

PLANNING STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION

PL/2026/04461

Land at Church Lane, Limpley Stoke

Planning Balance and Response to Objections

1. Principle of Development

The proposal comprises three polytunnels, a packing shed, a welfare/tool shed, associated access and landscaping in connection with a community-supported horticultural enterprise focused on food production. The proposed infrastructure is characteristic of horticultural and agricultural operations and is directly related to cultivation, harvesting, storage and distribution activities.

The development would deliver local food production, community-supported agriculture, educational opportunities, volunteering, health and wellbeing benefits, biodiversity enhancement and climate resilience.

2. Response to Specific Objections -Alleged Class F2 Community Use

The objection's primary contention is that the proposal constitutes a Class F2 community use rather than an agricultural enterprise.

This interpretation is not supported by either the nature of the proposed development or the operational purpose of the scheme.

The application seeks permission for agricultural infrastructure comprising polytunnels, a packing shed and a welfare/tool shed. No meeting halls, visitor centres, classrooms, assembly spaces, cafés or other facilities normally associated with a primary community use are proposed.

Whilst the Business Plan refers to volunteering, educational visits and community participation, such activities are common features of community-supported agriculture schemes, market gardens and community farms. These activities do not displace the principal activity of food production.

The appropriate planning question is whether agriculture remains the primary use of the site. In this case, the evidence clearly indicates that it does.

3. Location Plan and Application Boundary

Concerns regarding the red line boundary and tree protection matters do not demonstrate planning harm and are capable of resolution through revised plans, clarification or planning conditions.

4. Green Belt

The site would remain agricultural land and continue to function as open countryside. Unlike residential or commercial development, the proposal does not expand settlement boundaries, introduce urban form or create a permanent urbanising influence.

The structures proposed are modest in scale and directly related to agricultural production.

The suggestion that the proposal contributes to settlement coalescence is unpersuasive. No housing, retail, commercial or urban development is proposed.

4. Heritage Impact

The significance of the Grade II* Church of St Mary is acknowledged. However, visibility of development does not automatically equate to heritage harm.

The church would remain physically unchanged and continue to occupy a prominent and recognisable position within the landscape. Agricultural activity has historically formed part of the church's wider setting.

Even if some degree of heritage harm were identified, it would be less than substantial and should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

5. Landscape and National Landscape

The proposal is inherently rural in nature and supports the productive use of agricultural land. The landscape would remain agricultural rather than becoming urbanised.

The application includes planting and landscaping measures intended to integrate the development into its surroundings and soften visual effects over time.

6. Residential Amenity

The proposal does not involve industrial activity, intensive commercial operations, floodlighting, significant machinery use or late-night operation.

Any concerns regarding operating hours, deliveries or organised events can readily be addressed through planning conditions.

7. Biodiversity

Ecological matters should be assessed through consultation with the Council's ecology officers. Any necessary mitigation, surveys or management requirements can be secured through condition.

Overall Planning Balance

The proposal remains fundamentally an agricultural and horticultural enterprise. The argument that the scheme should be treated as a primary Class F2 community use is not supported by either the proposed development or the intended operation of the site.

Against the limited and localised impacts identified by objectors must be weighed the substantial public benefits arising from sustainable local food production, support for rural enterprise, community participation, educational opportunities, biodiversity enhancement, health and wellbeing, environmental stewardship and climate resilience.

Taken as a whole, the proposal represents a sustainable form of rural development that remains agricultural in character, preserves the essential openness of the countryside and delivers significant social, environmental and economic benefits. It should therefore be supported.

Nigel White

Wiltshire Councillor

(Submitted in a personal capacity)