

Wiltshire Council Public Art Consultation Response re:

PL/2026/03545 - Land east of Showell Farm, Chippenham, Wiltshire

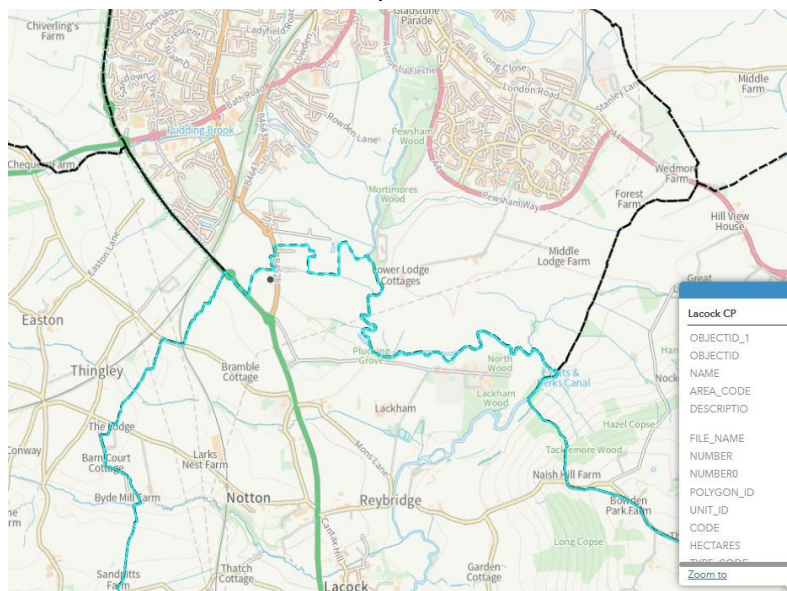
Outline Planning Application for up to 400 dwellings (Class C3 use), land for a Local Centre, accommodating commercial, business and service uses (Class E use), drinking establishment and hot food takeaway (Sui Generis); and local community uses (Class F2); open space and landscaping to include natural 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

Context

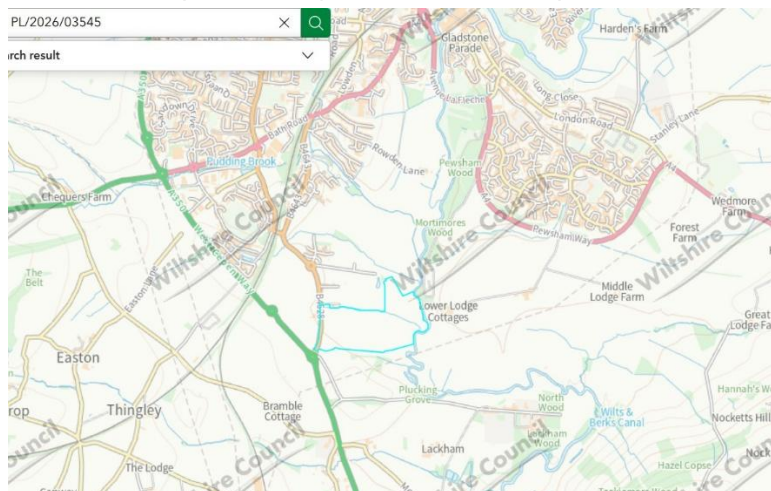
Lacock is a village and civil parish roughly 3 miles south of Chippenham. Lacock village is largely owned by the National Trust due to its unspoiled medieval architecture and heritage including Lacock Abbey, a country house of various architectural styles that was built on the foundations of a former nunnery.

Proposed site

The site lies in most northern part of Lacock Parish:



It sits within open countryside with the exception of further development sites to the NNW:



This application for up to 400 dwellings constitutes major residential development. Combined with a substantial amount of development NNW of this site and more generally on the outskirts of Chippenham and

into the surrounding parishes – equates, relatively-speaking, to a disproportionate amount of development in the area.

Applications that constitute a disproportionate amount of development within an area - as identified in Chippenham Town Council's objection against this application – can disrupt the established character, identity, and social balance of a settlement.

I note Chippenham Town Council's comments - dated 17 July 2026:

"The site does not adjoin the settlement boundary and whilst adjacent to the Rowden Park/Showell Nurseries sites on one side, on all other sides, the site is surrounded by open countryside. The proposed 'ribbon development' along the B4528 would create an obvious and isolated urban incursion into the countryside and at this current point in time would not appear as a logical, sustainable, expansion of Chippenham.

Chippenham has seen a massive growth in housing being built on the countryside in the last decade, with the cumulative effects of housing development around the town now taking its toll on the existing infrastructure. There are swathes of large, dormitory, car dependent housing developments that have gone up on the outskirts of the town, most of which is sited on what was previously ecologically valuable land. A brownfield land first approach should be adopted before valuable countryside is developed upon. In its submitted evidence, as part of the Local Plan Review, the Town Council identified a number of available brownfield sites in the town which could accommodate in total over 400 houses. In accordance with NPPF Para. 119, which requires LPA's to make as much use as possible of brownfield land, these should be the first sites to be considered for new housing development, as opposed to countryside locations."

With regard place-shaping and community cohesion, I also note Urban Designs comments - dated 27 July 2026:

"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."

Policy and guidance

For a development of this size, we would expect the inclusion of public art, which is in line with:

- Core Policy 3: Infrastructure Requirements [page 58, paragraph 4.42]. This promotes and defines public art as a type of place-shaping infrastructure and states that the cost of providing infrastructure may be met through the use of planning obligations.
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place-shaping [page 287, paragraph xii] which promotes “...the integration of art and design in the public realm”
- The Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (October 2016) refers to the 2011 guidance note *art and design in the public realm* [page 31, paragraph 10]. Please note the 2011 Guidance has been superseded by [Art and design in the public realm in Wiltshire – 2024 Guidance](#)

Residential contribution threshold and indicative figure

- 50 dwellings or more
- £300 per residential dwelling

The indicative public art contribution figure for a site of 400 dwellings would be £120,000 (see: Contribution calculation below) to be commuted prior to commencement to Wiltshire Council’s Arts Service to devise and manage the scheme/s.

The Public Art Officer encourages early engagement from Applicants regarding potential sites/schemes that may be incorporated into the Development or the vicinity of the Development (publicart@wiltshire.gov.uk).

Rationale

The provision of public art is justified as a proportionate and necessary measure to both mitigate the impact of development, and support its successful integration.

Public art provides a means of embedding locally responsive elements that can reflect the area’s history, culture and environment, helping development to feel assimilated rather than imposed.

Our guidance on public art was adopted by Cabinet in 2024, and the Council is able to demonstrate a robust methodology benchmarked against several other authorities. There is an identified specific site-based requirement as a result of this development, and we can point to several appeals where public art contributions have been found compliant and secured.

You will also note the recent Secretary of State decision - dated 28 July 2026 - re: PL/2024/07097 - Land South of Snarlton Farm, Snarlton Lane, Melksham, SN12 7QP - APP/Y3940/W/25/3373278, which agrees with the submitted CIL compliance statement which makes reference to the public art contribution (as does the agreed S106):

Planning obligations

32. The Secretary of State has had regard to the Inspector’s analysis at IR12.76-12.80, the planning obligation dated 5 February 2026, paragraph 58 of the Framework, the Guidance and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010, as amended. For the reasons given at IR12.79, she agrees with the Inspector’s conclusion that the obligation complies with Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 and the tests at paragraph 58 of the Framework.

Public Art contributions provide a policy compliant mechanism that will help mitigate the impact of this development: assisting integration with existing and incoming communities/developments, and addressing coalescence of Lacock Parish and Chippenham Town.

This is essential in the context of Lacock to create a sense of place and unique identity - as distinct from Chippenham - and so as not to undermine community cohesion with regards to WCS CP57 and NPPF para. 96 and para. 98.

Contribution calculation

To provide a consistent, sustainable and transparent approach for our Public Art programme, our communities and Developers, Wiltshire Council has held its 'fixed per dwelling' figure since its implementation in 2009.

The 2009 figure was calculated* using the internationally established Public Art funding mechanism, Percent for Art** i.e. up to 1% of capital costs derived from an average build cost per residential dwelling in England. In this case, taking a conservative approach of 0.5% and the lower end of a typical standard newbuild.

*[*build cost per dwelling (RICS) x average floor space per dwelling (English Housing Survey) = lower end of average cost per dwelling (c£60,000 in 2009) x 0.5%*

***Percent for Art is an internationally established funding mechanism implemented by authorities, development corporations and housing associations for the commissioning of public art. Normal practice is for up to 1% of capital costs to be allocated for public art]*

Summary

Public art is widely recognised within the planning system as a key component of place-making, contributing to distinctive, higher quality environments that go beyond purely functional design and instead create places that reflect local identity and aspirations.

Public art also plays an important role in supporting community cohesion and well-being by creating shared spaces and experiences that bring together existing and new residents, acting as a bridge between communities and helping to foster a sense of belonging.

Community involvement in the delivery of public art schemes encourages participation and dialogue, strengthening social connections, and helping communities adapt to change.

More broadly, it supports and contributes to civic pride, legibility and the usability of public spaces, while reinforcing a shared identity and delivering long-term social value.

As such, public art should not be viewed as decorative but as a legitimate planning tool that supports the assimilation of new development, and the creation of cohesive, inclusive communities.

As per our public art guidance and process, by locating a public art scheme/s along the boundary of this development and adjacent development – or along a PRow it is possible to adopt a more effective and strategic approach to aid integration and support cohesion in accordance with the WCS CP57 and the NPPF:

To support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, the NPPF recognises 'cultural wellbeing' as a 'social objective' - one of the three overarching objectives in achieving sustainable development.

2. Achieving sustainable development

8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

b) a social objective – *to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-*

designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being

8. Promoting healthy and safe communities

96. Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;

b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas

98. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community