

Land West of Marlborough Road, Royal Wootton Bassett

Reserved Matters – Councillor Review

Personal scrutiny note for discussion with the Chair of the Planning Committee

Purpose and status of this note

This is not presented as an expert planning, landscape, highways, drainage or ecological report. It is a structured review prepared from my own knowledge, research, competencies and experience in planning and development, and in my role as a Town Councillor considering matters brought before the Planning Committee. Its purpose is to identify questions, strengths, possible deficiencies and areas where the Town Council may reasonably seek better outcomes from the reserved-matters submission for 95 Marlborough Road.

I am providing it to the Chair so that any matters I would seek to raise in chamber can be raised, prioritised and expressed in a manner befitting the Planning Committee forum and the limited time available. It is intended to support focused discussion rather than to substitute for the professional advice of Wiltshire Council's planning, highways, drainage, landscape, ecology or other specialist officers.

How the RAG assessment is used- subjective

RED – unacceptable / a material deficiency. **AMBER** – minimum viable or conventional response; amendment or stronger evidence should be sought. **GREEN** – good, credible provision. **DARK GREEN** – clearly above ordinary provision / a particularly strong feature. Mixed ratings (e.g. Amber–Green) indicate that the provision has merit but has not yet been demonstrated at a consistently good standard.

Climate and weather reality relevant to a development being built now

- **Drought is already a Wiltshire/Wessex planning reality, not a distant scenario.** The Environment Agency moved Wessex, which includes Wiltshire, into drought on 29 July 2026. July 2026 brought only 2 mm of rain across Wessex (4% of the long-term average), the driest July since records began in 1871; soil moisture deficit was within 1 mm of the historic maximum for the time of year. [Environment Agency – Wessex July 2026](#)
- **Royal Wootton Bassett already has recorded flood history.** Wiltshire's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment records clusters of historical flood events around Royal Wootton Bassett and states that climate change will increase the intensity and frequency of rainfall across the South West, with all types of flooding, including surface-water flooding, expected to increase. [Wiltshire Level 1 SFRA 2024](#)
- **The direction of future change is well established.** For England by the 2070s, the Met Office's current UK Climate Projections show, under the high-emissions scenario, summers ranging up to 48% drier and 5.5°C warmer, while winter precipitation ranges up to 35% wetter. The Met Office also projects that the rainfall from a summer event typically occurring once every two years will increase by around 25%, increasing surface-water flood risk. [Met Office UK Climate Projections](#)

Accordingly, shade, mature canopy, drought-tolerant planting, water-sensitive design and robust exceedance/drainage arrangements are not optional aesthetic extras. They affect whether the neighbourhood remains usable, healthy and maintainable over the lifetime of homes now being permitted.

Full Reserved Matters Review

Issue	RAG assessment	What the submission shows / concern	Planning reason	What Good / Great looks like – and consequence if not achieved	Comparable example / benchmark
Overall placemaking / layout	AMBER – MVP (minimum viable product)	Technical components are present, but the combined layout is still more conventional housing layout than demonstrably distinctive place.	CP57 / national design policy: reserved layout should achieve a high standard of design, strong sense of place and positive response to context.	Good: clear street hierarchy, memorable spaces and landscape structuring the neighbourhood. Great: a place recognisable as RWB rather than a transferable housebuilder layout. If this is not achieved, the deficiency is effectively permanent once roads, plots and frontages are built.	The Avenue, Saffron Walden – 76 homes

Local identity / relationship to RWB	AMBER – MVP	Local distinctiveness is much weaker in the built core than in the landscape framework.	Failure adequately to respond to local context and reinforce local distinctiveness may conflict with CP57 and National Design Guide principles.	Use local grain, materials, boundary forms and landscape cues consistently. The consequence of generic character is not cosmetic: it reduces legibility, civic identity and the sense that the development belongs to the town.	Magna, Cambridge – 95 homes
Landscape-led masterplanning / GI	GREEN+ – GOOD to GREAT	Substantial connected peripheral GI, retained vegetation, native hedgerows, woodland, scrub, meadow, wet grassland and orchard planting are real strengths.	No wholesale objection is justified. Concern is whether the quality of the landscape framework is fully carried into the residential core.	Great schemes use landscape as the organising structure, not leftover green space. The objective should be for residents to experience habitat, shade and landscape through daily streets and routes, not only at the edge.	The Avenue – mature landscape drove the layout
Existing hedgerows	GREEN – GOOD	Most are retained; substantial new species-rich hedgerow is also proposed.	Material loss, fragmentation or development pressure reducing landscape/ecological function may engage CP50/51/57 and biodiversity policy.	Retained hedges need generous functional buffers, ecological management and protection from later garden encroachment or severe clipping. Failure leads to gradual erosion of the habitat corridor the scheme relies on.	Derwenthorpe – retained hedgelines structure neighbourhoods
Native species-rich hedgerows	DARK GREEN – GREAT	Substantial mixes include field maple, hazel, dogwood, hawthorn, spindle, holly, privet, blackthorn, wayfaring tree and oak.	No current objection. This is a particularly strong landscape/ecology element.	Secure establishment, replacement and appropriate cutting. Without management, the promised ecological value can diminish sharply after handover.	Derwenthorpe – hedgerows integrated with GI
Veteran / retained trees	GREEN+ – GOOD to GREAT	Five veteran trees are identified and retained buffers have influenced the layout.	Development, lighting, drainage, utilities or recreational pressure affecting irreplaceable habitat or functional buffers could conflict with national policy.	Treat veteran trees as long-term habitat assets: dark buffers, no intrusive utilities/drainage, no gradual garden encroachment and suitable veteran-tree management.	The Avenue – retention of mature trees as a design driver
Native woodland / scrub planting	DARK GREEN – GREAT	Substantial native woodland planting includes oak, hazel, field maple, dogwood, hawthorn, spindle, holly, privet, Scots pine and wayfaring tree.	No current reason for objection; delivery and long-term management are key.	Allow structural diversity and maturation into habitat rather than treating woodland as clipped ornamental estate planting. Failure of establishment would remove a major part of the scheme's claimed ecological gain.	Derwenthorpe – landscape/ecology as core infrastructure
Residential-core planting	AMBER – MVP	Residential areas repeatedly use conventional ornamental combinations (Fatsia, Phormium, laurel, Hebe, Photinia, Viburnum, Elaeagnus).	A repetitive standard palette may weaken local distinctiveness, biodiversity and landscape character under CP57, although repetition alone is unlikely to sustain refusal.	Carry the biodiversity quality of the edges into the streets: more pollinator value, seasonal flowering/fruitletting, greater species diversity and climate resilience. Otherwise residents live in a more generic landscape than the masterplan suggests.	The Avenue – each cluster responds to context
Street trees / mature canopy	AMBER – GREEN	Trees are shown, but ambitious mature canopy and adequate rooting conditions throughout the built core are not yet demonstrated.	If trees cannot establish and reach useful maturity, claimed tree-lined street, amenity and climate benefits are not deliverable.	Specify rooting volumes/soil, coordinate utilities around trees and demonstrate canopy at 20–30 years. Inadequate rooting produces small, failing trees, repeated replacement cost and little useful shade during the hottest decades of the development's life.	Goldsmith Street – tree-planted communal public realm, 105 homes
Climate resilience / summer shade	AMBER – MVP	No clear mature shade or thermal-comfort strategy demonstrates where people will actually find shade on routes, seating and play space.	Climate-responsive public realm is relevant to high-quality, resilient design. Current local evidence makes heat/drought resilience a foreseeable design requirement, not a speculative future concern.	Map 20–30 year canopy and shade over footways, seating and play; favour drought-resilient planting and shaded resting places. Wessex entered drought in July 2026 after its driest July since 1871; future summers are projected hotter and drier. Failure means public space can exist on paper but be uncomfortable or unusable during hot periods.	Goldsmith Street – usable, tree-planted communal areas
SuDS / attenuation landscape	GREEN – GOOD	Basins are integrated with wet-tolerant grassland and appropriate planting, so they are more than bare engineering features.	Concern would arise if safe amenity, biodiversity, landscape integration or exceedance performance are inadequate.	Great SuDS visibly combines drainage, wetland habitat, seasonal interest and public amenity where safe. Wiltshire's SFRA states heavier rainfall and surface-water flood risk will increase; the consequence of weak design is not merely aesthetic but greater exposure to flooding and costly retrofits.	Derwenthorpe – open ditches and ponds as ecological SuDS
Orchard	GREEN+ – GOOD to GREAT	A genuine orchard with named apple cultivars is shown around open-space/basin areas.	No current objection; this provides local character, food growing, biodiversity and seasonal interest.	Treat as community asset: accessible routes, interpretation, community stewardship, meadow understorey and replacement obligations. Without stewardship it risks becoming ornamental planting rather than productive community landscape.	No close same-size built comparator needed – the submitted concept itself is strong
Wildflower / wet meadow	GREEN – GOOD	EM2 general-purpose meadow and EM8 wetland meadow are used in GI areas.	No objection in principle; claimed value depends on establishment and management.	Use soil-appropriate establishment, cut regimes, arisings removal, monitoring and remedial reseedling. Poor management quickly converts diverse meadow into coarse grass, losing both biodiversity and the visual quality relied upon in the submission.	Derwenthorpe – habitat-rich landscape tied to SuDS
Flowering lawn / bulbs	GREEN – GOOD	Flowering lawn and native bulb drifts provide seasonal and pollinator value.	No present objection.	Minimise intensively mown amenity grass where it has no recreational function. Species-rich lawn and bulbs improve forage, seasonal character and maintenance resilience.	National Design Guide – nature and multifunctional green infrastructure
Play provision	AMBER – MVP	Play/trim-trail provision exists, but it has not yet demonstrated a rich offer across ages, abilities and weather conditions.	If range, accessibility or quality is inadequate for the population generated, layout/landscape may fail to provide inclusive and functional public space.	Combine formal/natural play, play-on-the-way, shade, seating and varied challenge. If not, children congregate in roads/parking areas or families travel elsewhere for basic recreation, undermining walkable-neighbourhood objectives.	Goldsmith Street – safe shared play space and separate play area, 105 homes

Teenagers / older children	RED-AMBER	General open space and a trim trail do not by themselves demonstrate a meaningful place for teenagers.	Failure to cater for different age groups may undermine inclusive and socially functional open-space provision.	Provide social seating, informal activity and legitimate places for teenagers to gather without being treated as a nuisance. If not designed in, informal congregation shifts to entrances, parking courts or play spaces intended for younger children, often creating avoidable conflict.	Derwenthorpe – play facilities for all ages (larger scheme, principle transferable)
Inclusive play / public realm	AMBER-GREEN	Technical accessibility is not the same as evidence that disability, age, sensory and mobility needs shaped the design.	Unnecessary barriers or exclusion from public space may conflict with inclusive-design objectives and high-quality design.	Step-free direct routes, usable gradients/crossings, accessible seating, inclusive play and uncluttered footways. Poor inclusion is difficult and expensive to retrofit after levels, kerbs and play landscapes are fixed.	Goldsmith Street – communal spaces designed for everyday resident use
Walking priority	AMBER-GREEN	Pedestrian connections exist, but pedestrian priority is not yet clearly the organising principle of the street hierarchy.	Vehicle-dominated junctions, indirect routes or over-engineered geometry can undermine safe, attractive streets and sustainable movement.	Direct desire lines, continuous footways/raised tables where appropriate, tight radii and clear pedestrian priority. If everyday routes feel subordinate to cars, short local journeys shift to driving and streets lose their social function.	Goldsmith Street – deliberately narrow streets and pedestrian-focused layout
Cycling	AMBER-GREEN	Cycle storage/provision exists, but the submission does not yet prove a coherent child-friendly cycling environment.	Failure to provide safe, direct and convenient cycling can undermine sustainable transport and healthy-place objectives.	Test whether a 10-year-old can safely cycle through the neighbourhood; provide secure convenient storage and logical onward links. A route that technically permits cycling but feels unsafe will not meaningfully change travel behaviour.	Homes England / Building for a Healthy Life approach
Parking dominance	AMBER – MVP	Private drives, on-plot parking and parking courts are prominent components of the layout.	Excessive visual/physical dominance of parking can harm streetscape quality and sense of place under CP57 and national design principles.	Cars should be accommodated without becoming the dominant view: trees, entrances, landscape and people should define streets. If parking dominates from day one, later landscaping rarely overcomes it.	Goldsmith Street – housing/public realm not visually organised around parking
Highway geometry / servicing	AMBER – MVP risk	Vehicle tracking is supplied; the question is whether infrequent large vehicles have driven unnecessarily broad or vehicle-led street geometry.	Over-engineered geometry can increase vehicle speeds and weaken pedestrian priority, placemaking and safety.	Accommodate emergency/refuse access without allowing those occasional movements to determine the everyday character of all streets. Once road geometry is built it is difficult to correct without major works.	Streets for a Healthy Life – national practice guidance
Street lighting / ecological corridors	AMBER – needs evidence	Streetlighting sits beside retained hedges, woodland and veteran-tree habitat.	Avoidable illumination of sensitive habitats may undermine biodiversity protection and functional ecological corridors.	Provide lux contours demonstrating genuinely dark corridors while pedestrian routes remain safely lit. Poorly located lighting can fragment otherwise connected habitat and cannot be solved by planting alone.	National Design Guide – integrated nature/public realm
Biodiversity within housing areas	AMBER-GREEN	Ecological planting is strongest at site edges/open space; internal residential landscaping is more conventional.	Confining enhancement largely to peripheral GI may fail to maximise multifunctional GI opportunities.	Use pollinator-rich street planting, rain gardens and connected habitat through the built core. Otherwise biodiversity becomes something surrounding the estate rather than part of residents' daily environment.	Fanshawe Road, Cambridge – 35% BNG, green corridor, trees/wildflowers
Landscape connectivity	GREEN+ – GOOD to GREAT	Peripheral vegetation, native hedges, woodland, scrub and meadow form a connected network.	No current objection on connectivity itself.	Extend connection through residential streets and protect it from lighting/boundary severance. Connectivity is more ecologically resilient than isolated habitat pockets.	Derwenthorpe – connected landscape structure
Allotments	GREEN – GOOD concept	Allotments sit beside significant green infrastructure; practical usability still needs scrutiny.	Objection would need evidence that access, water, soil, sunlight, accessibility, servicing or management make them unsuitable.	Good sunlight, water, accessible paths, storage/composting, rainwater harvesting, biodiversity and practical servicing. If basics are absent, nominal allotment provision can become poorly used or abandoned.	Shenley Grange – current 95-home proposal with substantial public open space (not yet a built precedent)
Boundary treatments	AMBER – needs verification	Boundary design must work with street character, surveillance and habitat permeability.	Harsh or impermeable boundaries facing public realm can harm streetscape, natural surveillance and ecological connectivity.	Use hedges/low walls to public fronts where appropriate, robust rear boundaries only where needed, and habitat permeability where compatible with security. Poor boundaries can turn green corridors into fenced leftover spaces.	The Avenue – strong defensible space without signage
EV charging	AMBER – baseline	EV provision is now an expected technical component, not evidence by itself of exceptional sustainability.	No objection merely because provision is baseline unless a specific policy requires more.	Future-proof capacity, visitor charging and sensible cable management. The greater design opportunity is reducing car dependence rather than only electrifying it.	No special precedent required – benchmark against applicable Building Regulations / local policy
Cycle storage	AMBER – MVP	Storage is only meaningful if secure, covered, convenient and sized for real household use.	Inaccessible, insecure or undersized storage less convenient than car parking may undermine sustainable transport objectives.	Immediate access, secure covered space and capacity for children's/adapted/cargo cycles where appropriate. Poor storage is a predictable barrier to daily cycling.	Building for a Healthy Life 2026

Affordable housing / tenure blindness	AMBER – needs verification	Affordable housing forms part of the wider scheme, but detailed integration needs checking.	Inferior siting, treatment or access to amenity can undermine mixed, inclusive community and design objectives.	Externally tenure-blind homes with equal-quality landscape, parking and access to open space. Visible tenure segregation embeds inequality into the physical layout.	Magna – 95 homes, 40% affordable, integrated mixed tenure
Open-space functionality	AMBER – needs scrutiny	Quantity of green area does not automatically equal usable recreation; ecological/drainage land and narrow residual spaces perform different functions.	If quantity, distribution, accessibility or quality of usable open space is inadequate, this may conflict with applicable open-space requirements and CP57.	Each space should have a clear function and be accessible, overlooked and comfortable. Counting inaccessible or mainly drainage/ecological land as equivalent to everyday recreation can overstate what residents actually receive.	Shenley Grange – current 95-home proposal advertises 39.4% public open space (proposal, not built precedent)
Long-term stewardship	AMBER – insufficiently demonstrated	The ambitious planting package depends on establishment, replacement, meadow cuts, woodland management and clear ownership.	Where management is necessary to make landscape, SuDS, ecology or open space acceptable, insecure management can undermine deliverability.	Specify ownership, funding, replacement obligations, measurable habitat/canopy standards and monitoring. Without this, impressive plans can degrade within years and residents inherit the cost and visual/ecological failure.	The Avenue – mature landscape has demonstrably endured over time
Overall climate adaptation	AMBER– GREEN	GI helps materially, but the package does not yet read as a neighbourhood deliberately designed around hotter/drier summers, wetter winters and more intense rainfall.	Insufficient climate-responsive layout/landscape can weaken design quality and resilience under national/local objectives.	Integrate shade, mature canopy, drought resilience, water-sensitive landscape, exceedance routes and low-car movement. This is supported by actual 2026 Wessex drought conditions and Wiltshire's own flood-risk evidence.	Goldsmith Street – 105-home development designed around long-term environmental performance
Overall ambition beyond minimum	AMBER– GREEN	Some elements clearly exceed bare minimums, particularly peripheral landscape; too much of the residential/public-realm offer remains conventional.	Technical compliance alone does not demonstrate the high standard of design and strong sense of place sought by CP57. Formal objection should identify the specific design deficiencies.	Carry the ambition of GI, orchard, woodland and native planting through the streets, play, movement and public realm. A 95-home scheme of comparable scale can demonstrably achieve more: Magna is 95 homes; Goldsmith Street is 105.	Magna (95) and Goldsmith Street (105)

Comparable developments and practice references

- [Goldsmith Street, Norwich – 105 homes](#) – Completed 2019; RIBA Stirling Prize winner. 105 Passivhaus social-rent homes with communal landscaped amenity, safe shared space for younger children's play, benches/picnic tables and a separate play area accessible to the wider community.
- [Magna, Cambridge – 95 homes](#) – A directly comparable number of homes: 95 mixed-tenure homes (40% affordable) with a deliberately contextual design and high-quality landscaped public space.
- [The Avenue, Saffron Walden – 76 homes](#) – A slightly smaller market-town scheme where retention of mature trees drove the site planning; local grain, materials and character were used to create distinct clusters. RIBA National Award winner.
- [Derwenthorpe, York – larger scheme, relevant practice comparator](#) – Not a size comparator, but useful for specific principles: retained hedgerows structuring neighbourhoods, open ditches/ponds as ecological SuDS, pedestrian-friendly lanes, home zones and play for all ages.
- [Shenley Grange – current 95-home proposal](#) – Not offered as a completed precedent. Useful only as a current same-scale comparator: the proposal advertises 39.4% public open space and a landscape-led approach.

Key evidence / practice sources

- [Building for a Healthy Life 2026](#)
- [National Design Guide](#)
- [Streets for a Healthy Life](#)
- [Met Office – heavy rainfall and flood projections](#)

- [Met Office – UKCP18 2025 England projections](#)
- [Environment Agency – Wessex water situation July 2026](#)
- [Wiltshire Council – Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024](#)