

NPPF 2026

Case Officer: Lucie Turner

Date: 26th August 2026

Site address: 554 Canal Bridge, Semington BA14 6JT.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on material and relevant changes in national planning policy since Wiltshire Council determined application PL/2026/02084. The Council acknowledges that the National Planning Policy Framework published on 17th August 2026 (NPPF 2026) is a new material consideration in the determination of this appeal and has considered the reasons for refusal in this context:

Refusal Reason 1:

Refusal Reason 1 relates to the principle of residential development on land outside the defined settlement boundaries of Semington and Berryfield, together with the proposal's impact on the separation between those settlements and the transition between settlement edge and countryside.

The Council acknowledges that Policies S3 and S5 of the NPPF 2026 introduce a new national framework for assessing development outside settlements. The appeal site does not fall within any of the categories listed in Policy S5(1)(a)-(i). The only potentially relevant category is Policy S5(1)(j), which provides support for development addressing an evidenced unmet need, including housing where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, provided that the development is physically well-related to an existing settlement and of a scale that can be accommodated by available infrastructure.

The Council remains of the view that the appeal site does not satisfy Policy S5(1)(j). The site is located outside the defined settlement boundaries of both Semington and Berryfield and comprises an undeveloped parcel of land that contributes to the physical and visual separation between those settlements. As set out in the Council's original assessment, the site performs an important role within the open countryside gap and

cannot reasonably be regarded as being physically well-related to an existing settlement for the purposes of Policy S5.

The Council also notes that the proposal remains in conflict with Policy 19 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 (JMNP2), which seeks to maintain the separate identity of settlements (the separation of Berryfield and Semington is explicitly noted) and conserve the openness and character of the countryside.

In addition, the Council notes that Policy S6 of the NPPF 2026 provides support to recently made neighbourhood plans. JMNP2 was made in August 2025 and forms part of the up-to-date development plan. The Council therefore continues to afford significant weight to the conflict with JMNP2.

Refusal Reason 2:

Refusal Reason 2 relates to the landscape and countryside impacts of the proposal brought about by the urbanisation of the site through built form and domestic paraphernalia associated with residential development.

The Council acknowledges that Policy S5 of the NPPF 2026 creates additional support for certain forms of development outside settlements. However, the Council remains of the view that the proposal would result in the urbanisation of an undeveloped parcel of land which currently contributes to the open character of the countryside and maintain the separate identity of settlements. The proposal would therefore continue to conflict with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Policy 18 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2. The Council's conclusions regarding landscape character and countryside impact are not altered by the introduction of Policies S3, S5 or S6 of the NPPF 2026

Housing Land Supply and Conclusion

The Council acknowledges that the NPPF 2026 has replaced the former paragraph 11 "tilted balance" approach and that this is no longer the relevant framework for determining the appeal.

The Council's most recent housing land supply position remains at 2.8 years. The Council has had regard to Policy HO7 of the NPPF 2026, which states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of providing homes which contribute towards meeting evidenced accommodation needs. Given the Council's current housing land supply position, the Council accepts that the provision of an additional dwelling attracts substantial positive weight.

The Council further acknowledges that Policies S3 and S5 have altered the national policy framework applicable to development outside settlements. The appeal proposal has therefore been reviewed against the revised Framework.

The Council notes that the appeal site does not fall within any of the categories listed in Policy S5(1)(a) to (i). The only potentially relevant category is Policy S5(1)(j), which provides support for development that would address an evidenced unmet need where the development would be physically well-related to an existing settlement and of a scale that can be accommodated by available infrastructure. The Council remains of the view that the appeal site does not satisfy this test. The site comprises an undeveloped parcel of land located outside the defined settlement boundaries of both Semington and Berryfield and performs an important role in maintaining the physical and visual separation between those settlements. As such, it cannot reasonably be regarded as being physically well-related to an existing settlement for the purposes of Policy S5.

The Council also notes that the proposal conflicts with Policies 18 and 19 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2. Policy 19 specifically seeks to maintain the separation between Berryfield and Semington, whilst Policy 18 seeks to maintain the separate identity of settlements and conserve the openness and character of the countryside. The Council remains of the view that the proposal conflicts with both policies.

In addition, the Council notes that Policy S6 of the NPPF 2026 provides support to recently made neighbourhood plans. Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 was made in August 2025 and forms part of the up-to-date development plan. Significant weight therefore continues to be afforded to the identified conflict with Policies 18 and 19.

Having reviewed the proposal against the revised Framework as a whole, the Council remains of the view that the benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the identified adverse effects. The proposal would continue to erode the contribution that the appeal site makes to the separation between Berryfield and Semington and would harm the character and openness of the countryside. Planning permission should therefore be refused.

Note on Annex A

Paragraph 2 of Annex A of the NPPF 2026 states that development plan policies (or parts of those policies) which are materially inconsistent with the national decision-making policies of the Framework should be given very limited weight. It also states that policies should not be given reduced weight solely because they pre-date publication of the NPPF 2026.

The Council has reviewed the development plan policies relevant to this appeal and does not consider Core Policies CP1, CP2, CP15, CP51, 60 or 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, or Policies 18 and 19 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2, to be materially inconsistent with the NPPF 2026. Whilst Policy S5 alters the national policy context for housing development outside settlements, the Council does not consider that this renders the relevant development plan policies inconsistent with the Framework or attracts very limited weight.