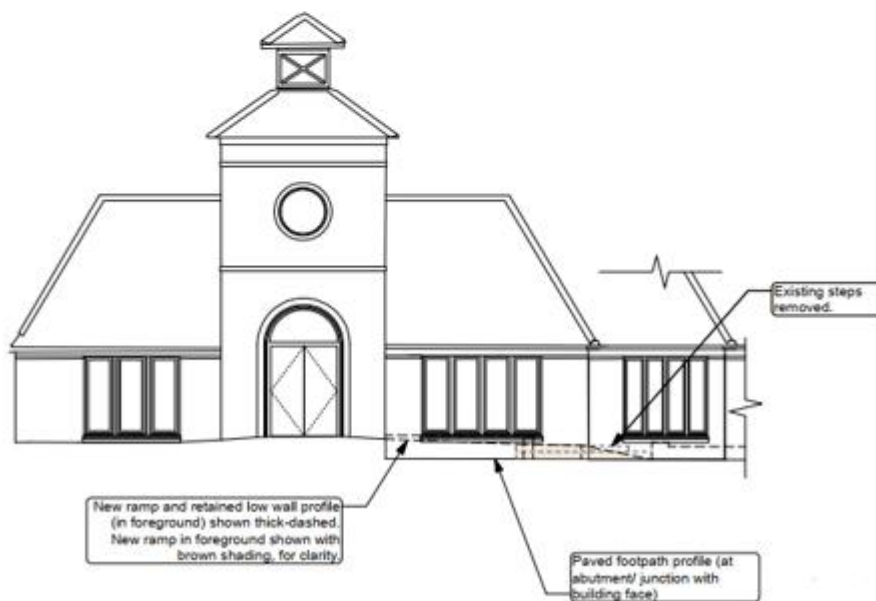
Below: Existing and Proposed NE elevations Facet A



Below: Existing and Proposed SE elevations Facet B:

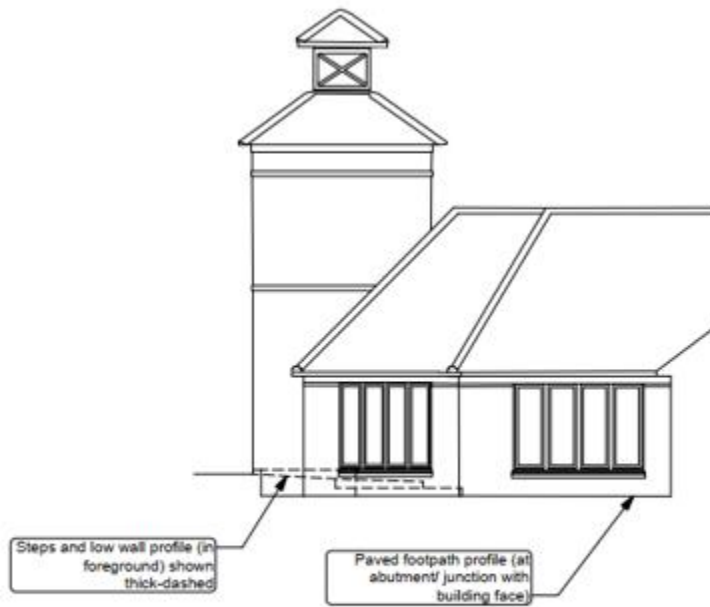


EXISTING SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION - FACET B

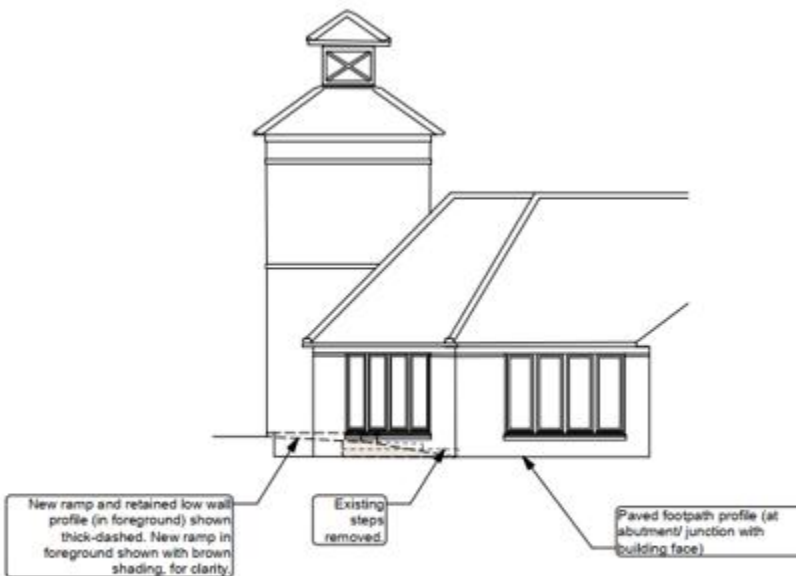


PROPOSED SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION - FACET B

Below: Existing and Proposed NE elevation Facet C



EXISTING NORTH-EAST ELEVATION - FACET C



PROPOSED NORTH-EAST ELEVATION - FACET C

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site comprises part of the Manor House Golf Club at Whitegates, Castle Combe. The golf club lies to the north of Castle Combe and is accessed from the B4039, with the club house set approximately 380 metres from the public highway. The site is located within the Cotswolds National Landscape and outside of any settlement boundary and so is in the open countryside for the purposes of planning.

The club house is not a listed building, is not situated within a conservation area (the Castle Combe conservation area is shown with the green wash on the plan below) and is not adjacent to any listed buildings.

There are no public rights of way crossing the application site.

The site falls within the 2km Core Roost Buffer Zone associated with Lesser Horseshoe Bats and areas of Natural England Priority Habitat are present within the surrounding area – indicated by orange pattern on the plan below:



The building is surrounded by mature landscaping and trees, many of which are protected by being within the Conservation Area , with the result that the application site is not readily visible from the public highway or other publicly accessible locations.

The aerial photograph below shows the extent of tree screening around the site:



The site is located within Flood Zone 1 according to the Environment Agency's Flood Maps and is identified within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment as being at negligible risk from groundwater flooding. However, areas of surface water flood risk are shown in the vicinity of the club house, including around parts of the eastern side of the building.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is extensive planning history across the wider site (much of it relating to tree works), however there is no history that is relevant to the application now being considered.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Design Guide

Development Plan:

The development plan for Wiltshire comprises the *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)* (adopted January 2015) and any made neighbourhood plans, which remains the principal statutory planning document guiding development across the county. In line with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Though the development plan is considered as a whole, those parts deemed to be particularly relevant to this application are listed below:

The adopted *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)*, with particular regard to:

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy;
- Core Policy 10 Spatial Strategy for Chippenham Community Area;
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape;
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 67 Flood Risk;

Saved policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (NWLP)

- NE14 Trees, Site Features and the Control of New Development
- CF2 Leisure Facilities and Open Space

There is no Castle Combe Neighbourhood Plan at present.

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)

ISSUES

The main issues that need to be addressed in this case include:

- Whether the development is acceptable in principle (CP 1 and 2)
- Whether the scheme constitutes high quality design (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable impact upon the reasonable living conditions of the adjoining occupants (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable landscape impact (CP 51)
- Whether the site can be adequately drained without increasing flood risk elsewhere (CP 67)
- Whether there would be any harmful impacts upon protected species or priority habitats (CP 50)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Wiltshire Council Ecology: No objection

The Council's Ecology Officer reviewed the application and raised no objection to the proposed development. The Ecology Officer advised that the works are minor in nature and are largely confined to existing hardstanding, with approximately 16m² of bedding plants being lost. It was concluded that the proposal is unlikely to result in any significant adverse impacts on protected species or wildlife.

The Ecology Officer noted that the site lies within the Lesser Horseshoe Bat core roost buffer associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC). A test of likely significance was undertaken by Wiltshire Council under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that, having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal, including the absence of any loss of bat roosts, removal of bat habitat or additional external lighting, there is no mechanism for adverse effects on the Conservation Objectives of the SAC and the proposal can be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

The Ecology Officer also confirmed that the development falls below the de minimis threshold for Biodiversity Net Gain as it does not affect priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat with biodiversity value. As such, the mandatory biodiversity gain condition is not considered to apply to the proposal.

Castle Combe Parish Council: No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), the application was publicised by way of a site notice displayed near the site. No representations had been received at the time of writing.

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 Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration has also been given to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration in the assessment.

Principle of Development

Policy Context

Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy of the WCS establishes a hierarchy of settlements to guide where development should be focused. The policy prioritises growth in:

- Principal Settlements (e.g., Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge) – main focus for strategic growth.

- Market Towns – support local services and employment; suitable for sustainable development.
- Local Service Centres – smaller towns and villages with a range of services; limited development supported.
- Large and Small Villages – development should be limited and respond to local needs.
- Outside the defined settlements – development is strictly controlled and generally not supported unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy of the WCS sets out how development will be distributed and delivered across Wiltshire. The policy emphasises:

- Sustainable patterns of growth, reducing the need to travel and supporting local services.
- Development should be plan-led, aligning with the settlement strategy and supported by infrastructure.
- Windfall development (not allocated in plans) must still comply with the principles of sustainable development.
- Development outside settlement boundaries is generally not permitted, unless it meets specific policy exceptions (as set out in paragraph 4.25 of the WCS).

Together, CP1 and CP2 ensure that new development is strategically located, sustainable, and supports the character and function of Wiltshire's communities.

Assessment

The application site is located outside any defined settlement boundary and therefore lies within the countryside for the purposes of Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The proposal does not, however, seek the establishment of a new use, the expansion of the golf club into undeveloped land, nor the creation of additional built floor space of any significance. Rather, it comprises minor alterations to the existing golf club house and buggy store facilities, including the installation of a pair of doors and the replacement of existing steps with an access ramp.

The proposed works are directly associated with, and ancillary to, the lawful operation of the existing golf club. The development would take place within the established built form of the site and would not result in encroachment into the surrounding countryside. In principle, there is no objection to modest alterations of this nature to support the continued operation and accessibility of an existing recreational facility.

Saved Policy CF2 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan is also relevant, as the proposal relates to alterations to an existing leisure facility. The works would improve facilities ancillary to the existing golf club use and would not result in the loss or reduction of leisure facilities or open space. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with saved Policy CF2.

The acceptability of the proposal therefore rests primarily on its specific impacts, including its effects on the character and appearance of the area, the Cotswolds National Landscape, ecology, trees, flood risk and neighbouring amenity, rather than the principle of development itself.

Conclusion

Having regard to the limited scale and ancillary nature of the proposed works, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle. The development would support the continued use and operation of the existing golf club facility without resulting in unjustified development in the countryside. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the aims and objectives of Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy Context

Core Policy 57 of the WCS requires high-quality design that:

- Enhances local character.
- Responds to the natural, historic, and built environment.
- Retains important features (e.g., trees, hedges).
- Supports sustainable construction and compatibility with surrounding uses.
- Creates safe, legible, and accessible spaces.

Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises design that is:

- Visually attractive.
- Functionally effective.
- Contributes to the quality of the built environment.

The Wiltshire Design Guide encourages sensitivity to local character, materials, and architectural styles and supports modern living standards while maintaining aesthetic and functional quality.

Building for a Healthy Life Framework promotes healthy, inclusive, and sustainable places. The document encourages:

- Walkability.
- Access to green space.
- Active design principles for well-being.

Assessment

The proposed works comprise the installation of a pair of doors within an existing elevation of the golf club house, together with minor alterations to the adjacent hardstanding, low retaining wall and the replacement of steps with an access ramp. The submitted plans indicate that the new doors, walling and paving materials would match the existing building and surrounding features. The proposal is therefore sympathetic to the appearance of the existing building and would appear as a modest and integrated addition.

The works are limited in scale and confined to a small area adjacent to the existing buggy store. Whilst located on the front (eastern) elevation of the building, the golf club house is situated approximately 380 metres from the B4039 and is screened by existing mature trees and vegetation. The building is not readily visible from the public highway or other publicly

accessible viewpoints. As a result, the proposed development would have a very limited visual presence in the wider landscape.

The proposal would not alter the overall form, scale or character of the existing building and would preserve the established appearance of the golf club complex. Furthermore, the replacement of the existing steps with a ramp would improve accessibility to the buggy store and support inclusive access to the facility.

Conclusion

Having regard to its limited scale, appropriate design and use of matching materials, the proposal would not result in any unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the existing building or the surrounding area. The development is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the design objectives of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the guidance contained within the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Amenity

Policy Context

Core Policy 57 (Point vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to respect the amenity of existing occupants and ensure appropriate amenity levels for future residents.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraph 135, reinforces the need for development to provide a high standard of amenity for both existing and future users.

Assessment

The nearest residential properties are located within the Whitegates development approximately 175 metres from the application site. The proposal comprises minor alterations to an existing golf club facility, including the installation of a pair of doors, alterations to hardstanding, and the replacement of existing steps with a ramp. The development would not introduce any new use, materially intensify the existing use of the site, or generate additional noise, disturbance, overlooking, loss of privacy or overshadowing.

Given the separation distance to neighbouring residential properties and the limited nature of the proposed works, it is not considered that the proposal would adversely affect the amenities currently enjoyed by nearby occupiers.

Conclusion

The proposed development would not result in any unacceptable impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the amenity objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecology and Biodiversity

Policy Context

The ecological impact of development is a key planning consideration, especially for larger schemes. Proposals must assess and address potential effects on:

- Protected species
- Priority habitats
- Ecological networks
- Green and blue infrastructure

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Avoid harm to ecological assets.
- Deliver measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), in line with the Environment Act 2021.
- Support habitat restoration and connectivity.
- Integrate biodiversity into site design.

Assessment

The application site lies within the Lesser Horseshoe Bat Core Sustenance Zone associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and areas of Natural England Priority Habitat are present within the surrounding area. Given these ecological constraints, the Council's Ecology Officer was consulted on the application.

The Ecology Officer reviewed the proposal and raised no objection. It was noted that the proposed development is minor in nature, being confined largely to existing hardstanding and involving the loss of approximately 16m² of bedding plants. The Ecology Officer concluded that the works are unlikely to result in any significant adverse impacts on protected species or wildlife.

In relation to the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon SAC, Wiltshire Council undertook a Test of Likely Significance under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that, due to the scale and nature of the proposal, including the absence of any loss of bat roosts, removal of bat habitat or additional external lighting, there is no mechanism by which the development would adversely affect the Conservation Objectives of the SAC. The proposal was therefore screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

The Ecology Officer also advised that the proposal falls below the de minimis threshold for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain as it does not affect priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat with biodiversity value. Consequently, the statutory biodiversity gain condition is not considered to apply.

Conclusion

Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposed development, the Council's Ecology Officer has confirmed that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on protected species, habitats, ecological networks or the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon SAC. The

development is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the ecological objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Policy Context

Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Protect, conserve, and enhance landscape character and quality.
- Respect local distinctiveness, key views, and visual receptors.
- Give particular weight to impacts on National Landscapes and locally valued landscapes.

The Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (2024) promotes a context-led approach, encouraging integration with natural features and settlement patterns while avoiding visual intrusion.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) supports landscape protection through green infrastructure, habitat connectivity, and nature-based solutions.

The NPPF emphasises the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes, particularly those with scenic, historic, or ecological significance. Planning decisions should:

- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- Safeguard key views, local distinctiveness, and landscape settings.
- Ensure development is well-integrated into its surroundings and avoids visual intrusion, especially in sensitive or designated areas.

Landscape impact must be considered alongside biodiversity, heritage, and green infrastructure objectives, with mitigation measures encouraged where harm cannot be avoided.

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

Under Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, LPAs and other relevant authorities must now “seek to further” the statutory purposes of National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), replacing the previous duty to merely “have regard to” them.

This is an active duty, requiring authorities to take reasonable and proportionate steps to support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics of these designated areas when exercising any function that affects them.

Assessment

The application site is located within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The proposed development comprises minor alterations to the existing golf club house, including the

installation of a pair of doors, alterations to hardstanding, a small section of retaining wall and the replacement of steps with an access ramp. The works are confined to the immediate vicinity of the existing building and do not involve any significant extension, increase in built form or encroachment into the surrounding landscape.

Whilst the works would be located on the eastern elevation of the building, the golf club house is situated approximately 380 metres from the B4039 and is well screened by existing trees and vegetation. Consequently, the development would not be readily visible from the public highway, public rights of way or other publicly accessible viewpoints. The proposals would therefore have a negligible visual presence within the wider landscape.

Saved Policy NE14 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan has also been considered. The proposal would not result in the loss of, or harm to, any trees, hedgerows, ponds or other important landscape or ecological features and is therefore consistent with the objectives of that policy.

Having regard to the limited scale of the works, their close physical relationship with the existing building and the use of materials which match the existing development, it is considered that the proposal would conserve the character, appearance and scenic qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape. In discharging its duty under Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, the Council is satisfied that the proposal would not harm, and would be consistent with, the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Conclusion

The proposed development would not result in unacceptable landscape or visual impacts and would conserve the character and appearance of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Council's statutory duties in respect of National Landscapes.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Policy Context

Core Policy 67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and NPPF paragraphs 170–182 require:

- Avoidance of increased flood risk.
- Use of appropriate mitigation measures.

Assessment

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of fluvial flooding. The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identifies the site as being at negligible risk from groundwater flooding. Mapping indicates that areas of surface water flood risk are present in the vicinity of the proposed works, including around parts of the eastern side of the golf club house.

Notwithstanding this, the proposal comprises only minor alterations to an existing golf club facility, including the installation of a pair of doors, replacement of steps with a ramp and associated localised hard landscaping works. The development would not result in a significant increase in built form, nor would it materially alter the overall drainage characteristics of the site. The works are located within the established developed area surrounding the existing building and are set within the wider grounds of the golf course, which comprise extensive permeable landscaped areas.

Given the limited scale and nature of the proposed development, it is not considered that the proposal would increase flood risk on the site or elsewhere, nor would it prejudice the existing drainage arrangements.

Conclusion

Having regard to the scale of the proposed works and the absence of any material increase in impermeable surfacing or built development, the proposal is not considered to increase flood risk on or off site. The development is therefore acceptable in flood risk and drainage terms and accords with Core Policy 67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposed development comprises minor alterations to an existing golf club facility, including the installation of a pair of doors, alterations to hardstanding and the replacement of steps with an access ramp. The proposal would support the continued operation and accessibility of the golf club and would not result in any significant change to the use, scale or appearance of the existing facility.

The application has been assessed against the relevant provisions of the development plan and all other material considerations. The proposal is considered acceptable in principle and would not result in unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the area, the Cotswolds National Landscape, residential amenity, ecology, biodiversity, flood risk or drainage. The Council's Ecology Officer has raised no objection to the development.

No material considerations have been identified which would outweigh the policy support for the proposal.

The proposed development is considered to represent sustainable development and complies with the relevant policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the saved policies of the NWLP and the National Planning Policy Framework. Having considered all relevant planning matters, it is concluded that planning permission should be granted, subject to the conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions

1. Time Limit

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- 2453.8.4/01 - Site Location Plan received 6th May 2026
- 2453.8.4/02 - Site Block Plan received 6th May 2026
- 2453.8.4/03 - Existing and Proposed Ground Floor Plans received 6th May 2026
- 2453.8.4/04 - Existing and Proposed Elevations received 6th May 2026

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.