

APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/04004
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Melksham Adventure Centre, Lowbourne, Melksham, SN12 7QU
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	An infill extension, refurbishment for improved facilities and PV panels fitted to the roof
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve

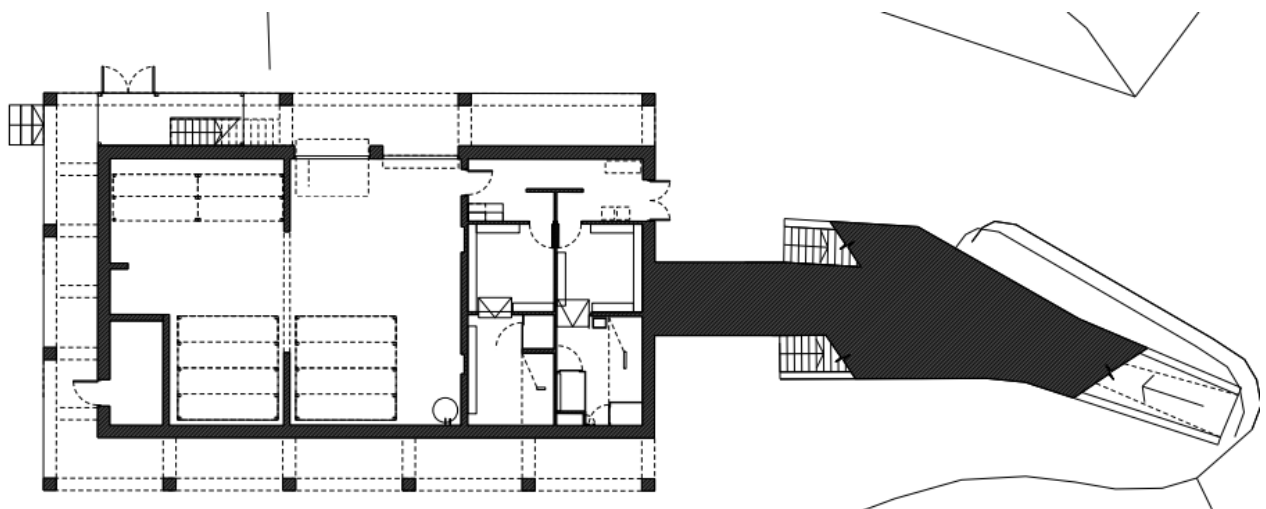
Date of site visit: 13 July 2026

PROPOSAL

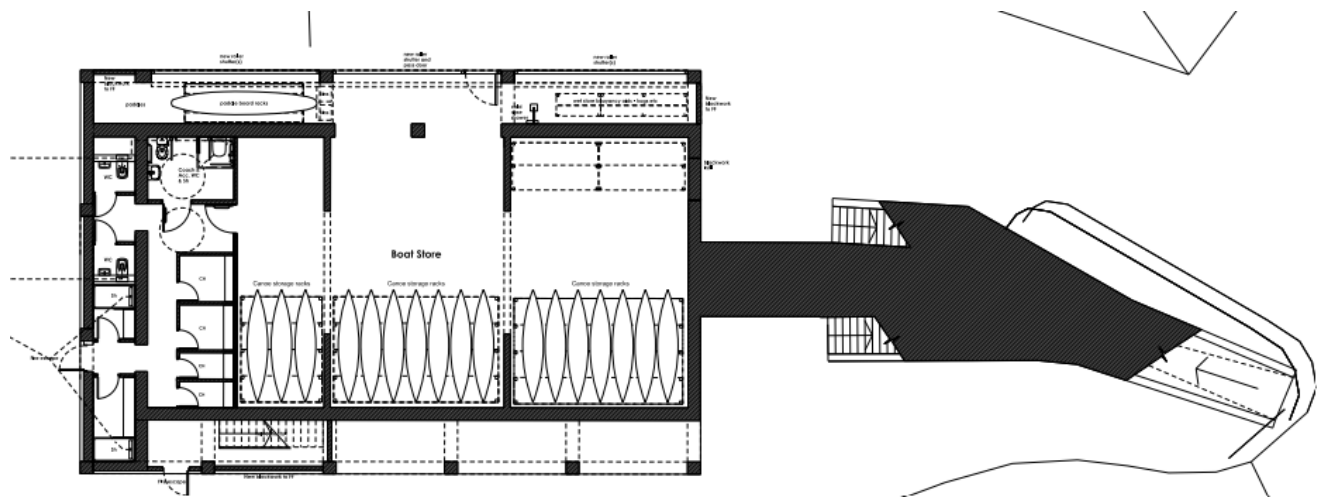
Planning permission is sought for the extension and refurbishment of the existing adventure centre building at Melksham Adventure Centre, Lowbourne, Melksham. The site is currently occupied by the Adventure Centre and Wiltshire Youth Canoe Club. The proposals include the enclosure of part of the existing covered area at the eastern end of the building to provide additional internal floorspace, alterations to the internal layout to provide updated changing and shower facilities, WCs and storage areas, and the installation of roller shutters to sections of the building frontage. The proposal would result in an increase in gross internal floorspace from approximately 322.75sqm to 408.57sqm, representing a net increase of 85.82sqm.

The existing and proposed ground floor plans below illustrate that the additional usable floor space would not require an extension to the footprint of the building – rather some of the existing covered areas would be enclosed:

Below: Existing Ground Floor Plan:



Below: Proposed Ground Floor Plan:

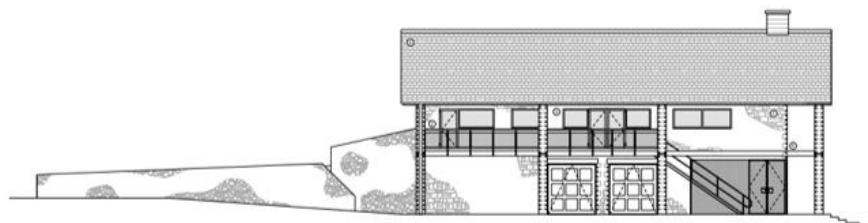


The works also include the installation of photovoltaic and solar thermal panels on the roof of the building and alterations to the access ramp and steps serving the building entrance. No change of use is proposed, with the building remaining in use as an adventure and recreation facility.

Existing East and North elevations:



EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

Proposed East and North elevations:

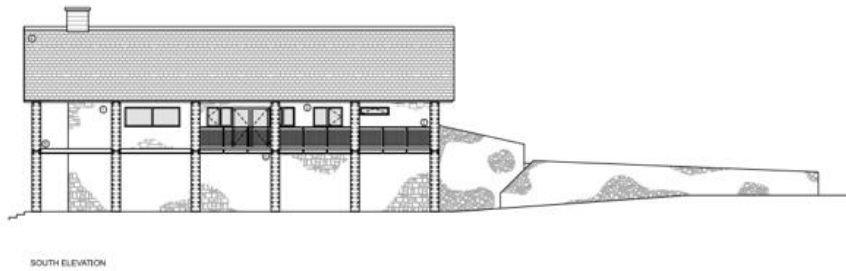


EAST ELEVATION

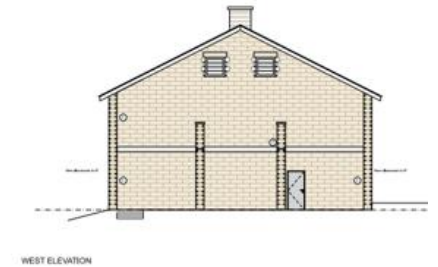


NORTH ELEVATION

Existing South and West Elevations:



Proposed South and West Elevations:

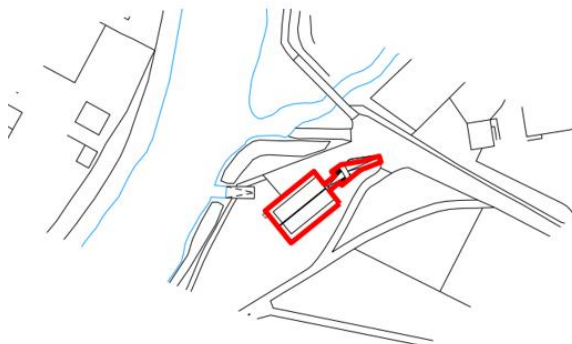


Proposed materials are reconstituted concrete stone blocks (to match the existing building) and power coated aluminium metal shutters and doors – the existing shutters and doors are metal.

The application form confirms that there are no proposals to change the access or parking arrangements, and that there are no trees or hedges on the site that would be affected by the proposals.

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

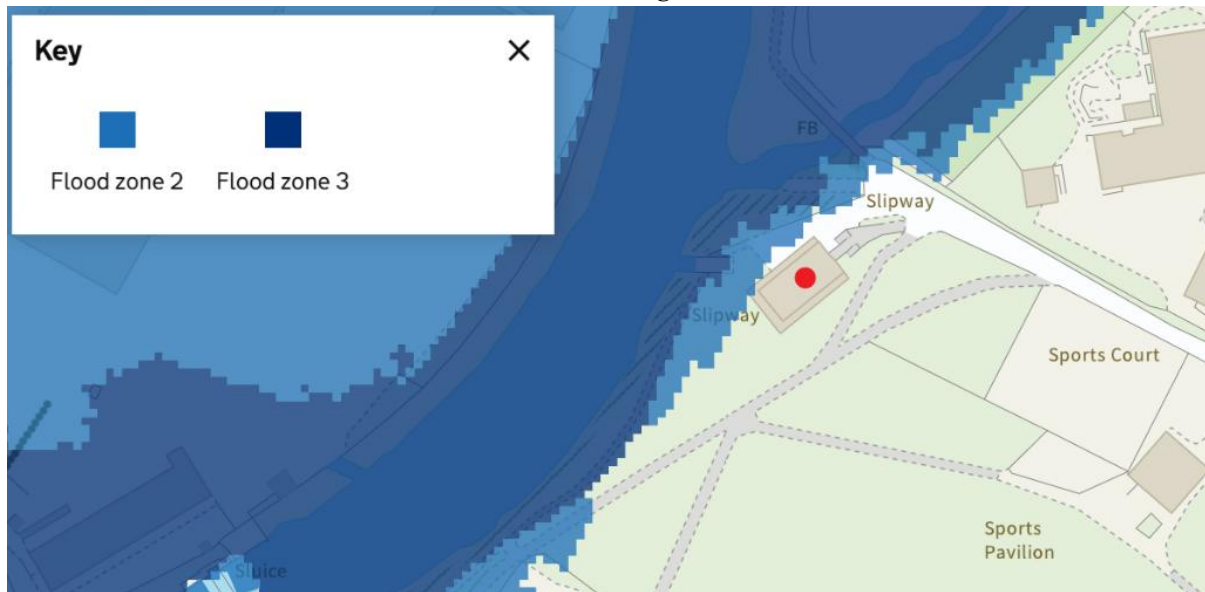
The site is Melksham Adventure Centre, located to the east of the River Avon and Melksham town centre. To the south of the site is King George field and play space, whilst to the north is Kings Park Primary School. To the east is the Sports Pavilion and tennis courts. Below is an extract of the submitted location plan, with the application site outlined in red. The site is marked with a red flag on the aerial photograph below, where the surrounding sports facilities and primary school can also be seen:



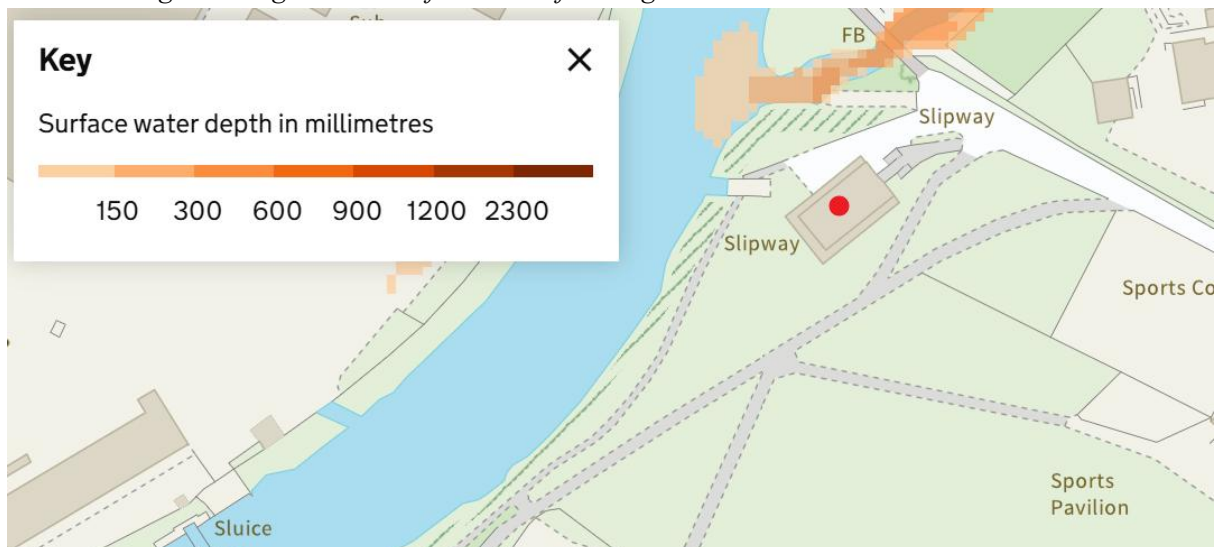
The site is identified as a local green space in the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2, but otherwise is not subject to any ecological, historical or landscape designations. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity.

The site is adjacent to the main river however due to its elevated position is almost entirely outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3, as shown on the extract from the Environment Agency's flood mapping, below. There is no particular risk of surface water flooding identified (also shown below) and the Council's SFRA indicates low risk from groundwater emergence.

Below: Flood Zones 2 and 3 indicated with blue shading:



Below: Orange shading denotes surface water flooding risk:



Below: Photographs taken during site visit:

Below: East Elevation



Below: South Elevation



Below: West Elevation



Below: North Elevation



PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary

W/13/00938/FUL - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 6/8/2013 – Construction of slipway for trail boats and river bank stabilisation works

W/76/00757/HIS - Historic apps 1974 to 1983 Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 29/9/1976 – Activity centre

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Legislation:

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

National Planning Policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

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 15 Spatial Strategy Melksham Community Area
- Core Policy 41 Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
- Core Policy 67 Flood Risk

Draft Wiltshire Local Plan

At Full Council on 19 May 2026, the elected members of Wiltshire Council agreed to withdraw the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan. The said Plan has no material weight for the purposes of the application.

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 currently carries no weight for decision making.

Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2:

- Policy 1: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy 20: Locally Distinctive, High Quality Design

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- National Design Guide

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 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 site can be adequately drained without increasing flood risk elsewhere (CP 67)

- Are there any other planning issues raised by the development?

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The views of consultees are material considerations in the determination of the application. However, the decision-maker must exercise their own planning judgement. Where consultees raise concerns or recommend conditions, these have been considered and are addressed within the assessment section of this report.

Melksham Town Council: No objection

“Melksham Town Council does not object to this application.”

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.

No representations have been 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 NPPF (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 Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy establish the overarching spatial strategy for Wiltshire and provide the primary Development Plan framework for determining whether development is appropriately located. Together, these policies seek to direct growth towards the most sustainable locations whilst protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The strategy prioritises development within Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and larger villages, whilst development in the countryside will only be supported where it accords with specific development plan policies or where material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF also contains national policies relating to the location of development. Policies S3-S5 distinguish between development within settlements and development in the countryside, support sustainable patterns of growth, and require decisions to have regard to the role and function of settlements, accessibility to services and facilities, and other site-specific considerations.

The principle of development should be assessed having regard to the Development Plan as a whole, the NPPF and all other material considerations. The weight afforded to individual policies will depend upon the nature, scale and location of the development proposed.

Assessment

The proposal relates to the enclosure of existing covered areas and alterations to an existing adventure centre building which remains in its established recreational use within the market town of Melksham.. No material change of use is proposed and the development would provide improved facilities for existing users of the site, together with a modest increase in floorspace.

Given the nature and scale of the works, the proposal does not give rise to any in-principle objection. The development represents an alteration and improvement to an existing facility and is considered compatible with the continued use and function of the site.

Conclusion

The proposal accords with the Development Plan and the principle of development is supported in this location.

The proposal must nevertheless be assessed against all other relevant Development Plan policies, national policy and material considerations. Subject to that assessment, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Policy Context

Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to achieve a high standard of design that responds positively to local character, context and distinctiveness.

Policies DP3 and DP4 of the NPPF seek to ensure that development is well-designed, visually attractive, sustainable and responsive to its surroundings. Development should contribute positively to local character, create high quality places and support healthy and inclusive communities.

The Wiltshire Design Guide provides further guidance on achieving high quality, context-led design and should be taken into account where relevant.

Assessment

The application proposes the enclosure of existing covered areas, alterations to the building elevations, the installation of additional roller shutters and photovoltaic panels, together with associated refurbishment works. The proposal would result in only a modest increase in built form and would not materially alter the overall scale, massing or appearance of the existing building. The development would remain clearly subservient to the host building and would retain its established function as an adventure and recreational facility

The existing building is of a functional and utilitarian design, reflective of its recreational use and riverside setting. The proposed works utilise materials and features that are consistent with the existing building, including matching blockwork and metal shutters. Whilst the additional roller shutters are not inherently visually enhancing features, they are considered appropriate to the operational requirements of the building and would not appear incongruous within the context of the existing structure.

The proposal also includes the installation of photovoltaic and solar thermal panels on the roof of the building. Whilst these additions would be visible within the surrounding area, they would be viewed in the context of the existing functional building and are not considered to detract from its appearance. The incorporation of renewable energy technology is supported by Core Policy 41 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Policy 1 of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan, which encourage development that contributes towards reducing carbon emissions and improving environmental sustainability

Overall, the development would preserve the simple functional character of the building whilst facilitating improvements to the facilities available to users of the adventure centre. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in design and visual terms.

Conclusion

Having regard to the scale, form and appearance of the proposed works, it is considered that the development would integrate satisfactorily with the existing building and would not result in unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the site or surrounding area. The incorporation of photovoltaic and solar thermal panels would provide a modest sustainability benefit. Accordingly, the proposal complies with Core Policies 41 and 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, Policy 1 of the Melksham Neighbourhood Plan and the relevant design policies of the NPPF.

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.

Similarly, the NPPF requires development to be appropriate for its location, taking account of its likely effects on health, living conditions and the environment. It requires development to avoid giving rise to unacceptable impacts on the living conditions of neighbouring residents and occupiers. In assessing amenity impacts, regard should be had to matters including daylight and sunlight, outlook, privacy, overbearing impacts and other effects on residential amenity. These policies guide the assessment of amenity impacts.

Assessment

The application relates to alterations and refurbishment works to an existing adventure centre building. The site is located within an established recreational area adjacent to the River Avon, with King George V Playing Field, associated recreation facilities and a school occupying the surrounding area. The site is not situated within a predominantly residential environment.

The proposal would not result in any significant increase in the scale of the building and no material change of use is proposed. The development would primarily improve and reconfigure existing facilities within the building, including enhanced changing facilities, storage and accessibility improvements. Whilst a modest increase in floorspace is proposed through the enclosure of existing covered areas, the nature and intensity of the use would remain substantially unchanged.

Given the site's context and the nature of the proposed works, the development is not considered likely to give rise to adverse impacts in terms of privacy, outlook, overshadowing, overbearing effects, noise or disturbance. Furthermore, the proposal would improve accessibility and the quality of facilities available to existing users of the adventure centre.

Conclusion

Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal, together with the characteristics of the surrounding area, the development would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers or users of the surrounding recreational facilities. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Flood Risk

Policy Context

Core Policy 67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development is appropriately located and designed to avoid increasing flood risk on-site or elsewhere.

Policies F4-F8 of the NPPF require flood risk to be taken into account in planning decisions and seek to ensure that development is safe for its lifetime, does not increase flood risk elsewhere and incorporates appropriate drainage measures.

Assessment

The site lies adjacent to the River Avon and a small part of the existing building is located within Flood Zone 3. However, the proposal does not involve the extension of the building footprint into areas of flood risk, nor does it introduce a new or more vulnerable use. The development principally comprises the enclosure of existing covered areas and internal alterations to improve the facilities available within the existing adventure centre building. The use of the building as a recreational and watersports facility would continue.

Given the nature of the proposal, the development is not considered likely to increase flood risk on the site or elsewhere. No significant increase in impermeable surface area is proposed

Furthermore, it is material that much of the ground floor accommodation comprises ancillary facilities associated with the watersports use, including changing facilities, showers and storage areas of kayaks, buoyancy aids and paddleboards. Having regard to the existing lawful use of the site, the limited scale of the works proposed and the absence of any increase in the building footprint, the development is considered acceptable from a flood risk perspective.

Conclusion

The proposal would not increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere. The development is therefore considered to accord with Core Policy 67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant flood risk and drainage policies of the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The application has been assessed against the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements introduced by the Environment Act 2021. The proposal is considered to fall within the de minimis exemption as the development relates to the enclosure of existing covered areas and associated alterations within a predominantly hard surfaced part of the site, resulting in no material impact upon existing habitats. Accordingly, the statutory Biodiversity Gain Condition would not apply in this instance

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposal comprises the refurbishment and improvement of an existing adventure centre building, including the enclosure of existing covered areas, alterations to improve accessibility and changing facilities, and the installation of photovoltaic and solar thermal panels. The

development would support the continued operation of an established community and recreational facility and would provide improved facilities for existing users of the site. The incorporation of renewable energy technology would also provide environmental and sustainability benefits.

The proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the area, neighbouring amenity, highway safety, or flood risk. No other material considerations have been identified that would indicate that planning permission should be withheld. Having regard to the Development Plan as a whole, the NPPF and all other material considerations, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions

1. Time limit

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. Approved plans

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

Proposed Elevations AL(0)113 B received 9 Jul 2026
Design Statement received 24 Jun 2026
Proposed Ground Floor and First Floor Plans AL(0)106 B received 24 Jun 2026
Location and Block Plan AL(0)002 received 24 Jun 2026
Proposed Ground Floor Plan – Enlarged AL(0)109 C received 24 Jun 2026
Proposed Site Plan AL(0)101 A received 24 Jun 2026

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

All conditions imposed have been assessed against the tests set out in Policy DM6 of the NPPF and are considered to be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.