

# APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION

## CASE OFFICER REPORT

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|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>APPLICATION REFERENCE:</b>   | PL/2026/03856                                          |
| <b>APPLICATION TYPE:</b>        | Full planning permission                               |
| <b>SITE ADDRESS:</b>            | Sewage Treatment Works, Mopes Lane, Purton,<br>SN5 4JA |
| <b>DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:</b> | Welfare building                                       |
| <b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>          | Approve with Conditions                                |

### SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The site lies wholly within the confines of the Thames Water, Purton Sewage Treatment Works. The site is accessed by way of a private track which leads north from the location of an existing industrial estate and the Purton Recycling Centre. The topography of the land in this location is flat and the site is bounded by mature trees and hedgerows.

Lying outside any settlement boundary, the site lies within the rural countryside for the purposes of planning. Public Right of Way, PURT20 bounds the southern side of the site.

### PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the provision of a welfare building which would be located within the confines of the sewage treatment works and adjacent to the settling tanks, pumping stations and other infrastructure typical in this type of facility.

The building would be a steel, prefabricated structure measuring 6.1m by 3.05m and with a flat roof at a height of 2.53m. Internally this structure would provide for a toilet facility and shower, changing area, small canteen facility with washing machine and a work area. One main entrance door is proposed with windows on the other elevations.

It is stated that the building is necessary in relation to a requirement to provide welfare facilities for staff and contractors to ensure compliance with Workplace Regulations 1992 and to ensure suitable welfare facilities are in place to support the efficient operation of the works. The building has been designed to be relocatable should it be required on other sites. It is also stated that the building will not be permanently occupied but available for use when required for workers on this site and on other sites within the locality.

### PLANNING HISTORY

The site forms part of an established sewage treatment works and no planning history has been identified that materially affects the determination of this application

### RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Legislation:

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 3 Infrastructure Requirements;
- Core Policy 19 Spatial Strategy: Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade Community Area
- Core Policy 35 Existing Employment Land
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;

#### Emerging Wiltshire Local Plan Policies

In accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, on 30th June 2026 Wiltshire Council published a notice of intention to prepare a new local plan for Wiltshire. The next stage is a Scoping Consultation which commences on 2nd September 2026. This plan is at a very early stage and carries no weight for decision making.

#### Neighbourhood Plan:

Purton Neighbourhood Plan: Made November 2018

Policy 3: Footpaths

#### Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, adopted 2015 - including the Car Parking Strategy and Cycling Strategy, adopted 2015
- A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wiltshire: Wiltshire's Natural Environment Plan 2022-2030

## **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 development is acceptable in principle (CP3)
- 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 there would be any harmful impacts upon protected species or priority habitats (CP 50)

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

Purton Parish Council: No Objection

WC Public Protection: No objection

WC Ecology: 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:

- Neighbour notification letters sent to adjoining and nearby properties;
- A site notice displayed near the site;

These methods were used to inform interested parties and provide a period of 21 days for comments to be submitted.

As a result on the consultation, no letters of representation were received.

## **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.

The assessment below considers each of the main issues identified above. Each topic is assessed in turn with reference to the relevant policy context, the evidence submitted, consultee responses, and all other material considerations, before a conclusion is reached.

## **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.

Core Policy 3: Supports delivery of new infrastructure to support settlements. Utilities such as water and sewerage operations are considered essential infrastructure, and their provision is supported in order to serve the needs of the long-term prosperity of Wiltshire.

The application relates to the provision of a small welfare building within an established sewage treatment works. The facility would provide toilet, washing, changing and canteen facilities for operational staff and contractors undertaking inspection, maintenance and repair activities associated with the wider wastewater network. The applicant has advised that such facilities are required to ensure compliance with the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and associated Health and Safety Executive guidance.

Whilst the site lies outside a defined settlement boundary, the proposal is directly related to and ancillary to the continued operation of an existing sewage treatment works, which forms part of the strategic wastewater infrastructure serving Purton and the wider area. The

development would not introduce a new use to the site but would support the efficient operation and maintenance of an established utility facility.

Having regard to its modest scale, operational necessity and functional relationship with the existing infrastructure, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle and consistent with the objectives of Core Policy 3, which supports the delivery and maintenance of essential infrastructure.

## **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 proposal comprises a small building which has been designed for the welfare of site operatives when working at this, or other sites across the sewage network. The building is considered a small addition within the site and would be seen against the backdrop of the other, taller buildings on the site; the large settlement tanks and pumping equipment typically located within a large sewage treatment works.

It is noted that there is a public right (PURT20) of way which passes the southern boundary of the site, but views into the facility are limited by way of the dense, established, soft boundary treatment of hedgerows and trees; as such, the proposal would not obstruct, divert or otherwise adversely affect Public Right of Way PURT20. Wider views of the site are very limited.

A condition to ensure that the works are undertaken in accordance with the submitted plans can be appended to any grant of permission.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the development would comply with aims of Core Policies 51 and 57 of the WCS, and the guidance and provision of the Framework.

## **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.

These policies guide the assessment of amenity impacts. Each of the below matters has been assessed having regard to the specific site context and layout of the proposal.

There are no directly adjacent dwellings or commercial buildings and this small building is not considered to result in loss of outlook, overshadowing, smell or noise impact on any adjacent occupiers over that which can normally be undertaken within a treatment works. Furthermore, users of the building will only be those employed to work at the site and will not be permanently stationed here.

## **Highways Impacts and Parking**

### *Policy Context*

Transport implications are a key factor in assessing planning applications, especially for larger developments. Proposals must demonstrate:

- Safe and suitable access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and those with mobility impairments.
- No severe residual impacts on the surrounding highway network.
- Promotion of sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- Adequate parking and cycle provision, in line with adopted standards.
- Protection and enhancement of public rights of way and active travel routes.

Relevant policies include Core Policies 60–64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, supported by the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan, Car Parking Strategy, and Cycling Strategy. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and LTN 1/20 (DfT) provide further design guidance for active travel infrastructure.

In assessing this aspect of the proposal, regard has been had to the site context, the details of the proposed development, the relevant development plan policies, and all other material considerations. The key considerations are set out below.

The proposed development would provide for a small provision of welfare facilities for site operatives who are visiting the site and there is already sufficient on-site parking for vehicles to meet the needs of Wiltshire Car Parking Strategy. The proposal would also not obstruct, divert or otherwise affect the public right of way PURT20.

The proposal therefore accords with the overarching transport policies 60-64 of the WCS.

## **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.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) promotes nature recovery, ecosystem services, and habitat connectivity through development.

Unless exempt, National policy requires a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for major developments, demonstrated via:

- Biodiversity Metric calculations
- Ecological assessments (e.g. PEAs, Phase 1 surveys, protected species surveys)

In assessing this aspect of the proposal, regard has been had to the site context, the details of the proposed development, the relevant development plan policies, and all other material considerations.

The location of the proposed building is set firmly within the confines of and directly adjacent to existing buildings and infrastructure typical of a large water treatment plant. The site does not lie within or adjacent to any site designated for conservation and there are no areas of significant ecological importance within the zone of influence. It is also noted that the site of the proposed development is grassed.

The footprint of the building is limited to less than 19sqm and no external lighting is proposed. The footprint of the building is less than 25sqm and therefore falls within the de minimis exemption to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, and the submission has been supported by way of Ecological Walkover Technical Note.

No comments have been received from the Council's Ecology Officers. Nevertheless, it is considered appropriate that any grant of permission is supported by way of informative notes, advising the applicants of their statutory duties in relation to BNG and Ecology.

## **PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

In reaching a decision, all identified harms and benefits must be weighed in the overall planning balance, having regard to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

At the heart of the NPPF there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development requiring local planning authorities to approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless (taken from paragraph 11d of the NPPF):

- The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing development proposed; or

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole;

In weighing the planning balance, the following factors have been considered:

The principle of development is considered acceptable when assessed against the settlement strategy of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

The proposal represents a modest ancillary facility required to support the ongoing operation of an existing sewage treatment works. No material harm has been identified in respect of visual amenity, landscape character, highway safety, biodiversity or neighbour amenity and the proposal complies with the relevant provisions of the development plan. No material considerations have been identified that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh these benefits or indicate that permission should be refused

The proposal is broadly compliant with relevant local and national planning policies in respect of design, scale, functional requirement, residential amenity, landscape, highway safety, ecology and biodiversity, subject to the recommended conditions.

The development would deliver clear public benefits by providing welfare facilities necessary for the safe operation and maintenance of an existing sewage treatment works. The proposal would assist Thames Water in meeting its obligations under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 and support the continued operation of wastewater infrastructure serving the local area.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in planning terms and in accordance with the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework, and all other relevant material considerations.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions**

1. 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 by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents;

Application Form. Received on 18 June 2026  
 Planning Statement. Received on 18 June 2026  
 LP1 Location Plan. Received on 18 June 2026  
 4266-AS1 Rev PL1 Block Plan, Indicative Drawings and Image. Received on 18 June 2026  
 STACK-15740 Proposed Elevations. Received on 18 June 2026  
 STACK-15740 Proposed Floor Plans. Received on 18 June 2026

Technical Note: Purton STW Ecological Walkover. Received on 30 June 2026

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

3 The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be as stated in the documents and on the plans hereby approved.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.

### **Informative**

The applicant should note that under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Habitats Regulations (2010) it is an offence to disturb or harm any protected species, or to damage or disturb their habitat or resting place. Please note that this consent does not override the statutory protection afforded to any such species. In the event that your proposals could potentially affect a protected species you should seek the advice of a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist and consider the need for a licence from Natural England prior to commencing works. Please see Natural England's website for further information on protected species.