

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2026/03545

Proposal: Outline Planning Application for up to 400 dwellings (Class C3 use), land for a Local Centre, accommodating commercial, business and service uses (Class E use), drinking establishment and hot food takeaway (Sui Generis); and local community uses (Class F2); open space and landscaping to include natural green space, amenity green space, area of formal play, allotments and community orchard, sustainable drainage infrastructure and ground remodelling. All matters reserved except for the formation of a new vehicular access and cycle and pedestrian access including emergency access onto the B4528.

Site Address: Land east of Showell Farm, Chippenham, Wiltshire

Case Officer: James Taylor

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 4th June 2026 on the application webpage.

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (abbreviated WCS), Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Pre-Submission Draft 2020-2038 (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 updated May 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)
- Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan (Made May 2024) (abbreviated CNP)

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 examination of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan has been paused and the weight to be afforded to any part of the emerging plan can be no more than very limited. A decision on how to proceed will be made by the Council in May 2026.

Observations

The site lies outside the defined Chippenham Settlement Boundary (2020). However, it was identified within Policy 7: Land South of Chippenham and East of Showell Farm in the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan (January 2023). As part of the plan-making process, the site has been assessed as a potential housing allocation that could contribute to the delivery of an extended River Avon Country Park. Once development at Rowden Park is completed, the site is expected to benefit from sustainable access to local facilities, services and community infrastructure.

New and enhanced walking and cycling routes, including connections to the Avon Valley Walk, would link the site to existing and planned communities. These connections would encourage sustainable travel choices and support healthy, active lifestyles. The River Avon corridor to the west and south should be protected from noise and light disturbance through the provision of wide, undeveloped and unlit buffer zones. This approach would deliver ecological enhancements while strengthening habitat and wildlife connectivity.

Whilst this remains a speculative proposal, if the principle of development is considered acceptable, the following initial comments are offered on the emerging layout. In the absence of detailed building designs, these observations focus on the overall structure, landscape framework and spatial organisation of the scheme

The emerging proposals were presented to the Design West (DW) Design Review Panel on 9 July 2026. The recommendations contained within the Panel's report dated 22 June 2026 have been taken into account in the preparation of these comments, which should be read in conjunction with the DW report.

Objection

While the site, according to the Planning Statement, may represent a sustainable and well-located opportunity for a logical extension to the planned growth of Chippenham, being adjacent to the settlement boundary and within close proximity of local facilities and services, the submitted proposals fail to satisfy the high-quality design and place-shaping requirements of Core Policy 57 for the following reasons:

Layout

- 1) With regard to the Design West (DW) Report, the intersection of the north-south Public Right of Way (PRoW) and the retained east-west hedgerow represents the natural focal point of the development. Consideration should be given to relocating the allotments to this location rather than positioning them on the periphery of the site. This would place the allotments at the heart of the development, making them more accessible to all residents and increasing their role as a shared community asset.

Furthermore, the provision of a community facility, such as a village hall, local café, or small convenience store, in this location would help establish a vibrant community hub. Co-locating these uses alongside the proposed formal play facilities would create a stronger centre to the development, encourage activity throughout the day, and increase opportunities for informal social interaction and community cohesion.

Recommendation: In accordance with BfHL Section 3a (page 32), consider strengthening opportunities for social interaction and community cohesion by establishing a clear focal point at the intersection of the north-south PRoW and retained east-west hedgerow. This should be achieved through the integration of formal play provision, community facilities, and community allotments within the heart of the development.

- 2) The site sits on the transition between the existing settlement and the open countryside and if this site is to be considered suitable for development a clear transition between the existing suburban development and the rural edge is required.

However, the proposed access road and private drive arrangement along the eastern edge introduces a dense, formulaic suburban layout typical of volume housebuilders, which is at odds with the site's rural setting. In line with NPPF paragraph 129(d) on achieving appropriate densities, development should maintain the prevailing rural character - defined by varied plot sizes and building forms, relatively small-scale and well-spaced 1 to 2-storey buildings, dispersed farmsteads and the intervening landscape that shapes the area's intrinsic vernacular.

Recommendation: Rather than reinforcing a suburban-style urban edge, the layout should adopt a looser, more fragmented structure, consistent with the rural character. This approach would also facilitate better integration with both the site's landscape rationale and the wider landscape. Reference can be made to the NDG (p.20, top-right image), where contemporary forms successfully draw from local rural typologies. Small, well-overlooked parking courts would be acceptable in accordance with BfHL Section 10 h (page 86). Opportunities for car-free edges particularly along the interface with the Country Park should be developed.

In this context, barn-style residential forms, arranged in farmstead, close, or relaxed courtyard groupings, would be more appropriate - particularly along the site's edges. Such an approach would help prevent settlement coalescence, maintain rural character, and preserve the distinct identity of the surrounding dispersed rural settlements. A study of the forms of Showell Farm and other rural building arrangements for example may offer local precedent.

- 3) In addition to Comment 2 above, the DAS identifies areas of higher-density development along the main circulation street and around the squares located in the north-west and south-east corners of the site. This approach reinforces the proposed movement hierarchy and helps create a more continuous and active development frontage along these key routes and public spaces.

I support the DW report recommendation to utilise locally characteristic typologies, such as Victorian terraces, radiating out from the town centre. Locating these typologies within the proposed higher-density areas would provide a logical and contextually responsive transition in character and density across the site.

Recommendation: In accordance with the principles set out in BfHL, Section 6a–c (page 54), the scheme should create a locally inspired and distinctive place that draws upon the character, form and grain of the surrounding area. These principles should be used to establish a clear hierarchy of density and character across the site, ensuring that higher-density areas are concentrated along key streets and squares. To provide clarity and certainty, these principles should be illustrated within a standalone **Design Principles Plan** (see Comment 9 below).

- 4) The DAS includes a Key Facilities and Services Plan, which identifies the distribution of community facilities across Chippenham. The plan highlights a concentration of active sports clubs and associated facilities within the northern part of the town. Development at Land East of Showell Farm presents an opportunity to help address this imbalance through the provision of formal sports pitches and recreational facilities.

Recommendation: Although the provision of sports facilities is not currently a formal requirement of the landscape and recreation strategy, consideration should be given to incorporating sports provision within the site. This could take the form of informal sports pitches located to the east of the developable area, where the allotments are currently proposed. Whilst these facilities would likely remain unlit, they would help address the perceived lack of sports

provision in the southern part of Chippenham and contribute to a more balanced distribution of recreational opportunities across the town.

Drainage

- 5) I support the Drainage Officer's comments. Indicative drainage features are shown on the Illustrative Masterplan comprising swales and detention basins located within the lower lying areas of the site to provide attenuation. However, these features are limited to green corridors within the POS and the periphery of the development.

In accordance with WDG expectations 6.3 and 6.5, a more appropriate approach would distribute water volumes across the site, within the streets, 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. An indication of how the swales are integrated within the streets should be included within the street hierarchy proposals (see comment 6).

Access and movement

- 6) The DAS identifies a street hierarchy intended to prioritise walking and cycling, comprising a primary loop connected to radial secondary streets and green edge lanes. Whilst this establishes a basic movement framework, the proposed hierarchy lacks sufficient differentiation in the scale, function and character of individual street types, resulting in a largely conventional suburban layout.

For example, the primary and secondary street cross-sections are almost identical, making it difficult to distinguish their respective roles within the hierarchy. This approach conflicts with the principles set out in BfHL, Section 8c (page 70), which emphasise the importance of creating streets with clearly defined functions and distinct character.

The proposed street sections are also overly simplistic and do not demonstrate how SuDS could be integrated into the public realm. Furthermore, inconsistencies exist between the written descriptions and illustrative material. For example, the primary street description refers to a 3m shared footway/cycleway, yet this is not reflected in the corresponding section drawing.

The proposed green edge lanes are largely comprised of turning heads and private drives rather than the continuous publicly accessible routes along development edges advocated by BfHL and SfHL. As a result, they fail to provide meaningful connectivity and do not fulfil the intended recreational, ecological and movement functions associated with green edge infrastructure. Car free edges particularly along the interface with the Country Park should be developed.

This approach also weakens the structure of the development by creating poorly connected edge conditions with limited spatial enclosure and reduced opportunities for active travel.

In contrast, SfHL promotes a broader range of street typologies, including shared surface streets and more informal street environments that create varied spatial and experiential qualities. The absence of comparable diversity within the proposed scheme limits the legibility of the street hierarchy and fails to clearly articulate the intended street-level experience.

It also restricts opportunities to incorporate street trees, SuDS features and other public realm elements within lower-order streets, reducing both environmental and placemaking benefits.

Recommendation: To support the creation of a clear and legible street hierarchy, the applicant should review the street typologies contained within the DAS and expand upon the design principles that underpin their scale, movement function, and character. These principles should be informed by the SfHL framework and articulated in a manner that clearly differentiates each street type. In addition to cross-sections, the DAS should include supporting plans and illustrative diagrams that demonstrate the distinctive role, form, and character of each typology.

Primary streets should incorporate wider verges (approximately 3–4m) to accommodate street trees, SuDS features, seating and opportunities for social interaction. Lower-order streets should also incorporate street trees within the public realm to ensure long-term resilience and management. All streets should integrate sustainable drainage features in accordance with best practice (see Comment 5).

Clear variations in street character are likely to be more effective in creating a legible place structure than relying primarily on housing-based "character areas" (BfHL Section 8d).

Landscape

- 7) 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).

Tree planting, at present scattered across the open space, should be more carefully considered, to open up and contain the best views and provide a useful mix of unrestricted open recreational space and semi-open woodland for wandering, picnics and nature appreciation. This would be supported, together with an increase in canopy cover within the proposed residential streets and spaces.

Recommendation: To support the objectives of the Western Forest, comply with NPPF paragraph 152, and strengthen integration with the wider landscape, woodland planting in the form of semi-open woodland should be incorporated within the Country Park and increased canopy cover within the residential development areas. This will soften the settlement edge, enhance biodiversity, and create a more natural transition to the surrounding countryside.

Parameter Plan

- 8) Although much of the required information is included within the DAS, a single Parameter Plan has been submitted. While this describes the land use proposed for the development, it fails to meet the requirements of the WDG Appendix C - Recommended Design Information which offers guidance as to the information that may be expected to support an application dependent on the location, nature, size and complexity of a development scheme. Given the complexity and size of this development, providing as much information as possible at Outline stage is likely to facilitate a smoother consideration at Reserved Matters.

Recommendation: The following drawing / plans should also be included with the planning application for outline permission.

- **Movement Parameter Plan** - showing convenient, legible (and continuous where appropriate) networks for all modes relating to block structure and development scale.
- **Density Scale and Massing Parameter Plan** - should avoid generic principles of low-density edge and high-density entrance space/primary route. The density should respond

to the urban design strategy that is more nuanced and considers the wider context and opportunities, focusing density on public transport routes, community facilities and public realm spaces that benefit from being more vibrant. This should include the key building locations.

- **Open Space / GI & BI Parameter Plan** – distinguishing the different types of open space, i.e. SuDS, retained landscape, accessible POS, play areas, allotments, formal recreation areas, inaccessible wildlife zones and new woodland planting.

Character

- 9) As noted in Comment 6 and supported by WDG 5.2.10, character areas are best defined by the experience of users at the street and space level. The DAS includes a description of Development Character supported by vignettes illustrating how a sample of key areas that represent a broad range of character types across the masterplan could be designed.

To support this approach, a **Design Principles Plan** should be prepared to clearly define the characteristics of key streets and spaces. This will help ensure the development is legible, coherent, and attractive to users.

The plan should describe the intended identity of each key street and space, including key characteristics such as building form, height, architectural detailing, density, and boundary treatments. These elements will provide a framework to guide future development.

The Design Principles Plan could be an enhancement of the Urban Design Strategy Plan (edp2272_d055) shown on page 47 of the DAS.

Recommendation: A Design Principles Plan should be submitted for approval alongside the Parameters plans noted in Comment 8 above. Together with the Street Hierarchy details noted above, this will form a clear framework for future development and provide a foundation for a Design Code (see comment below).

Design Codes

- 10) For applications for major residential development, particularly schemes of this size, the use of developer prepared, site specific Design Codes is strongly encouraged. For the larger developments, particularly those likely to be delivered in phases, it may be necessary to require submission and approval of a Design Code by condition where it is in the interests of securing a consistent approach to design. Design Codes should clearly demonstrate how the proposal will raise design standards within the locality and align with relevant national and local design guidance. Where a proposal demonstrates compliance with an approved Design Code, especially where this has been subject to independent review and endorsement, this may attract significant weight in the planning balance. This requirement should be secured by a suitable condition.