

DATE
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WHL REF
26.2176

Mr Tim Pierce
c/o Stella Turner,
Fowler Architecture and Planning,
39 High Street,
Pewsey,
Wiltshire,
SN9 5AF

Dear Tim and Stella,

Proposed replacement dwelling at Hodd's Hill Cottage, Baydon Manor Farm, Marridge Hill

1. The following comments are made in respect of the Proposed Site Plan and Garage 230116 - 02 and Design Scheme 260116-03D prepared by Fowler Architecture and Planning in April 2026.

THE PROPOSALS

2. The current layout plan is presents a scheme for the development of a replacement dwelling to the south of Baydon Manor Farm, comprising a single detached dwelling and detached garage. The existing bungalow, in the south-west corner of the farm complex will be demolished. The proposed dwelling will have access taken through the existing paddock access from the lane passing the site which provides vehicular access to the farm buildings and the currently redundant Marridge Hill Chicken Farm.

3. The proposals also include the provision of an access and hardstanding within the northern and eastern parts of the site and a garden area, which will take up the north-east part of the paddock in which the site is located. If required, there is ample space for SuDs features within the wider area, outside the site and away from the front boundary vegetation, but in the ownership of the applicant.

SITE ANALYSIS

4. The proposed development site comprises part of a small well enclosed pastoral paddock, taking an area of approximately 60m x 40m, located to the east of the access lane and abutting the southern edge of Baydon Manor Farm, and to the north of the Baydon Manor grounds. The site lies in open countryside in the small

hamlet of Marridge Hill, high on the Marlborough Downs, with limited access to the nearest population centres; the villages of Baydon, Aldbourne and Ramsbury.

5. This part of the Marlborough Downs forms a relatively flat (216m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)), in places well-treed, plateau lying close to Wiltshire County boundary with West Berkshire. To the west the land falls a way steeply towards Aldbourne, in a series of steep-sided dry valleys creating a complex chalk downland topography. To the north and east the plateau continues, but with a steep-sided valley separating the site from Membury Airfield, M4 Service Station and industrial park. To the south the landform drops gently into the winterbourne valley of the River Aldbourne, which flows south-east to join the River Kennet just south of the hamlet of Whittonditch. Despite its high elevation, the site is remarkably well-contained by trees and the built form.

6. The site itself is currently in agricultural use, forming part of a series of pastoral paddocks between the Baydon Manor to the southgrounds and the Baydon Manor Farm buildings. The western part of the paddock area has been further informally split into a series of fenced small paddocks. To the east the land is bordered by a dense overgrown, mixed hedgerow, many of the plants of which have reached the proportions of small trees, allowing filtered views of the site from the lane. There is no tree or hedge cover within the site itself. A single oak tree in the south-east corner of the site forms a prominent feature, whereas the ash trees in the hedgeline appear to be suffering from ash dieback. In the southern part of the paddock area is a tall and rusted water tower, south of which are a row of mature trees dividing the land from the Baydon Manor grounds. The northern boundary of the site is contiguous with the site boundary and is formed by a purely functional wire fence separating the site from informal farm storage and a general purpose farm building.

7. On the eastern side of the road, opposite the site, are two pairs of semi-detached cottages and a chicken farm. Apart from one of the cottages, the entire built form and their grounds appears to be unoccupied and in a state of increasing disrepair. One very large oak tree dominates the frontages of the dwellings. The former chicken farm is not visible from the lane.

8. There are no natural environment designations present within or directly adjacent to the proposed development area. There are two listed structures at Baydon Manor; the conservatory immediately north, north-east of the Manor and; Baydon Manor itself, both of which are Grade II listed, but from which intervisibility with the site is notably restricted by a dense tree cover. However, the site and surrounding

landscape is covered by the statutory landscape designation of the of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

9. Visually the site is afforded a high level of containment within the hamlet by virtue of the existing built form to the north and east and the flat landform, as well as a strong landscape structure of mature trees which are characteristic of the Marridge Hill plateau. The only views of the site are from the lane passing it. There are no views from the surrounding network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW), including the close by footpath RAMS27 which cuts through the Baydon Manor Farm buildings.

10. Despite the high elevation of the site views into it from public viewpoints will be limited, but vegetation, landform and existing buildings will ensure that the wider visual envelope is also extremely limited. Long views will be minimal and potentially from the west only, however, the nearest equivalent high point to the west is around 4km from the site on the high ground beyond Aldbourne, from where a dwelling of the scale and massing proposed, in close proximity to the existing farm buildings, will not be readily perceptible.



Close distance view south, taken from lane passing the site. Baydon Manor Farm is on the right, with footpath RAMS27 following the farm access immediately to the right. The dwelling is proposed to be located in the paddock behind the storage container and other farm storage. It will be filtered by intervening vegetation and further contained by a backdrop of mature trees. To receptors using the lane for recreation the dwelling will appear subservient to the farm buildings.



Proposed site access. The vegetation on either side should be retained and managed to retain the lane side landscape structure. The farm boundary would benefit from tidying up and the planting of mixed native hedging.



Close distance view north, taken from the lane passing the site. To the right is the access to the cottage garages adjacent to the prominent oak tree. To the left the lane side vegetation forms a screen to the proposed dwelling and an important landscape feature for receptors using the lane for recreation. Retention of the vegetation is important and therefore the development must be kept a sufficient distance from the boundary to ensure adequate root protection.

LANDSCAPE POLICY AND GUIDANCE

11. The August 2026 NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Of particular relevance to this report is Section 19. Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, specifically Policy N2: Improving the Natural Environment, which states that *“To contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature’s recovery, development proposals should”*:

- a) *Consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development, including habitats, landscape character and the natural beauty of the countryside, and identify opportunities for those qualities to be conserved or enhanced (including through requirements for biodiversity net gain where these apply);*

and:

- b) *Conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value (such as established trees and hedgerows) where possible; and use appropriate landscaping to help create a well-designed place and integrate the development into its surroundings;*

12. Furthermore, in terms of protected landscapes, Policy N4 states:

1. Development proposals within Protected Landscapes should be limited in scale and extent and sensitively located and designed to avoid harm to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the Protected Landscape. Substantial weight should be placed on the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of these areas, and to conserving and enhancing wildlife and cultural heritage in National Parks and the Broads.

4. Development proposals within the setting of Protected Landscapes should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the Protected Landscape.

13. The 2025 -2030 North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan details the requirements to prevent the over-development and conservation of local landscape character through the development of sites. Of particular relevance is Planning and Development Policies, Policy DE11, which states states:

Maintain the rural character and valued qualities of the National Landscape by preventing over-development of sites and the erosion of local character. The following should be considered:

- *The overall size, scale and massing of the replacement dwelling and/ or extension compared to the original (new dwellings should not be materially larger in terms of volume).*
- *Site context and local context including natural and built character and features, visual prominence and the local vernacular.*
- *Relationship within the local street scene / countryside and potential to unbalance this.*

14. In terms of local policy, Core Policy 51: 'Landscape' and Core Policy 57 'Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping' are the most relevant to the scope of this document. The policies can be found in full in the Wiltshire Core Strategy; however, to summarise; Core Policy 51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance

Wiltshire's distinctive landscape¹ character; Core Policy 57 sets out how the Core Strategy will ensure that development contributes towards:

- *achieving high quality buildings and spaces that reinforce a sense of identity*
- *a well-integrated development, which makes a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire's urban and rural environments by complementing valuable contextual features and buildings*
- *protection and enhancement of Wiltshire's heritage assets*
- *ensuring that places with national and international designations receive the highest level of protection.*

15. The North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment 2025 sets of the Landscape Guidance for the Open Downland (LCT 1) landscape within which the site is located. Relevant to this project are the following guidelines:

- *Retain the sparse settlement pattern. Consider the cumulative impact of incremental changes to the small villages through extensions, which may change the character of the settlements.*
- *Conserve the rural roads and lanes, minimising small-scale incremental change such as signage, fencing and kerbing, or improvements to the road network which could change their character. Promote the use of traditional signage features, using local styles and materials. Ensure any road lighting schemes retain the experience of dark night skies within the open downland.*
- *Protect the remote, tranquil character of the open downland. Consider the siting and colours used for any new agricultural barns or equestrian development so they do not disturb the open horizon and sinuosity of the smooth downland landscape as little as possible.*
- *Conserve the dark skies and minimise lighting, with new lighting only introduced where necessary. Consider the impact of lighting on night-time views from lower ground as well as within the locality.*

16. The Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment provides a landscape strategy for each of the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified within the assessment. In the case the Landscape Character Area is Marlborough Downs LCA 1A, which is one of two character areas within the overarching LCT 1: Open Downland.

Landscape Strategy:

The overall strategy Open Downland Landscape Type is to conserve the inherent remoteness, isolation and simplicity of the downland landscape and its important ecological, historic and geological features.

¹ The term 'landscape' here is used to refer to the built, historic and natural environment in urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

17. The Kennet Landscape Conservation Strategy offers specific implementation principles for development within the eleven landscape character areas identified in the East Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment. In respect of the Marlborough Downs (LCA 2), it notes that:

Where development essential to the rural economy can be justified, it will be sensitively sited to make use of existing topographical features and woodland plantings, with additional new planting to further mitigate visual impact. Additionally, it should as far as possible be located within the existing built form. Where development is permitted on the fringes of settlements it will be sensitively located to ensure that there is minimal harm to the character and visual integrity of the landscape and that it is suitably landscaped using native species.

18. The document also classifies the land across the district into three categories: Conserve, Strengthen, and Repair. The site and the land surrounding it falls within the 'Strengthen' category. To achieve this, it is recommended that native hedgerows around the site to create the garden boundaries, and also the management of the road frontage vegetation to ensure the conservation of the character of the lane and the wider landscape is undertaken. The area in which the existing bungalow is located should be cleared of domestic paraphernalia and reinstated has herb-rich downland meadow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

19. The proposed development of a single dwelling within the site and is coupled with the removal of the existing bungalow, which has extensive views out to the west, and presumably views from the open countryside towards it, is particularly welcomed. A two-storey dwelling within the site proposed will have a limited visual impact if constructed using traditional materials of the local vernacular, and with limited external lighting so as to retain the dark skies environment. It would complement the development form found on Marridge Hill, with sparse residential development, often associated with local agricultural or equestrian landuses, set back from the road edge. In this case the roadside vegetation is of high landscape and visual importance and should be retained and managed.

20. The garage is located beside the farm storage barn, so their visual impact will be very limited and largely toned down by the adjacent building.

21. Potential effects on the character and appearance of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, as well as close distance views of development from the adjacent lane and PRoW, are key considerations when it comes to refining the design. However, as stated above, the potential visual impact of the development is very limited.

However, in addition to the retention of the lane side vegetation, including that to the north of the proposed access, it is recommended that the remaining boundaries are planted with appropriate hedging and trees to maintain and enhance the character of the receiving landscape. As mentioned in **18.** above the area in which the existing bungalow is located should be cleared of domestic paraphernalia and reinstated as herb-rich downland meadow to create a further landscape enhancement.

22. Therefore, space needs to be provided for a well-hedged boundary, alongside strategic tree planting, to fully define the site within the landscape. All planting along the site boundaries will need to comprise native species characteristic of the local area and include native tree species indigenous to the area. Hedging will be a hawthorn-based mix and trees dominated by pedunculate oak, field maple and silver birch.

23. Retention of the existing tree and hedge at the site frontage is important in providing the development with an established landscape structure, and as previously stated, the final site layout will be guided by the requirements of BS5837(2012) 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction. Recommendations.' It is acknowledged that considerable management of this boundary planting will be required to ensure its long-term viability.

24. From a preliminary review, it would appear, given the site's relationship with existing farm buildings to the north and the residential properties to the east, affording a high level of containment within the wider landscape, that the site is an appropriate area for a single dwelling in landscape and visual terms.

25. However, the LPA may require an appropriately detailed and proportionate Landscape and Visual Report, to accompany any formal application for the proposed development of the replacement dwelling and ancillary features to help give confidence that the potential effects have been appropriately considered.

Yours sincerely

Will Harley BSc (Hons) CMLI
(Director)