
Planning Design and Access Statement

Applicant: Pear Tree Community Farm Ltd

Date: June 2026

Site: Pear Tree Farm, Church Lane, Limpley Stoke, Wiltshire

NGR: ST784603 X (378465) Y (160300)

Proposal: Erection of 3 No. polytunnels, packing shed and welfare / tool shed with associated access and landscaping.



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 PlanningSphere act for Pear Tree Community Farm Ltd, a charitable community benefit society that has been set-up to create a community-led market garden to serve the villages of Freshford and Limpley Stoke. We are instructed to submit a full planning application in respect of a proposal for the erection of 3 no. polytunnels, packing shed with welfare building, tool store, and associated landscaping and access works.
- 1.2 The application site sits between the two communities of Freshford and Limpley Stoke. Pear Tree Community Farm have a preliminary agreement to purchase the land to produce locally grown fruit and vegetables for the community. The proposals are supported by Wiltshire Council (Bradford on Avon Area Board Grant) through the award of a grant to support the costs associated with progressing a planning application.
- 1.3 The proposal will result in the employment of 1 No. FTE grower from the outset who will be supported by a team of volunteers. In Years 2 and 3 it is anticipated that the proposal will create an opportunity for a part time administrator and growing apprentice. Key to the proposal is empowering a rural community to provide a new service which will increase a sense of community and strengthen community cohesion.
- 1.4 The finalised application proposal has been informed by site surveys and a multi-disciplinary coordinated design process; community engagement; and pre-application advice received from the Council (ENQ/2026/00256),
- 1.5 The full planning application submission comprises the following:
 - Planning application fee: £127.00 plus Planning Portal Admin Fee of £91.00
 - Application Form: PlanningSphere
 - Site Location Plan: Greenhalgh LA
 - Access Plan: Miles White Transport
 - Architectural Drawing Pack (4 No. Drawings): David Edmunds Design
 - Poly Tunnel Plan: First Tunnels
 - Drainage Strategy Plan: Tumu Consulting
 - Landscape Drawing Pack (2 No. Drawings): Greenhalgh LA
 - Planning Design and Access Statement: PlanningSphere
 - Arboricultural Survey and AIA: Assured Trees
 - Business Plan: Pear Tree Community Farm Ltd
 - Drainage Strategy Report: Tumu Consulting
 - Ecology: BNG Metric
 - Ecology (PEA): Bengrove
 - Heritage Impact Statement: Mel Gould Heritage Consultant
 - Landscape and Visual Appraisal: Greenhalgh LA
 - Transport Technical Note: Miles White Transport
 - Validation Schedule: PlanningSphere

2.0 Planning Context

(i) Site Description and Surrounding Context

- 2.1 The application site area extends to 0.36 ha and is located within an agricultural field, which is currently used to produce a biannual hay crop. The field is located off Church Lane, a primary route into Freshford with direct access to the nearby A36T. For further information on the location of the site refer to the Transport Technical Note.

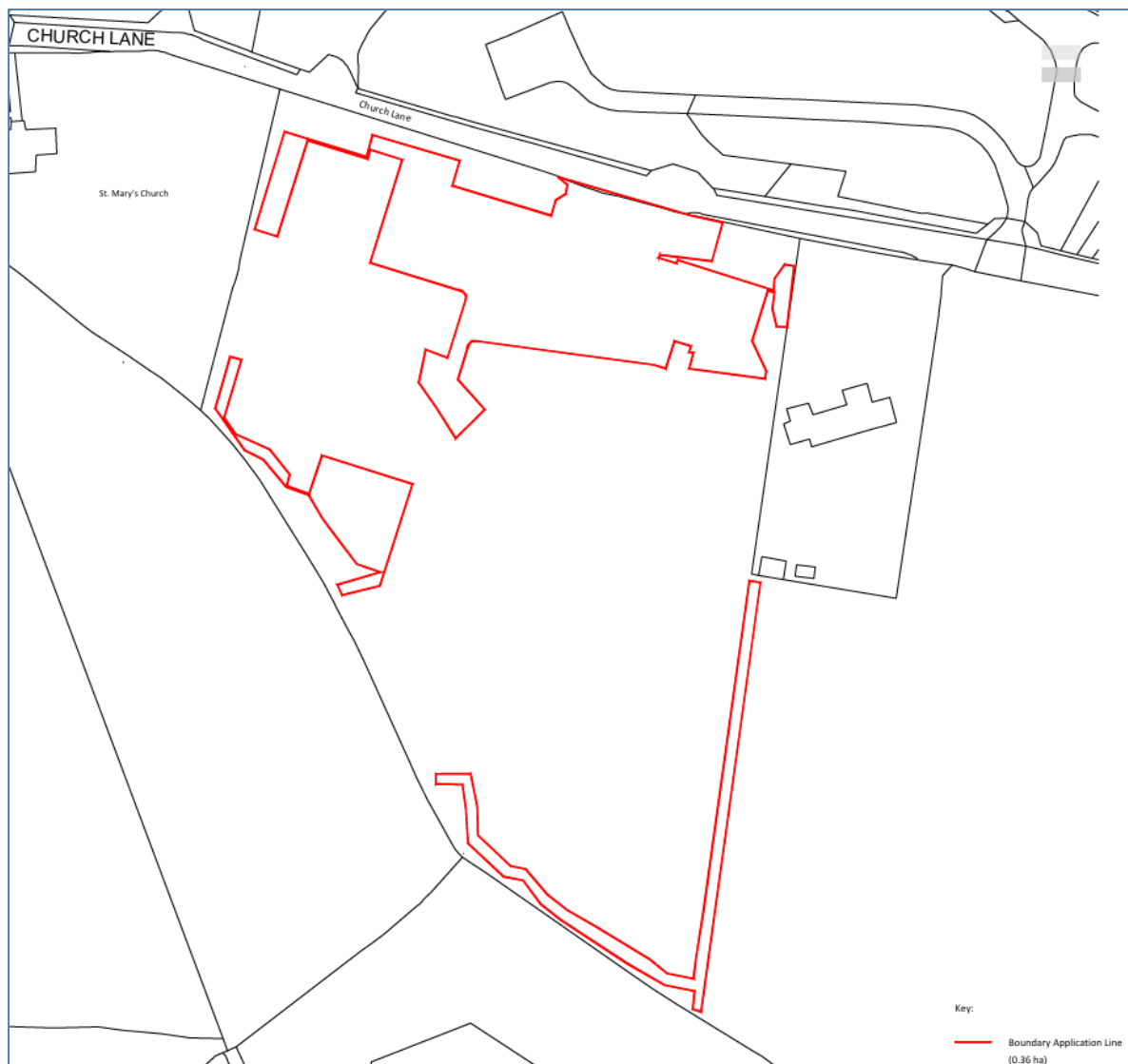


Figure 1: extract from Site Location Plan

- 2.2 To the north of the site is an established native hedge row, with Church Lane immediately beyond. To the west, beyond a low stone wall is the C10 grade II* listed St Mary's Church and its associated graveyard. To the east is Knowle House and gardens, and the remaining half of the field. For further information on the heritage context refer to the Heritage Statement.

- 2.3 Agricultural grazing fields lie to the south segregated from the Site by an established native hedgerow. The fields are accessed 2 No. public rights of way (PROWs) which connect the Church to Freshford Playing Fields and the Community Shop, and the hamlet of Park Corner. For further information on the landscape context refer to the Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA).

(ii) Existing Lawful Use and Planning History

- 2.4 The existing lawful use of the site is agricultural land. There is no recorded planning history.

(iii) Pre-application Enquiry (Ref: ENQ/2026/00256)

- 2.5 A pre-application enquiry was submitted to test the principle of development, the design of the proposed new vehicular access, the siting of new buildings and polytunnels, and the scope of information required to support the submission of a full planning application. The Council confirmed potential acceptability of the proposed junction design. Matters requiring further detailed technical justification include: heritage impact; landscape and visual impact; ecology impacts; and drainage. Clarification over the extent of proposed community use was also requested.

(iv) Pre-application Community Consultation

- 2.6 The applicant had held fifteen community engagement meetings at local venues including Freshford Memorial Hall and The Hop Pole and has delivered surveys to all households in Freshford and Limpley Stoke as well as direct engagement with the nearest neighbours. Further information on community engagement is set out in Section 1 and the Appendices within the Business Plan including statements of support and the results of a residents' survey.

3.0 Design and Access Statement

(i) Design and Access Statement

3.1 This section of the PDAS has been prepared having regard to the Design Council best practice guide 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them'. As such it explains the evolution and design thinking that has developed the application proposals into the submission scheme.

3.2 National Planning Practice Guidance advises that:

"...a Design and Access Statement is a concise report accompanying certain applications for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users'.

3.3 The NPG goes on to state that:

"...the level of detail in a Design and Access Statement should be proportionate to the complexity of the application but should not be long".

(ii) Applicant Brief

3.4 The background to the proposal, including the search for a suitable local site, the vision and objectives, consultation and research undertaken, governance and team structure, and the project viability analysis and programme are set out in detail in the enclosed Business Plan.

3.5 The proposals have also been informed by baseline technical studies across a range of disciplines and a pre-application process that was undertaken with the Council.

(iii) Use

3.6 The proposed horticultural use does not constitute a material change of use of the agricultural land. Any occasional community use or activity on the site will be ancillary to the horticultural use of the site.

(ii) Amount

3.7 The quantum of proposed built development comprises:

- Welfare/tool Shed: c. 80 sqm GEA
- Packing Shed: c. 80 sqm GEA
- 3 No. Polytunnels: combined total c.300 sqm GEA

(iii) Layout

3.8 The layout is landscape-led and has been carefully considered and informed by technical studies and in particular, the LVIA process. The proposed new access from Church Lane is fundamental requirement and forms an integral component of the proposals.



Figure 2. Extract from Proposed Site Plan

(iv) Scale and appearance

- 3.7 The proposed packing shed and welfare and tool store building are simple single storey buildings that have been carefully sited to optimise operational efficiency, minimise visual impact. Appendix 6.8 of the Business Plan provides an operational justification for the minimum size and extent of the proposed buildings to meet functional need.

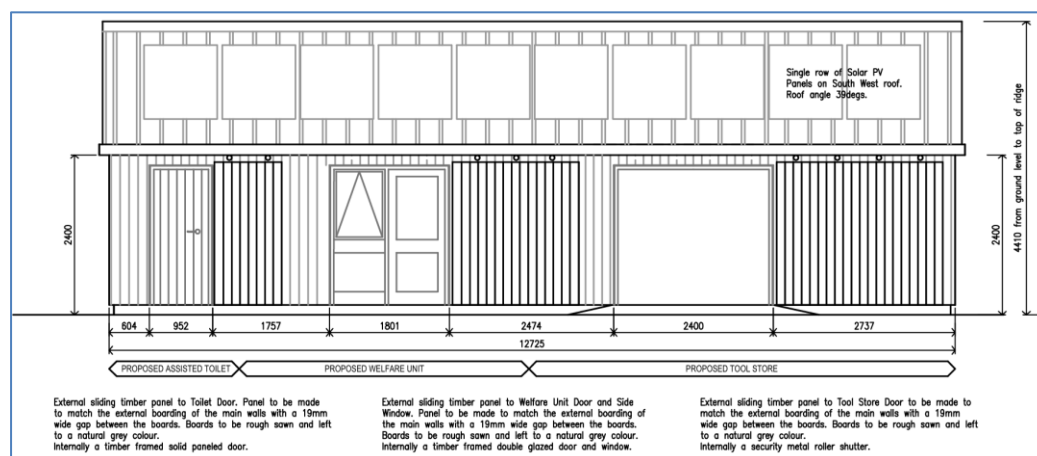


Figure 3. Entrance elevation of Welfare / Tool Shed

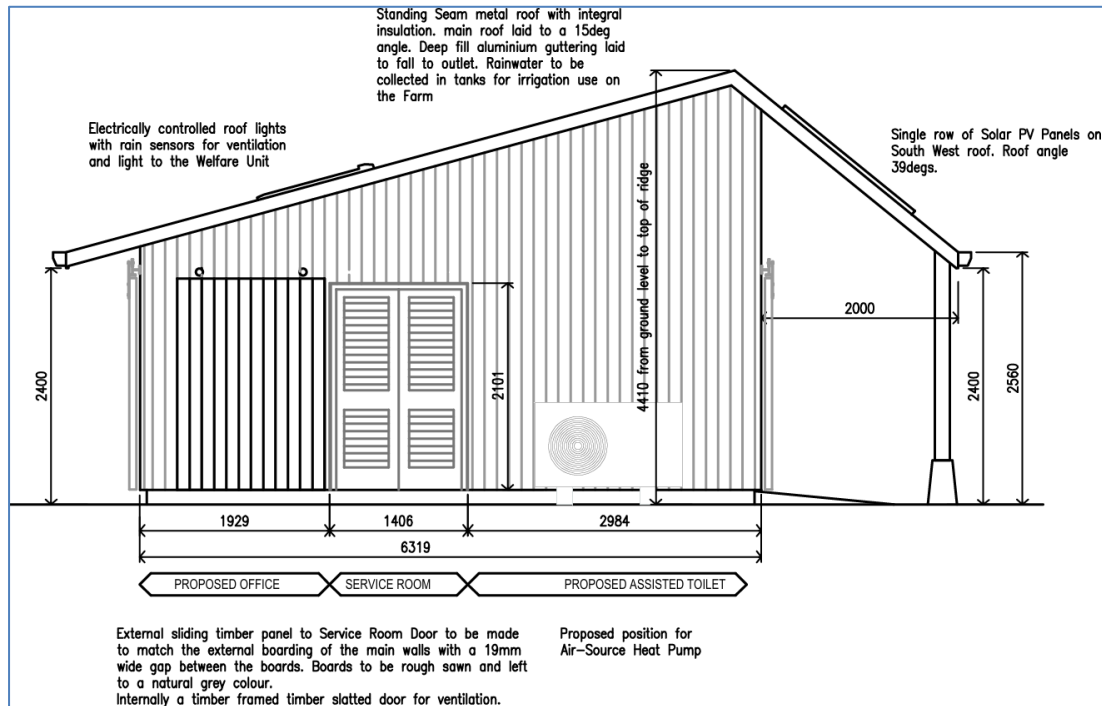


Figure 4. Side elevation of Welfare / Tool Shed

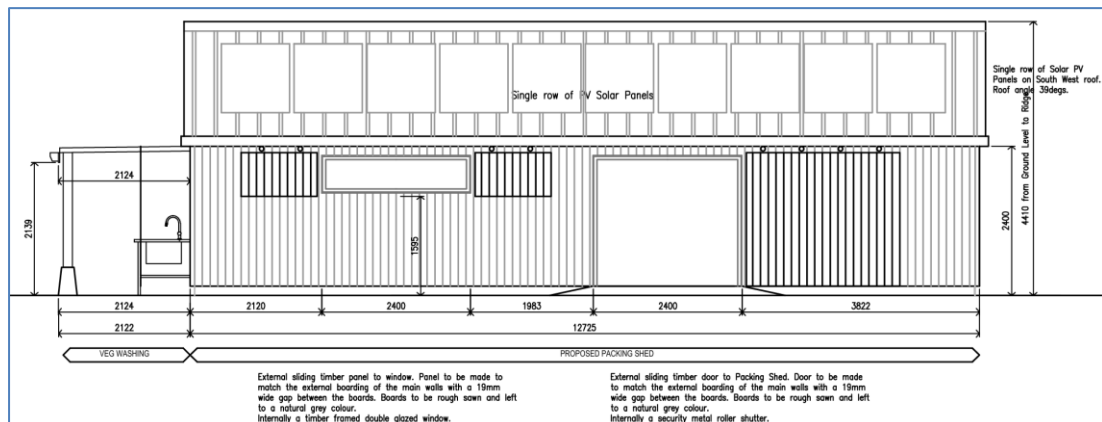


Figure 5. Entrance elevation of the Packing Shed

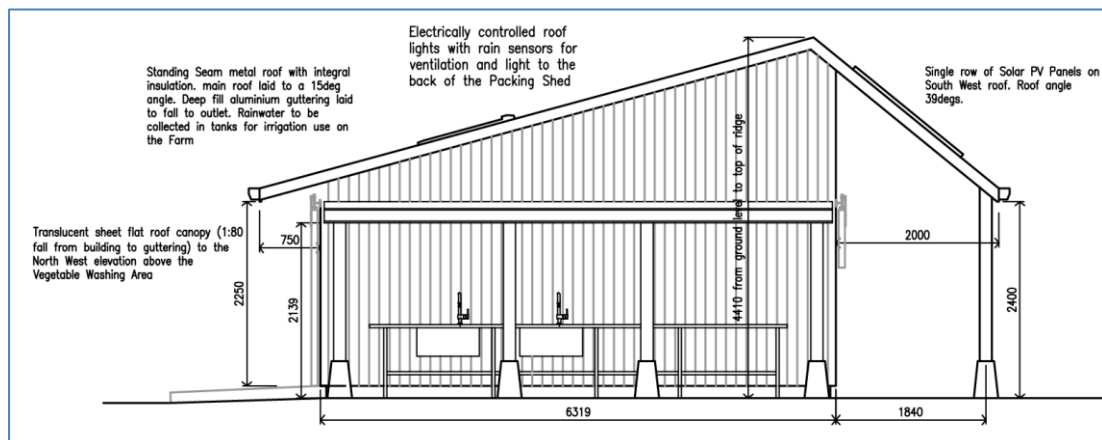


Figure 6. Side elevation of Packing Shed

(v) Landscaping

- 3.8 A Landscape Masterplan and Proposed Planting Plan have been prepared as part of multidisciplinary design approach that is aligned the detailed access design, the drainage strategy, a site levels strategy, required ecology mitigation (including on site delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain), heritage assessment, residential amenity assessment, and the findings of a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA). The submission also includes photomontages from key identified viewpoints to assist the assessment. No external lighting is proposed.

(vi) Access and Car Parking

- 3.9 The access design has been informed by a speed survey, an arboricultural survey, and pre-application consultation with the Highway Authority. The proposed access takes the form of simple cross-over junction with the full standard of visibility splays. Offsite highway works in highway verge will be secured by an agreement with the Council under applicable highways legislation/regulations.

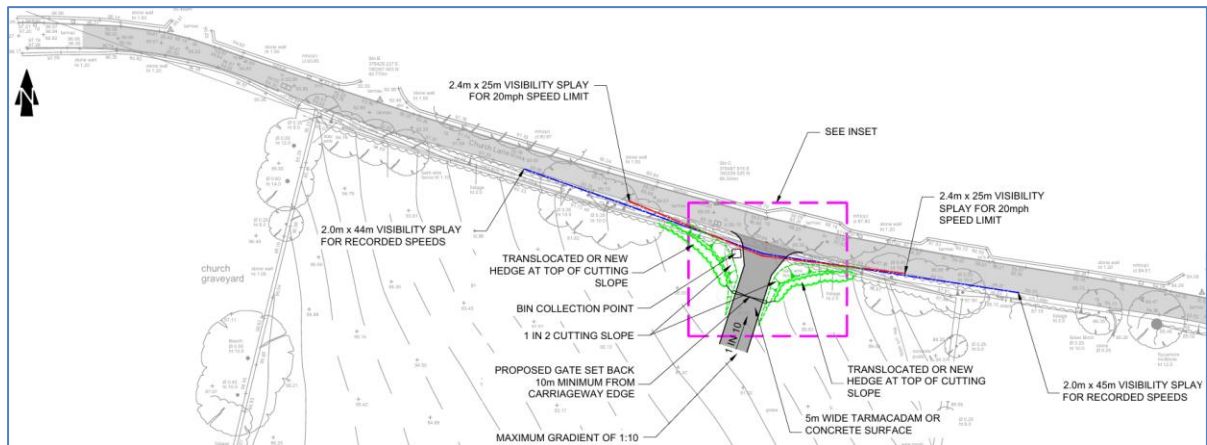


Figure 7. Extract from Proposed access Plan

(vii) Drainage

- 3.10 The surface water drainage strategy involves the collection of rainwater from the building roofs via rainwater goods to water butts for irrigation use. Excess surface water from the buildings and hardstanding areas will be conveyed to a soakaway at a low point on the site where it will infiltrate to the ground. Foul water will be discharged to a bespoke self-composing toilet as part of the proposed staff welfare facilities.

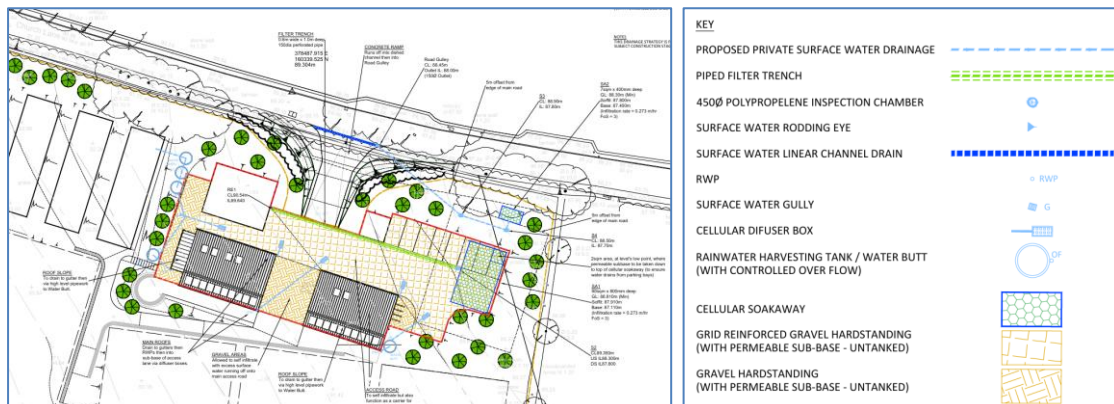


Figure 8. Extract from Proposed Drainage Plan

(vii) Staffing levels and hours of operation

- 3.11 The Business Plan states the proposal will provide employment for 1 No. FTE paid full time grower who will be supported by volunteer team rising to 1.5 FTE plus one part time administrator.
- 3.12 Hours of operation will be within daylight hours only with core hours being Monday-Friday 0800-1700.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

(i) The Development Plan

- 4.1 The statutory development plan comprises: the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015); the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (2020); and the Freshford and Limpley Stoke Neighbourhood Plan (2014).

(ii) Applicable Designations

- 4.2 Applicable designations include the Greenbelt and National Landscape.

- 4.3 Other acknowledged planning constraints include:

- **Heritage:** the proximity of the Grade II* Listed St Mary's Church (LEN 1364104) and Grade II Listed monuments (LEN 1194655; 1285575; and 1021819); and
- **Wildlife:** the proximity of Bath and Bradford on Avon Special Area of Consultation (SAC) for Bats

(iii) Applicable WCS Policies

- 4.4 Relevant development policy includes:

- CP48: Supporting Rural Life
- CP50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- CP51: Landscape
- CP57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
- CP58: Ensuring the Conservation of Historic Environment
- CP61: Transport and Development
- CP67: Flood Risk
- CP 68: Water Resources

(iv) National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.5 National planning policy is set out in the NPPF (last updated in February 2025)¹. The NPPF reaffirms the legal requirement that applications for planning permission must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Paragraph 210, NPPF). The NPPF is itself a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (Paragraph 212, NPPF).
- 4.6 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that '*...planning policies and decisions should enable a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas...d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities...*'

¹ The Government concluded consultation on a new NPPF in March 2026. The new NPPF is anticipated for publication by Q2/Q3 2026. In the event that there are any changes relevant to the application these will be addressed through a post-submission update to this Planning Statement.

5.0 Planning Assessment

- 5.1 Section 38 (6) of the Town and Country Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise.

(i) Principle of development

- 5.2 The application proposal is for operational development only as the proposed community farm does not constitute a change of use from the existing agricultural use. Any occasional educational or community activity on the site will be ancillary to the primary agricultural use.
- 5.3 The proposed local food production and delivery aspect diversifies the rural economy away from conventional intensive agriculture, will create employment opportunities during the construction and operational phases of development and will enhance the local food supply chain. The proposal is also aligned with the Council's declared Climate Emergency (2019) and the Wiltshire Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022).
- 5.4 Although there is no proposed change of use, the proposed community farm accords with WCS Policy CP48, Paragraph 88 of the NPPF, and also the 3-dimensional sustainable development tests that are set out Paragraphs 7-10 of the NPPF.

(iii) National Landscape impact

- 5.5 The application proposals are for 'non-major' development so Paragraph 190 of the NPPF is not engaged. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF does however require 'great weight' to be given to 'conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in ... National Landscapes'.
- 5.6 The quantum of new buildings, and polytunnels, and extent of hard standing, is the minimum that is functionally required to deliver the project vision. The functional justification for the new buildings and infrastructure is set out in Appendix 6.8 of the Business Plan.
- 5.7 The placement of the buildings has been carefully considered in terms of landscape and heritage impacts, whilst also preserving residential amenity. The choice of external materials and landscape mitigation in the form of new screen planting has been tested through the LVIA process.
- 5.8 The LVIA concludes that the proposals (with mitigation) would respond appropriately to the key sensitivities of the site in the context of the edge of village location. On this basis the proposal is considered to be in accordance with WCS Policy 51 and Paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

(iv) Green Belt impact

- 5.9 On the basis that proposed access and new buildings are 'agricultural' development, the proposal meets excepting criterion 'a' of Paragraph 154 of the NPPF. For the avoidance of doubt, the proposal meets the national Green Belt policy definition of 'appropriate development'.

(iv) Heritage impact

- 5.10 The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) assesses the impact of the proposals upon the grade II* listed St Mary's Church whose curtilage adjoins the western boundary of the application site. The HIA concludes that the proposals will not impact upon its significance nor key views from the north and north east. The HIA does however conclude that the proposal will impact views to and from the east of the churchyard and the character of Church Lane where the new access is proposed. The HIA concludes in the parlance of the NPPF that the level of harm will be 'less than substantial'.
- 5.11 the summary, the public benefits of the proposal, which are summarised in Section 6.0 below, are considered to outweigh the identified 'less than substantial harm'. On this basis the proposal accords with WCS Policy 58, Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, and applicable heritage legislation.

(v) Transport considerations

- 5.12 An ATC speed survey and a topographical survey has informed the simple dropped kerb crossover access design which will provide a safe new agricultural access onto Church Road. The proposals have been designed a full standard of visibility in both directions having regard to the 85th percentile recorded speeds, which are in excess of the 20 mph limit.
- 5.13 8 No. car parking spaces are provided with adequate turning so that all vehicles will be able to enter and leave in a forward gear. Secure on-site cycle parking is also provided.
- 5.14 The Transport Statement concludes that the proposal will have not raise any adverse highway or transport implications, and on this basis, the proposal is considered to be in conformity with WCS Policy 61.

(vi) Ecological considerations

- 5.15 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and associated Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment (sHRA) has concluded that seasonal bat surveys are not necessary. This is on the basis that despite the small section of frontage hedgerow loss to facilitate the proposed vehicular access, the proposals, with mitigation, will deliver an overall enhancement that will support activity of light shy bats associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC). In this regard, it is also noted that no external lighting is proposed.
- 5.16 The proposal will not have any impact upon other protected species – NB. the PEA does however recommend Reasonable Avoidance Measures for inclusion in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which can be secured via a planning condition. On this basis, the proposal is considered to be in compliance with WCS Policy 50 and applicable wildlife legislation.
- 5.17 The BNG metric demonstrates on site compliance with mandatory BNG provision on the following basis:
- **Total Existing and Proposed Habitat Units:** 6.26 and 7.06 (12.81% Biodiversity Net Gain)
 - **Total Existing and Proposed Linear Hedgerow Units:** 1.37 and 2.29 (66.83% Biodiversity Net Gain)

- 5.18 On this basis, the proposal accords with Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

(v) Arboricultural impact

- 5.19 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been undertaken which has directly informed the location of the new vehicular access and siting of new buildings and hard standing. Tree protected fencing during construction phase can be secured by a compliance planning condition.

(vi) Drainage

- 5.20 The Drainage Strategy confirms that the site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk from all sources of flooding. The proposed surface water attenuation mitigation will not increase downstream risk of flooding.
- 5.21 The Drainage Strategy recommendations can be secured by a compliance planning condition. On this basis the proposal is considered to be compliant with WCS Policy 67.

(vii) Residential amenity

- 5.22 The design and siting of the proposed new buildings, polytunnels and areas of hard standing have been carefully considered in respect of preserving the amenity and privacy of the nearest residential dwellings by locating these elements of the proposal on the northern boundary of the site whilst also maintaining a buffer between the nearest dwelling on the eastern boundary of the site.
- 5.23 As noted above, there will be no external lighting. Site working hours and activities will be relatively benign with no heavy agricultural machinery being used. On this basis, the proposal will preserve the amenity of near neighbours and is considered to be compliant with WCS Policy 57.

6.0 Planning Balance and Conclusions

- 6.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 The applicant team have been through an extensive process of evaluating prospective sites for a Community Farm, as explained in the Business Plan. The need for a Community Farm is summarised at Page 4 of the Business Plan. The application site was selected on grounds of its availability, its topography and soil conditions, and its close proximity to both Freshford and Limpley Stoke.
- 6.3 The technical challenge associated with forming a new vehicular access onto Church Road, and the potential impacts upon landscape, heritage and ecology were acknowledged by client team. This led to the testing of the proposal through an iterative process of pre-application engagement with the local community and local planning authority. The feedback received has directly informed the finalised application proposal.
- 6.4 The submitted technical reports demonstrate compliance with applicable development plan policies and legislation. The landscape impact and the identified 'less than substantial' heritage harm to the setting of the grade II* listed St Mary's Church is outweighed by the following public benefits, which also form part of the planning balance assessment:
- Provision of community-owned market garden backed up with a credible Business Plan that will be operated in accordance with an established 'Community Supported Model'².
 - When established, the Business Plan demonstrates that the proposal can achieve operational independence and has potential to reach an output of 80 No. boxes plus wholesale deliveries by Year 6.
 - The fresh organic produce will be available with low delivery mileage to local residents and businesses including: The Galleries shop; The Hop Pole Inn; and other existing local community businesses.
 - In addition to the measurable BNG, as confirmed in the submitted metric, the proposal will also improve soil health through avoiding pesticides and sequestering carbon.
 - Community vitality will be enhanced through the creation of volunteer activity creating opportunity for learning new skills and socialising in the community. This in turn aligns with Wiltshire and BANES Councils' strategies for addressing loneliness, social isolation and mental health for all ages.
 - Integrated school and pre-school visits will also be undertaken as an occasional ancillary activity.
 - The operation will include 'green prescribing' programmes aimed at improving mental and physical health through nature-based agricultural work and building skills around growing, health and climate resilience.
 - The proposal will create construction employment opportunities and supply chain support during the construction phase.
 - The proposal will create 1 No. FTE employment opportunity for a grower (rising to 1.5 supported by volunteers) and 1 No. part time administrator from Year 2.
- 6.5 In accordance with the Paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF, the Council is respectfully requested to grant planning permission on the basis that the application proposals are demonstrably in accordance with applicable development plan policies, the NPPF and applicable heritage and wildlife legislation.

² communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk