

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

James Weddell RIBA
Senior Urban Design Officer
Wiltshire Council

Date: 27.05.2026

22.09.2026 Revised drawings and documents indexed 19th to the 21st August 2026. Comment in blue below (✗ indicates where Reason not addressed or not satisfactorily addressed - ✓ indicates where reason has been addressed or mostly addressed with recommendations).

Application No: PL/2026/02472

Proposal: Reserved Matters Application for Landscaping, Appearance, Layout and Scale for 54 dwellings following outline planning permission PL/2023/01880 approved at appeal (APP/Y3940/W/24/3352160)

Site Address: Land Rear of 117, High Street, Dilton Marsh

Case Officer: Jemma Foster

Reference:

Drawings and documents indexed 16th to the 30th April on the application webpage.

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (Abbreviated CP57)
- Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Pre-Submission Draft 202-2038 (Regulation 19) (September 2023) (abbreviated WLPR)
- Wiltshire Design Guide – Wiltshire Council Supplementary Planning Document adopted 25th March 2024 (abbreviated WDG)
- National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG December 2024) (abbreviated NPPF)
- National Design Guide (MHCLG January 2021) (abbreviated NDG)
- Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England June 2020) (referenced in the NPPF) (abbreviated BfHL)
- Streets for a Healthy Life: A companion guide to Building for a Healthy Life (Homes England) (abbreviated SFHL)
- Dilton Marsh Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2038 (Made September 2025) (abbreviated DMNDP)

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

At Full Council on 19 May, the elected members of Wiltshire Council agreed to withdraw the emerging WLP. It will now be subject to a legal process to finalise its withdrawal - which is likely to happen in July or August (2026). The said Plan has no material weight for the purposes of the application.

Observations

The Outline Planning Permission (ref: PL/2023/01880) was granted at Appeal (ref: APP/Y3940/W/24/3352160) on the 21st February 2025. Condition 3 sets out that the following Reserved Matters are to be carried out in accordance with the approved details:

- The scale of the development;
- The layout of the development;
- The external appearance of the development;
- The landscaping of the site.

Condition 4 sets out that the layout and the scale of the development is to be carried out broadly in accordance with the approved following plans:

- BNG Plan (Ref: LVA103_3601F);
- and Ecological Parameters Plan (Ref: 1321.v7).

While the proposals generally accord with the approved plans, the following matters require resolution to enable approval of the reserved matters.

Objection

Layout

- 1) The approved Eco Parameters Plan (EPP) indicates drainage attenuation areas to the rear of Plots 6 to 8A, St Mary's Lane. This arrangement was also reflected in the proposed site layout presented during community engagement.

However, the Site Layout shows an electricity substation and a pumping station within this location. The pumping station in particular appears to be located potentially within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of existing vegetation.

The proposed siting of these facilities lies outside the defined built development and road infrastructure areas (shaded yellow) on the approved EPP and encroaches into the identified bat corridors along the site boundaries.

Recommendation: It is therefore considered that these facilities should be located within the areas shaded yellow on the approved EPP, in accordance with the approved parameters and to avoid conflict with ecological constraints.

✓ Whilst the relocation of the pumping station outside the Root Protection Area and the repositioning of the electricity substation adjacent to Plot 7 are welcomed, the revised location of the LAP raises significant concerns. The LAP is now positioned adjacent to Plot 36 on the periphery of the development, resulting in a space that is poorly overlooked, disconnected from the primary movement network and remote from much of the residential catchment. The location gives the appearance of a residual space rather than a purposeful community asset and is unlikely to provide the level of accessibility, activity, safety and natural surveillance expected of children's play provision. The proposal therefore conflicts with the WDG, BfHL and the NDG objectives relating to the provision of attractive, safe, well-used and overlooked public spaces. A more central location integrated within the site's green infrastructure and overlooked by a greater number of dwellings should be provided

- 2) The Design and Access Statement (DAS) proposes the incorporation of rain gardens within new green infrastructure to create attractive and welcoming public spaces accessible to the wider community. This is welcomed, however, it is noted that many of the rain gardens are located within the front and rear curtilages of individual dwellings.

It is unclear how these rain gardens will be maintained and managed. If responsibility is to fall to individual homeowners, there is significant uncertainty as to how their long-term effectiveness and longevity will be ensured.

Recommendation: Rain gardens should be located within the public realm, such as within street verges or other shared public spaces, to ensure appropriate management, maintenance, and long-term functionality.

✓ Urban Design supports the Drainage Officer's comments. Whilst the covering letter states that the proposed rain gardens have been removed, it is evident that the drainage strategy is not reliant upon these features and remains acceptable in principle. However, it is disappointing that these source-control SuDS features have been omitted, particularly as no clear justification for their removal has been provided. In addition to their drainage function, rain gardens can contribute positively to the quality of the public realm, biodiversity, visual amenity and the delivery of multifunctional green infrastructure. Their retention should therefore be encouraged where feasible.

- 3) It is unclear from the submitted information whether the proposed landscape buffers/ecological corridors along the site boundaries adjoining the rear gardens of existing dwellings are intended to be publicly accessible or gated to restrict access. Unrestricted public access in these locations could result in security and privacy impacts for neighbouring and new residential properties. The existing properties along the southern boundary front onto, and are accessed from, the High Street. These properties have small rear garden areas adjoining the site, enclosed by a variety of boundary treatments.

The proposed incorporation of open space along this edge to accommodate a below-ground sewer and associated easement introduces a potential security risk to both existing and proposed dwellings, due to increased accessibility.

Recommendation: The open space along the southern boundary, up to the fronts of plots 7 and 43, should be enclosed and gated to restrict public access. This area should be managed and maintained as part of the overall site management arrangement.

✓ New fences and gates have been added to create protected corridors along the southern boundary.

Landscaping

- 4) While the proposed Site Layout introduces orchard planting to the rear of St Mary's Lane, this is considered a suboptimal location in terms of visibility and public accessibility. The orchard should be relocated to a more prominent and accessible position within the site, with a preference for inclusion within the Public Open Space (POS) and visible from the primary route.

In addition, the Site Layout fails to maximise opportunities for more comprehensive woodland planting, particularly along the northern and western boundaries. Given that Wiltshire falls within the newly established Western Forest - a National Forest initiative aimed at significantly increasing canopy cover - this represents a missed opportunity.

The objectives of the National Forest programme are a material planning consideration under paragraph 152 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), which supports climate change mitigation and environmental enhancement through increased tree cover.

There is a clear opportunity to provide strategic woodland planting to the rear of St Mary's Lane, extending the existing woodland along this edge. This approach would enhance landscape connectivity, strengthen boundary treatment, and contribute to increased canopy cover in line with national and regional objectives.

Recommendation:

To support the objectives of the Western Forest and comply with NPPF paragraph 152, the development should incorporate substantial woodland planting along the northern, eastern, and western boundaries. This would create a robust landscape buffer, improve ecological connectivity, and deliver a more significant and policy-compliant contribution to long-term canopy cover.

✖ As noted in response 1 above, the orchard previously shown within the eastern green corridor has been replaced by the proposed LAP. However, the Cover Letter states that the orchard remains in its indicated location, stating retention of the orchard in this area would provide significant benefits in terms of biodiversity enhancement, habitat connectivity, green infrastructure provision and the creation of a softer, more attractive development edge adjoining the eastern boundary. The submitted plans do not clearly identify the orchard or demonstrate how these benefits are to be achieved, and clarification is therefore required.

Similarly, the Cover Letter states that substantial woodland planting has been added to the scheme in alignment with the Western Forest initiative and NPPF paragraph 152. While this approach is supported in principle, it is not evident from the submitted plans where this woodland planting is proposed, nor how it contributes to landscape integration, biodiversity enhancement and climate resilience objectives. Further information should therefore be provided to clearly identify the location, extent and function of the proposed woodland planting. Note the comment below regarding street trees, woodland planting in groups rather than individual trees/tree lines would also be more suitable for a village setting.

- 5) Tree-lined streets are a fundamental component of high-quality urban design and are strongly advocated by national and local guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Building for a Healthy Life (BfHL), and the Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG). The incorporation of street trees, layered landscaping, and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) contributes to well-defined, visually cohesive, and healthy streets and public spaces.

Within the submitted layout, notable exceptions occur where continuous street tree planting is absent, particularly within the arrival area and along the primary route. This approach conflicts with the expectations of NPPF paragraph 136, which promotes high-quality, well-designed places that create a strong sense of place and integrate nature into streets and neighbourhoods. The absence of trees on these streets risks weaker street character, reduced environmental benefits, and poorer overall placemaking outcomes.

Recommendation: To ensure compliance with the NPPF, BfHL, and the Wiltshire Design Guide, all new streets - including lower-hierarchy streets - should incorporate appropriate street tree planting. To safeguard their long-term retention, management, and contribution to the public realm, street trees and associated landscaping should be located within communal, publicly managed areas rather than within private plots, as currently proposed along several internal streets.

✓ Although the Cover Letter states that trees have been introduced to the access as well as secondary streets, urban design would support the Conservation Officer's observation that the submitted plans show isolated trees within the street scene, but groups of trees are considered to be better for the trees and offer a more informal plan, which is more suitable for a village setting.

Appearance

- 6) Some street/street corner return elevations and street/open space corner return elevations have attractively placed and proportioned windows utilising house types that are consciously designed for this purpose (Banbury, Foxham, Elmhurst for example), but there are the following exceptions below. These would represent 'what red looks like' BfHL (pp 54-55) rather than the preferred 'what green looks like' (pp 52-53), and WDG expectation 4.2.8. *'Where buildings are on a corner both public elevations should be designed as 'frontages' and have windows from habitable rooms in them'.*

- Sherbourne – has a first floor WC window only
✓ Sherston type now includes a living room window on corner turning plots.
- Axminster – has a small ground floor dining room window only. This not considered as a well arranged 'frontage' elevation.
✓ Axminster type now has habitable windows to the corner turning type.

Recommendation: In order to comply with WDG 4.2.8, the return elevations of the above house types should be redesigned as active and attractive frontages, with habitable room windows provided. This approach would improve the visual quality of the proposed development and strengthen natural surveillance of the adjoining public realm.

Materials

- 7) WDG paragraph 9.3.5 states that “the interface between a private rear plot boundary and an adjacent public or shared space (including highways, public open space (POS) and parking courts) should generally use robust masonry walls or decorative metal or timber railings, as opposed to close-boarded or panel fencing.”

The submitted Materials Plan does not accord with this expectation, as it indicates fencing along some interfaces including plots 1 to 7, 8 to 14, 36 to 41, 42 to 50, and 51 to 54. This form of boundary treatment is not considered appropriate where private rear gardens adjoin public or shared spaces and fails to meet the design expectations set out within the WDG.

Recommendation: To ensure compliance with WDG paragraph 9.3.5, all boundaries interfacing with public or shared spaces should be revised to comprise robust masonry wall treatments, with the Dwelling Boundary Material Layout plan amended accordingly.

✓ The Cover Letter states that walls have been added rather than fences, except for 1-7, 43 -53 as the space behind is now an enclosed ecology corridor with no public access. This would be acceptable. Note that the Dwelling and Boundary Materials Layout does not show the return boarded fence behind plot 54 and this should be amended.

- 8) Railings enclosing front spaces are not a common feature locally. Low stone front boundary walls are a defining feature of the historic character of this part of Wiltshire and are particularly prominent along the High street and St Marys Lane. Their incorporation within the arrival area and along the primary route would reinforce local distinctiveness and help integrate the proposed development sensitively within its established context, in accordance with national and local design guidance.

Recommendation: Strengthen the character and sense of enclosure of the arrival area and primary route through the inclusion of low stone boundary walls at key entrance points and along the frontages of dwellings.

✓ The Cover Letter states that low stone walls have been introduced along the arrival space and primary street. The Dwelling and Boundary Materials Layout indicates the location of 600mm-high stone walls throughout these areas. However, the Street Elevations depict a mix of low stone and brick walls. This approach more effectively reflects the material palette of the adjacent dwellings and would create a more varied and coherent streetscape. To ensure consistency across the submitted documents, the Dwelling and Boundary Materials Layout should be amended to reflect the wall treatments shown on the Street Elevations.

- 9) The Materials Plan should provide a detailed specification for all proposed materials, rather than broad or generic descriptions (e.g. Roof colour: red or grey; Brick colour: Red or Red Multi; Stone colour and render colour: tbc). Specifications should clearly identify the material type, colour, finish and, where possible, manufacturer.

In particular, any red brick should be an **orangey-red** tone in order to accord with WDG paragraph 3.1.10, which states that “*stone, orangey-red brickwork and render are the common building materials across this part of the county.*”

Recommendation: A schedule of materials should be provided and supported by physical samples, preferably displayed within an on-site sample panel, to enable a full and accurate assessment of the proposed materials prior to determination.

✓ The matter has been partially addressed with a more detailed specification included on the Dwelling and Boundary Material Plan. Though the materials chosen could be acceptable in principle, a sample panel should be provided on site as requested above. This matter could be controlled by an appropriate Condition.

Conclusion

The Above recommendations should be considered to ensure that the development proposals meet the high-quality design and place shaping requirements of CP57.

Design Review

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the importance of design review in securing high quality development. Accordingly, major development proposals are encouraged to undergo independent design review at an early stage of the design process. The NPPF states that significant weight should be given to designs that “help to raise the standard of design more generally in an area”, with the draft revised NPPF proposing to increase this to substantial weight. Where a scheme has been subject to independent review and endorsement and can demonstrate how the proposal will raise design standards within the locality, this may attract significant weight in the planning balance.

Where a scheme has undergone independent design review, the Council will take the panel's recommendations into account as part of its assessment and decision-making process. The Council's Urban Design Team can provide further advice on design review options and the value this can add to the development process.