

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

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(South/West)

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Application No: **PL/2026/03902**

Proposed landscaping and ecological improvements associated with an existing holiday accommodation complex, including tree and hedgerow planting, orchard reinstatement, ponds, sustainable drainage features, padel courts, additional parking, and the erection of a storage and service building to support the operation and management of the estate
Hesdin Estate, Thoulstone, Chapmanslade, Westbury, BA13 4GF

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

☐	No comment
☐	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
☐	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
☒	Object (for reasons set out below)
☐	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy:

From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 (PP) requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings, **their settings** or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Chapter 20 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Policy HE5: 'Assessing effects on heritage assets' requires a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

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.

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

The following points are taken from the Historic England document "The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3" (HE GPA3) that are considered to be particularly relevant:

HE GPA3 Part 1:

"The NPPF makes it clear that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset."

"The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. ...views of or from an asset will play an important part..."

"While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset. This is because the surroundings of a heritage asset will change over time."

"The importance lies in what the setting contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance."

Site and assets considered:

Hesdin Hall (listed as Thoulstone Farmhouse) is a grade II listed building. The list entry (a means to identify a building) reads as follows:

'Thoulstone Farmhouse (formerly listed as Thoulston Manor Farm) 11.9.68 GV II Farmhouse. Circa 1800. Painted English garden wall bond brickwork with stone dressings, hipped tiled roof, brick stacks. Three storey, 3-window. Central 6-panelled door with pediment, pair of beaded sashes either side. Plat band to first floor; pair of sashes either side of central 12-pane sash. Second floor has pair of 6-pane sashes either side of central 6-pane sash. Moulded stone eaves. Left return has bay with sashes, 6-panelled door to left, first and second floor has 3-light flush beaded mullioned casements. Right return has 3-light mullioned and transomed beaded window to ground and first floor, 3-light beaded mullioned casement to second floor. Rear has lean-to extension. Interior not inspected. A Longleat Estate farm until mid C20.'

There are historic farmbuildings within the curtilage of the listed former farmhouse. Buildings which pre-date July 1948 may be considered as 'curtilage listed'. Hence there have been planning and listed building applications for the conversion of the old farm buildings to residential.

Across the road (A36) is Spinney Farmhouse, a grade II listed building.

'Spinney Farmhouse (formerly listed as 11.9.68 Thoulston Farmhouse) GV II Farmhouse. C18 and early C19. Rubble stone and stuccoed brick, Welsh slate hipped roof to C19 addition, pantiled roof to earlier

range, brick stacks. Two-storey, 3-window C19 entrance front. Central 6-panelled door with pointed fanlight and square hoodmould, 3-light casement with pointed lights and square hoodmould either side. One 2-light casement to first floor over door, deep eaves. Right return has 2-light pointed casement with square hoodmould to left, 2-light casement to first floor of C19 range. C18 range has two pairs of plate glass sashes to ground and first floors, right return has French windows and lunette to single-storey extension with attic. Rear of C18 range has two 2-light casements to ground and first floor, raised eaves in brick, C19 lean-to porch with planked door and 2 light casement attached to rear of C19 range. Left return of C19 range has 2-light casements. Interior not accessible at time of survey (June 1986), but C19 range said to contain 6-panelled doors, window shutters, marble fireplaces’.

North-west of the site is another listed farmhouse, Summerstead Farmhouse, Westbury Road.

The site is within a locally designed landscape area.

Proposal:

The planning statement says (2.2):

‘The proposed development comprises the enhancement of the existing holiday accommodation complex by way of the provision of additional landscaping, and recreational and operational facilities. Notably, the proposal includes: formal use of the site as identified as part of the holiday accommodation complex; significantly enhanced landscaping including extensive new planting; the re-introduction of an orchard and pond(s) at the site; replacement of previously lost hedgerow, plus leisure facilities (padel courts), additional car parking and the provision of a new building to provide appropriate storage and servicing facilities for the continuing upkeep and management of the estate’.

Relevant planning history:

In so far as it relates to the current planning application, pre-application enquiry: ENQ/2025/01852.

Issues: impact on the **setting** of the listed buildings, impact on the setting of neighbouring listed buildings.

Information considered/provided:

HE5: ‘Assessing effects on heritage assets’ paragraph 1 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. (Paragraph 4 says that ‘decision-makers should be satisfied that assessments accurately reflect the effects on heritage assets caused by development proposals.’)

In this case, whilst the applications are accompanied by a “Historic Environment Assessment” (AH Heritage Planning dated June 2026) which provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposals and is proportionate to their scope. The requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

Significance of assets and contribution of setting

The NPPF defines significance as the “value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological**, **architectural**, **artistic** or **historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.” Historic England

assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

At 3.1 in the heritage statement:

'The Site has undergone a gradual transition from its historic agricultural use toward a mixed leisure and hospitality function, although much of its rural character remains evident.'

- A substantial late Georgian farmhouse;
- It retains its historic floorplan including the staircase;
- Externally it has a strong visual presence derived from its scale and the handling of its elevations;
- Particular features of note are its timber sash windows , plat band, moulded stone eaves, pedimented doorcase;
- Stone garden walls
- Its siting to the front of the site with a small front and wide walled garden;
- The two historic courtyards and associated farmbuildings.

To note: the heritage report refers to a 'lawned forecourt' but it is my recollection that this is astroturf.

In respect of the setting of the farmhouse, the author of the heritage report says (4.5):

'The setting of Hesdin Manor comprises both its immediate historic farmstead context and the wider rural landscape within which it is experienced. Historically this setting was agricultural in character, focused on the farmyard, associated outbuildings and surrounding farmland. During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, however, the estate has undergone a gradual transition toward leisure and hospitality uses, including the conversion of historic buildings and construction of modern accommodation and ancillary facilities. Whilst this evolution has altered the historic agricultural character of parts of the estate, the building remains experienced as the architectural and historic focus of a secluded rural property set within a landscape of mature trees, hedgerows, paddocks and open countryside'.

And at 4.11 and 4.12:

'Contribution of Setting to Significance: The setting of Hesdin Manor contributes to its overall significance. The building was historically constructed as the principal dwelling of Thoulstone Farm and retains a clear visual and functional relationship with the surviving farmstead buildings immediately surrounding it. This historic relationship remains legible despite subsequent adaptation and changes in land use'.

'The wider setting comprises a predominantly rural landscape characterised by open fields, paddocks, mature trees, woodland belts, hedgerows and scattered agricultural and residential development. These elements contribute to an appreciation of the building as a historic rural property occupying a relatively secluded location within the Thoulstone landscape'.

At 4.14 the author says:

'The contribution made by setting is found therefore to derive in largest part from the survival of the building's relationship with its surrounding rural landscape, mature planting, farmstead group and sense of separation from surrounding settlements, rather than from the preservation of a wholly agricultural setting. Overall, the contribution of the Listed Building's setting to its significance is considered moderate.

It is here where I part company with the author. If the house were sited within a woodland, it would be within a rural setting but that woodland would arguably not contribute to its significance (unless, for argument's sake, it was a gatehouse or game keeper's cottage).

And in an appeal decision in respect of PL/2022/05649, the inspector said:

'The surrounding area is highly agricultural in character, primarily consisting of open fields, with vegetated boundaries, and some small pockets of woodland. The nearest settlement of Chapmanslade is located approximately 800m from the site, with only very sparse levels of housing nearby adding to the rural nature of the site.' *'The building therefore represents a natural, functional link to the former farmstead and is reflective of its rural surroundings.....'*

In the case of Hesdin Hall, the former farmhouse is within the landscape with which it had an inter-functional connection. As such, I consider that the agricultural fields surrounding the former farmhouse is a positive aspect of its setting contributing to the understanding that this was a farmhouse which depended on the surrounding farmland.

Assessment:

Having changed the name to Hesdin Hall, the intention is clearly to create a parkland setting. Fields are proposed to be converted to a park with bound gravel paths, water features and mobile sauna pods. An extensive scheme of tree planting is also proposed. I consider this formation of a parkland setting erodes an appreciation of the principal building being a farmhouse.

New estate building (to the west of the farmhouse)

I do not support a new structure in this location on the basis that it is outside the curtilage and introduces development (including an access track) which is not for agricultural purposes nor agricultural in character. I consider it would cause some harm to the setting of the farmhouse and farm complex.

Proposed padel courts (to the east of the farmhouse)

Unlike a tennis court¹, the padel court will require glass panels 3-4 metres high. As such, it will have reflective qualities and appear overtly modern.

There do not appear to be any detailed 'proposed elevations' although I note that the annotation on the section plan says *'indicative elevation only, exact detail to be specified by a Padel court supplier'*. The information provided is therefore insufficient to properly assess the impact of the development. However, notwithstanding a greater level of detail, I consider a new building in this location would cause some harm to the setting of the farmhouse.

Extension of the carpark

I consider the existing carpark has caused some harm to the setting of the farmhouse by eroding its verdant agricultural setting. An extension would further compound the harm. Planting along the boundary would help screen the car park from the road but not within the site.

Proposed bund

This is annotated on the proposed section plan and is suggested to obscure the parking from the road. It would also potentially obscure views towards the eastern elevation of the former farmhouse and as such, I have some reservations.

[I note the drawing says *'proposed meadow grassland'*. Given their choice of astroturf for the front of the farmhouse, you might want to check what this actually means.]

Summary & conclusion:

A previous appeal inspector said (in respect of proposed new buildings):

The proposed development would be at odds with the surrounding built form that retains a far more inconspicuous, rural character.’ ‘Overall, I find the scale and design of the proposal would result in a highly domesticated form of development that would erode the agricultural character of the site and surrounding area.’

The appeal cited related to more extensive new development. Much of what is now proposed appears to be hard and soft landscaping. However, in combination, I consider the proposals would result in an overtly domesticated and aggrandised setting for the former farmhouse thereby having a negative impact on its setting.

Section 66 of the Planning LBCA Act 1990 requires that the LPA should have ‘*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses*’.

HE6, paragraph 4 of the NPPF (2026) says that:

‘Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal’.

ⁱ I note that Conservation were not consulted in respect of the application. I consider the proposals (tennis court and parking) have caused some harm to the setting of the farmhouse. Intervisibility is not a determining factor.