

APPLICATION FOR HOUSEHOLDER PLANNING PERMISSION DELEGATED REPORT

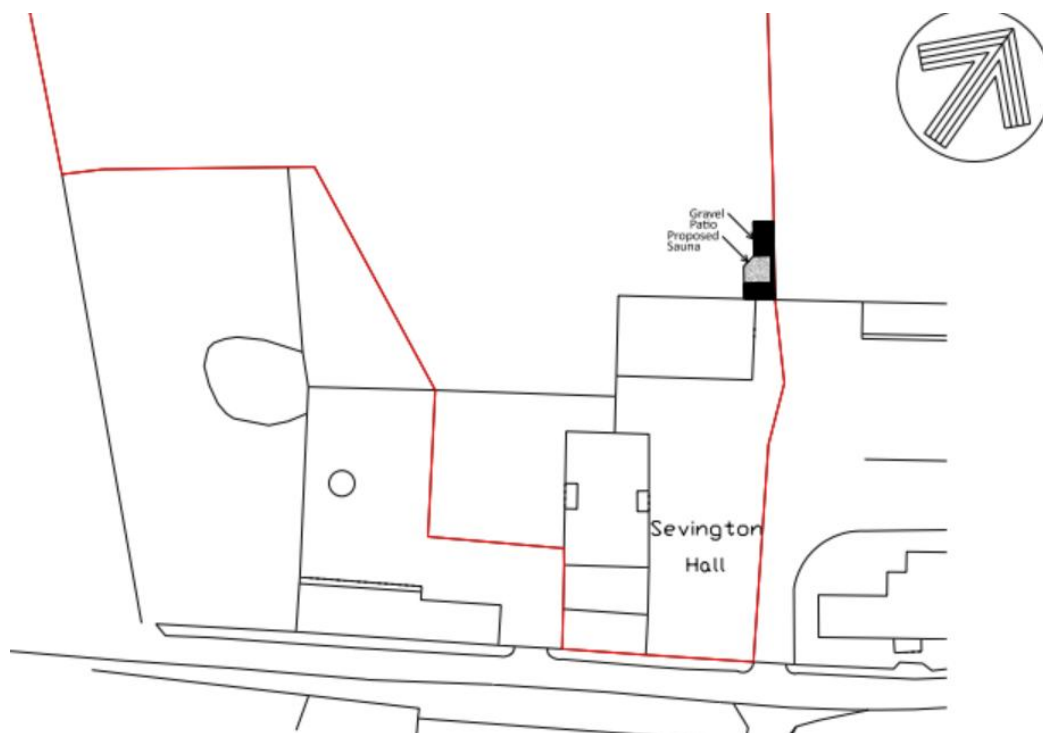
APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/02989
APPLICATION TYPE:	Householder planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Sevington Hall, Sevington, Grittleton, Chippenham, SN14 7LD
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Provision of outdoor sauna (Retrospective).
RECOMMENDATION:	That Planning Permission be REFUSED

PROPOSAL AND BACKGROUND

The proposal seeks retrospective planning permission for the creation of an outdoor sauna. The sauna is positioned on a raised wooden deck with gravelled patio areas created either side of the structure, as shown on the block plan extract below. The submitted Planning Statement states that the sauna has been placed within 'a visually contained corner position of the garden'. Whilst not expressly noted in the Planning Statement, site photos provided during the course of the application demonstrate that a variety of domestic paraphernalia is also present within the paddock area (reproduced in appendix 1).

The application has been submitted using the householder application forms and there is no reason to believe that its use is to be anything other than ancillary to that of the occupation of Sevington Hall as a domestic dwellinghouse.

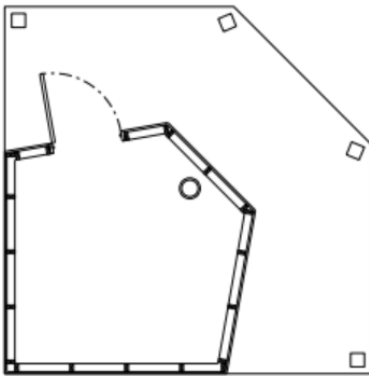
The extracts below demonstrate the appearance and location of the sauna in relation to the main building:



The sauna is positioned in a corner location, set adjacent to existing walling and established landscaping. The siting is on the other side of the wall from the position of a larger domestic outbuilding for which permission was granted in 2022 (under reference PL/2022/05902). That earlier permission is understood to have not been implemented and has been assumed to have expired for the purpose of determining this planning application.

The covering letter states that the sauna was placed on site without seeking a fresh planning permission because it was believed to be a “temporary structure” and smaller than the approved outbuilding.

The sauna building has an irregularly shaped footprint and is fixed to a similarly shaped timber deck. The building is timber clad, finished in black with flat roof and centrally positioned metal flue. Its height exceeds that of the adjacent dry-stone wall, which marks the extent of the lawful garden area.



(L-R) Proposed floorplan of sauna and decking, and existing photos of sauna in situ

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The site known as Sevington Hall is a Grade II listed building, located within the hamlet of Sevington, in close proximity to the village of Grittleton. Also, the site lies wholly within the Sevington Conservation Area, with the majority of buildings within this small settlement being listed buildings. The main dwelling is a converted formal agricultural building which displays a centrally located gable and very prominent stone slate roof. The site is located on the edge of the settlement, bound by a dry-stone wall and located behind a separate single storey building which fronts the road, whilst the property itself benefits from extensive grounds to the north and features a large gravelled area to the front of the dwelling for off-road parking and turning. The surrounding area is characterised predominantly with detached buildings along the local vernacular with the overarching construction materials being rubble stone and stone slate roofs, with further Grade II buildings in close proximity including The Old Byre to the west, Sevington Farm to the east and Sevington Byre to the south.

The official listing of Sevington Hall is set out below:

“Barn, c1840-50, possibly remodelling of C18 barn, rubble stone with flush quoins and halfhipped stone slate roof swept down on east side over stalls flanking gabled cart entry. West side plain entry with boarded upper loading doors each side. Regular spaced vent loops. In south gable 5 tiers of dove holes in triangular pattern. Tall interior with 7-bay triple purlin roof and king-post and angle-strut trusses. Cambered-arched opening into east cart-entry. A barn with features typical of the Neeld estate barns, but other barns have squared rubble stone walling.”

The application site is subject to the following planning policy constraints:

- Grade II listed building
- Sevington Conservation Area
- Countryside Character Area – Cotswolds
- Negligible risk from groundwater flooding due to the nature of the local geological deposits.
- Archaeological Monument Lines and Polygons – Sevington Farm
- Groundwater levels are between 0.025m and 0.5m below the ground surface

PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
N/01/02620/LBC - Listed building consent Decision - Withdrawn Date: 6/2/2002 – INSTALLATION OF GROUND FLOOR WINDOW TO SOUTH ELEVATION
N/05/02894/LBC - Listed building consent Decision - Refused Date: 3/1/2006 – Erection of Stone Wall
N/09/01291/LBC - Listed building consent Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 21/9/2009 – Internal Alterations, 3 new Windows and 2 Rooflights
N/01/01699/LBC - Listed building consent Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 25/9/2001 – CONVERSION OF BARN AMENDMENT TO N.97.2398.LBC
N/04/01134/LBC - Listed building consent Decision - Refused Date: 15/6/2004 – REPLACEMENT OF BACK DOOR
14/03327/FUL - Full planning permission Decision - Refused Date: 20/5/2014 – Single Storey Extension linking Existing Building and Outbuilding. New Hedgerow and Gated Entrance.
14/03375/LBC - Listed building consent Decision - Refused Date: 20/5/2014 – Single Storey Extension linking Existing Building and Outbuilding. New Hedgerow and Gated Entrance.
PL/2022/05902 - Householder planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 15/11/2022 – New single storey outbuilding

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- Core Policy 51: Landscape
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
- Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment
- Core Policy 67: Flood Risk

Wiltshire Design Guide

- Appendix D – Design Guidance for Householder extensions

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Section 14: Achieving well designed places
- Section 19: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 20: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The Planning Practice Guidance

National Design Guide

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Grittleton Parish Council: No objection.

Council Conservation Officer: No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was publicised by direct neighbour letter and the erection of a site notice at the application site, however no representations have been received.

APPLICATION TYPE AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The application has been submitted using the “householder” application forms. However, the sauna building has been sited on land that does not form part of the established residential curtilage of Sevington Hall; it being on land that historically appears to have been physically and functionally separate from the domestic curtilage. Indeed, the building is positioned on land that has the character of land which is paddock land or unkept grassland, and therefore agricultural for the purposes of land use planning. It is on the other side of the dry-stone wall to that of the dwelling, and which separates that paddock land from what appears to be the historic gravelled yard and lawn immediately around the dwelling.

A series of aerial images are demonstrated in Appendix 2 which have been compiled using the Portal Maps available to Wiltshire Council and Google Earth Imagery. The images demonstrate the application site over the course of time and illustrate that the land in which

the sauna is sited would not be considered as within the residential curtilage. The land clearly retains the character of paddock land during this period of time and up until present day.

The immediate area surrounding the sauna has been finished in gravel to create a patio area to both sides of the sauna structure. As the photographs within Appendix 3 shows, placed on the gravelled area are a variety of garden items such as a seating bench, planters with flowering shrubs, a storage container box and a log store, with further seating placed on the timber decking to the sauna structure itself. The application form states that the development was started on 07/07/25 and completed on 14/07/25. Whilst the structure is not evident on the Google Earth Imagery from 2026, this may be due to the canopy of the tree adjacent to the structure and the shadows cast from the sun when the images were taken. The wider area beyond the sauna structure is and has been utilised for domestic purposes, as demonstrated in Appendices 1 and 3. A section of the land has been mown with the grass level considerably lower and more kempt than the area behind, which takes the appearance of unkempt grassland. The photographs within Appendices 1 and 3 demonstrate the clear division between the area of grass which is being maintained and effectively kept as lawn, as opposed to the area beyond which has longer, wild grass and planting and does not appear to be maintained in the same way as the area surrounding the structure.

There is no planning history which suggests the use of the land upon which the sauna building has been lawfully changed. Similarly, the application does not seek to change the use of the land; nor does it seek to prove immunity from enforcement action by reason of the passage of time.

The initial submission provided no explanation as to why the outbuilding has been sited on land that is not part of the domestic curtilage. When given the opportunity to provide supporting information in this regard, the applicant referenced the aforementioned 2022 permission, which included plan which places a red line around the land under the control of the applicant. The applicant asserts that the existence of that previously approved plan and the fact that it formed part of the approved plans to that 2022 permission should be taken as the tacit agreement of the Council that the land upon which the proposed outbuilding is placed is residential curtilage. The applicant also claims that the land on which the sauna build is placed has historically been used for domestic activities, such as clothes drying, children's play etc.

Below, each of the claims of the applicant (contained both in the submitted Planning Statement and in later correspondence) have been considered in relation to what is known about the history and appearance of the land on which the proposed outbuilding has been sited.

The 2022 permission – PL/2022/05902

The plan relied upon by the applicant was titled "location plan" and "site plan" and, factually, did not seek to demonstrate or otherwise explain the extent of the residential curtilage associated with Sevington Hall. Further, the 2022 permission was for the erection of a single storey domestic outbuilding and utilising "householder" application forms. It did not seek to change the use of the land upon which the sauna building is sited and none of the supporting documents referenced such.

It is also of relevance to note that the outbuilding permitted in 2022 was to be sited on the opposite side (south side) of the boundary wall to that of the land upon which the sauna building is sited, and in the immediate proximity of the residential dwellinghouse. Both at that time, and now, there is no dispute that the land to the South of the wall is part of the domestic curtilage to Sevington Hall.

For the above reasons, the 2022 permission is considered to offer no support for the view that the land upon which the sauna building has been sited is lawfully, or should be somehow treated as, domestic curtilage. The applicant's claim that the 2022 householder planning permission for a domestic outbuilding somehow agreed the extent of domestic curtilage (which demonstrably includes land which is open countryside) is a misunderstanding of the extent and meaning of that permission.

Applicant's claimed use of land as garden

In subsequently submitted correspondence, the applicant asserts that the *"land has been used, through the gateway so to speak....as garden land including various domestic paraphernalia....over many years"*. However, the application includes no evidence to that effect, no identification of what, or extent of, the "land" or "gateway" area is in relation to the wider land holding. Neither does the submission provide any documentary evidence to suggest that the use of the land on which the sauna is sited has been used as part of the residential curtilage for confirmed length of time which would render it immune from enforcement action.

In contrast to the vague assertion made by the applicant, available aerial imagery suggests that the land immediately around the sauna structure has only recently been "domesticated". Ariel imagery set out in appendix 2 to this report appears to show that neither the sauna nor any domestic paraphernalia can be seen on the images 2016-2026 (accepting that it is possible that there is a non-zero chance that the sauna building itself is hidden by tree cover in the 2026 image).

The submitted application form states that the development was started on 07/07/25 and completed on 14/07/25. On the surface, this somewhat conflicts with the applicants later statements that the land has been used as garden "over many years" and what can be plainly seen in aerial imagery of the land, but in any event is not backed by any documentary evidence nor explanation as to whether this was solely for the sauna structure or whether it includes the creation of the gravelled patio areas.

Nevertheless, and as previously referenced, the application is submitted as a householder application, does not (and cannot) seek to change the use of the land, nor issue a lawful development certificate for the land.

For the above reasons, it cannot be agreed that the land upon which the sauna building is sited is part of the domestic curtilage. The application has therefore been determined on the basis that the land is in fact part of the open countryside and that its lawful use is agriculture. The proposal therefore amounts to the erection of a domestic outbuilding in the open countryside.

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 adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans.

Principle

Decisions on planning applications are made in accordance with the policies contained in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and government guidance. The principle of domestic extensions, alterations and/or outbuildings within the curtilage of existing dwellings is established as acceptable but detail of the proposals must also be considered against other policies within the development plan. However, in this case, the sauna, gravelled patio and garden paraphernalia are located outside of the residential curtilage and on land that is part of the open countryside.

The proposal therefore amounts to development in the open countryside, which benefits from no policy support and is not justified by any exception policy at the national or local level. The physical impact of such development is considered in the sub-sections below.

Design and appearance in countryside

CP51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to protect, conserve, and where possible enhance the character and quality of Wiltshire's landscapes, giving particular weight to designated areas such as National Landscapes.

WCS Core Policy 57 requires, *inter alia*, development to respond positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, elevational design and materials, with particular regard required for the compatibility of the design, together with the relationship to adjoining buildings and spaces.

Policy N2.1 to the NPPF requires, *inter alia*, new development to contribute positively to the natural environment.

Whilst the design and scale of the proposed sauna building itself is unremarkable and relatively modest, significant concern is raised regarding its siting outside of the established residential curtilage within the adjoining field. The field forms part of the open countryside and contributes positively to the rural character and landscape setting of the area. As evident in the site photographs, this land retains an undeveloped and open appearance which reinforces the transition between the built form of the settlement and the surrounding countryside.

The proposed sauna would introduce a domestic structure into an area that is currently free from such forms of development. As a consequence, the proposal would extend domestic built form beyond the defined residential curtilage and would therefore result in the domestication of land that presently exhibits a distinctly rural character. This encroachment would erode the openness of the site and would appear as an incongruous feature within the wider landscape. The land to the rear of the site remains open and exposed, with limited natural screening to obscure views of the development. Indeed, as it stands, there is nothing on the site which would provide a natural barrier to the incremental expansion of domestic paraphernalia further out into the open field beyond.

The structure, and the inevitably associated domestic paraphernalia, appears as an isolated and overtly domestic feature within a parcel of land that currently retains a rural and undeveloped character. The development would consequently blur the distinction between the domestic curtilage and the surrounding countryside, amounting to an unjustified spread of domestic development into the rural landscape.

There appears to be no appreciable shortage or restriction of land that is part of the established domestic curtilage to the applicant's property on which to site the sauna building. Indeed, the applicant have previously sought and gained permission for a sauna building in their garden under reference PL/2022/05902.

Having regard to the above, the proposal fails to protect, enhance or conserve the rural setting within this location and therefore fails to comply with the design principles set out in Core Policies CP51 and CP57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, and policy N2.1.a. to the NPPF.

Heritage

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 requires that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. Section 72(1) of the Act requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

Policy CP58 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy, requires that designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance and encourages proposals which improve the condition of heritage assets at risk.

The NPPF outlines government policy for planning and is a material planning consideration. Chapter 20 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development, with policy HE6 setting out how to assess effects on heritage assets.

Sevington Hall, the property to which the new building purports to relate, is a grade II listed building in a prominent position in Sevington. In addition, the application site is within the

Sevington Conservation Area, with many other grade II buildings in close proximity and throughout the locality. Therefore, consideration is required to the impacts upon the significance of these identified heritage assets.

Immediate setting of listed buildings

The sauna building and associated domestic paraphernalia is located on land that is part of the open countryside. The location is divorced from the immediate setting of Sevington Hall and further still from the neighbouring Grade II listed buildings of The Old Byre, Sevington Farm and The Manor Barn.

Since the development is not located in the immediate settings of these listed buildings and is perhaps for this reason that the Council's Conservation Officer has provided only limited comment. Accordingly, the Council is of the view that there is no harm caused to the immediate setting of the listed buildings.

Impact on the Sevington Conservation Area

Sevington Hall is located in a rural setting within the hamlet of Sevington, also within the Sevington Conservation Area. Sevington is an attractive, stone built hamlet that is contextualised by an open rural farmland hinterland, which would have been historically associated with many of the historic C18th and C19th buildings which are located throughout, contributing to the rural feel and local vernacular. Sevington lies in a gently undulating and lightly wooded landscape, giving it a very rural character. The hamlet has a linear arrangement of dwellings and buildings which follows the C road which passes through, with the majority being listed buildings, and is bound and interspersed by open countryside and agricultural land. It is within this landscape and pattern of rural development that the land upon which the sauna building and associated domestic paraphernalia now sits.

Whilst Sevington does not benefit from a Conservation Area Statement, the map included in Appendix 6 illustrates the extent of the Conservation Area and its coverage of large expanses of open fields along with interspersed buildings which includes Sevington Hall and the land upon which the sauna and associated paraphernalia is located.

Unfortunately, the comments received by the Wiltshire Council Conservation Officer were extremely limited and failed to reference or consider the impacts of the development upon the Sevington Conservation Area. Nevertheless, and as is required by statute and policy, such an assessment has been undertaken in the paragraphs below.

As is alluded in the previous paragraphs, the significance of the Sevington Conservation Area as a heritage asset is considered to lie in its value as a typical rural Wiltshire settlement, where listed and historic buildings are contextualised by open rural farmland. A large proportion of the conservation area is open fields free from domestic development, and this is clearly no accident.

The sauna is a highly domestic structure that is located outside of the residential curtilage of Sevington Hall. Due to its use for domestic purposes, it is accompanied by a range of other domestic paraphernalia and other associated surfaces and traces of activity. During the site

visit, it was observed that no immediately obvious similar forms of development or encroachment were present within the locality when viewed from public vantage points within the surrounding area. Similarly, there is planning history in the locality that suggests other similar domestic uses or building have been permitted to expand out beyond the established confines of domestic curtilages and garden areas. Such an intrusion into the countryside is at odds with the Conservation Area, which is defined by its historic, rural landscape. Given the lack of a natural barrier, it is unavoidable that the sauna building will be accompanied by the trappings of domestic activity, thereby likely to further erode that historic rural landscape over time.

Overt publicly accessible views of the development are perhaps limited, but glimpsed views are possible from road passing through the village, between the scattered buildings. Nevertheless, and acknowledging the interlinkage with the impacts to the landscape assessed in the design and appearance sub-section above, the openness and rural feel of the Conservation Area is eroded by the sauna building and associated domestic paraphernalia in a real sense and causes harm to it as a heritage asset.

In light of the meaningful erosion of the historic rural landscape that characterises the Sherston Conservation Area, and because the proposal is the first such intrusion into the fields beyond the well-established domestic curtilages, it is concluded that the proposal would cause harm to the significance of the Conservation Area as a heritage asset. As is mandated by policy HE6 to the NPPF, substantial weight should be given to the conservation of such heritage assets.

In this case, no public benefits can be identified as resulting from the proposal, and certainly nothing that can be described as enabling energy efficiency or low carbon heating, as identified in policy HE6.4. to the NPPF (in fact, the creation of a sauna in all likelihood increasing energy demands). As previously mentioned, it would appear that the property provides sufficient space for the placement of such domestic outbuildings and paraphernalia within the lawful domestic curtilage, as has been previously permitted under PL/2022/05902.

As is set out in policy HE6.3., any harm to a designated heritage asset is a matter of considerable importance. Accordingly, and in light of the foregoing, the proposed development is considered to fail to comply with Core Policy 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, Policy HE6 of the NPPF, as well as Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Amenity

Point vii of Core Policy 57 - Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that developments do not adversely affect neighbouring properties.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Policy P3, stresses that planning decisions should ensure developments provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

In this case, however, the development is somewhat distant from surrounding residential dwellings and occupiers and there is considered to be no impact upon their amenity or living conditions. The proposal therefore accords with Core Policy 57 point vii in respect of safeguarding residential amenity and relevant parts to Appendix D of the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Flood risk

Core Policy 67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that all new development avoids increasing flood risk on-site or elsewhere and, where appropriate, incorporates sustainable drainage measures.

The site lies within an area identified by mapping as having groundwater levels at or close to the ground surface, which indicates a potential susceptibility to groundwater flooding under certain conditions. In terms of footprint, the proposal sauna is a modest and temporary structure. All of the proposed works are wholly contained within the land owned by the applicant and in close proximity to the main dwelling and residential curtilage and it is not considered that the degree of additional footprint would result in a significant increase in impermeable surfacing.

Given the scale and nature of the development, it is not considered that the proposal would materially alter existing drainage patterns or increase surface water runoff to the detriment of neighbouring land or properties. A proportionate approach to surface water management is therefore considered appropriate, and the development is not expected to increase flood risk on or off the site. Therefore, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Policy 67 and the relevant provisions within the NPPF.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Householder planning applications are exempt from the requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain under Schedule 7A, Section 4(2)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by the Environment Act 2021.

CONCLUSION

The proposal constitutes an unjustified expansion of domestic activity and development into the open countryside.

The development erodes the openness of the field in which it is sited and would appear as an incongruous feature within the wider rural landscape, with no natural boundary which would stop the spread of the inevitably associated domestic paraphernalia.

The land is also located within the Sevington Conservation Area, the character of which is largely defined by open rural farmland interspersed with listed and other historic buildings and their well-defined domestic curtilages. The aforementioned intrusion of domestic activity and development into the open fields and setting of the conservation area will cause unjustified harm its significance as a heritage asset.

Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to fail the requirements of policies CP51, CP57 and CP58 to the Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as policies N2.1.a. and HE6 to the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reason:

By reason of its siting beyond the established residential curtilage of Sevington Hall on land which is open green field, the proposed development constitutes an unjustified encroachment of domestic development into the rural, historic landscape which is designed part of the Sevington Conservation Area. The development fails to protect, conserve and enhance the landscape character of the locality and fails to protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment. As a result, the proposal would cause unacceptable visual harm to the character and appearance of the area and the significance of the Conservation Area, which is not outweighed by any public benefits. Therefore, the proposal is considered contrary to policies CP57 and CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Design Guide and policies N2.1.a and HE6, to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Informative:

For the avoidance of doubt the application has been determined upon the submitted plans, namely

LPC 6344 01 – Location Plan received 08.05.26

LPC 6344 02 – Proposed Block Plan received 08.05.26

LPC 6344 PR 03 – Proposed Plan and Elevations received 08.05.26

Informative:

The proposal is not considered to constitute householder development within the residential curtilage of a dwellinghouse as defined by Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and therefore falls outside the scope of a householder planning application.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Site photographs submitted by applicant

Appendix 2 – Aerial imagery

Appendix 3 – Site photographs taken by case officer showing grassland/fields

Appendix 4 – Application PL/2022/05902 - approved plans, DAS, delegated report and decision notice

Appendix 5 – Extent of Sevington Conservation Area