

APPLICATION FOR HOUSEHOLDER PLANNING PERMISSION

OFFICER DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/04721
APPLICATION TYPE:	Householder planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Bridge House, Happy Land, Ashton Keynes, Swindon, SN6 6PN
DESCRIPTION:	Installation of external air conditioning unit located at the rear of the property
RECOMMENDATION:	APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

PROPOSAL

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of an air conditioning unit (Panasonic CU-2Z50CBE) to the rear of the dwellinghouse.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a detached two-storey dwellinghouse known as Bridge House. It has walls of reconstituted stone, a gabled tile roof with hipped dormers, uPVC fenestration, a driveway and surrounding front and rear gardens enclosed by drystone walls. It occupies a corner plot, and its setting is characterised by the immediate rural street scene around a crossroad, with river, foliated banks and primarily linear arrangement of dwellinghouses.

It is in the settlement boundary of Ashton Keynes. Relevant designations and constraints include the Ashton Keynes Conservation Area, Flood Zone 1 where groundwater levels are either at or very near (within 0.025m of) the ground surface¹ and 1 in 1000 surface water flood risk with climate change allowances, Cotswold Water Park Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and priority habitats within 500m, and North Meadow Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 4.2km recreational buffer.

PLANNING HISTORY

ENQ/2026/01319 - Installation of Air Conditioning Unit (PLANNING PERMISSION REQUIRED, RESPONSE DATED 22/07/2026).

16/05039/FUL - Single Storey Extension and 2m High Boundary Fence (APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS 25/07/2026).

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS):

- Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping (CP57)
- Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment (CP58)

¹ Wiltshire Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)

- Core Policy 67: Flood Risk (CP67)

Saved policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 (NWLP)

Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan – Made 2017

- Policy INP1: Flood risk mitigation in new developments
- Policy INP2: Road and Pedestrian Safety
- Policy ENP1: Protection of biodiversity and wildlife sites
- Policy HCP1: Local Character

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Design Guide (NDG)

Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (WDG):

- Appendix D – Design Guidance for Householder extensions

Historic England Guidance:

- Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2 (GPA2)
- The Setting of Heritage Assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) (GPA3)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The following consultees and interested parties were invited to comment on the application:

Ashton Keynes Parish Council – No objection (09/09/2026).

Wiltshire Council's Public Protection Team – No objection

Initial comments advised, that further information was required in respect of noise by way of an MCS 020 assessment (15/09/2026).

Following receipt of additional information, comments advised: no objection, noting the siting, separation distances and screening of the proposal and its domestic scale and attenuation distance, advising that it is unlikely to result in a significant adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity (25/09/2026).

REPRESENTATIONS

Immediate neighbouring dwellings were notified of the application, and a site notice was displayed on 2 September 2026. No letters of representation were made by members of the public.

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.

Residential amenity

Core Policy 57 (vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) seeks to ensure that the design of new development has regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants and that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself.

Appendix D of the Wiltshire Design Guide (WDG) expects a well-designed householder development to respect neighbouring properties by advising, amongst other things, that they should not be unduly overbearing or unduly obtrusive, and that windows should not directly overlook neighbouring properties.

DP3 and 4 of the NPPF sets out principles for achieving well-designed places, including liveability by ensuring their function well over the lifetime of the development. P3 advises that developments should be appropriate for their location taking into account likely effects on living conditions from air, noise and light pollution, among other things.

The closest neighbouring dwellings to the application site are 17 Happy Land (east) and Foxgloves (south).

The proposed air conditioning unit is modest is a domestic appliance and would have modest massing, size and scale. The main issue is whether the noise it would produce, when in operation, is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the living conditions of neighbours.

The application is supported by manufacture specifications which detail a nominal sound power level. The applicant has also provided a noise calculation, although the methodology and standards used are unclear as it has been produced by AI. Neither piece of information can be relied upon to conclude that the effect of noise at the nearest receptor would be acceptable.

Wiltshire Council's Public Protection Team initially requested further information in the form of an MCS020 noise calculation; however, the MCS020a standard can only be used for calculating the noise produced by a heat pump, which an air conditioning unit is not. Further advice was therefore sought on information requirements. A review of the information submitted resulted in a proportionate view, given that the proposal is a domestic appliance. They advise that, due to the siting, separation distances and screening, the unit is unlikely to

have significant adverse effects on the living conditions afforded to occupants of neighbouring dwellinghouses.

During the site inspection, the case officer observed the distance and relationship between the proposed location of the unit and neighbouring dwellinghouses and found no reason to disagree with Public Protection's conclusions. In any case, any residual risk of adverse levels of noise is controllable as a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and there is no reason that these regulatory controls would not be effective in preventing an unacceptable noise impact.

For the reasons given, the development would not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions enjoyed by occupants of the site itself or neighbouring land. Furthermore, it would satisfy the expectations of adopted design guidance and the aims of CP57 (vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

The development plan remains broadly aligned with the national guidance at DP3 and 4 and P3 of the National Planning Policy Framework in so far as they are relevant to design and living conditions. Material considerations would not, therefore, lead to different conclusion.

Design and local character and appearance, with particular regard to the conservation area

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

CP57 and CP58 of the WCS together seek to ensure all new development, including extensions and alterations to existing buildings, deliver a high standard of design that contributes to the character of Wiltshire and conserves its historic environment. Among other things, this could be achieved by responding positively to the features of the site itself, its landscape or townscape setting, and the value of the historic environment by being sympathetic to and conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Policy HCP1 of the Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure the design of new development are contextually appropriate and are in harmony with their surroundings, in particular in proximity of heritage assets.

Appendix D of the Wiltshire Design Guide supports CP57 with guidance for delivering well-designed householder developments, emphasising that they should respect the original building and neighbouring properties and fit into the general street scene.

DP3 and 4 of the NPPF sets out principles for achieving well-designed places and advises that substantial weight should be given to compliance with relevant development plan policies when assessing design quality. HE4 to 10 sets out a framework for assessing and securing the conservation of heritage assets.

The application site is a post-war dwellinghouse located within Ashton Keynes Conservation Area, the character and appearance of which, in so far as is relevant, can be partly discerned

from its protected buildings and features, its pre-1900 buildings, its significant trees and foliage, and its valuable open spaces, paths and watercourses.

The proposed air conditioning unit would have an industrial appearance, starkly contrasting with the prevailing traditional and vernacular appearance of the Ashton Keynes Conservation Area. However, it is modest in size, situated in a well-screened rear garden and close to ground level. It would not appear incongruous as a domestic appliance closely associated visually and spatially with a modern dwellinghouse.

The unit would produce noise when in operation for heating or cooling purposes, which is likely to be periodic throughout the year. The surrounding area has a somewhat tranquil quality, the majority of noise created by infrequent traffic. In any case, the unit would be screened and the noise audible from within the street scene is not likely to detract from how the character of the Ashton Keynes Conservation Area, is experienced.

For the reasons given, the development would not harm the character or appearance of the dwellinghouse or conservation area in which it is located. It would therefore preserve the character and appearance of the Ashton Keynes Conservation Area, satisfying the duty under S72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Accordingly, it would satisfy the expectations of adopted design guidance and the requirements of CP57 and CP58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

The development plan remains broadly aligned with the national guidance at DP3 and 4 and HE4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework in so far as they are relevant to achieving well-designed places, assessing design quality and conserving the historic environment. Material considerations would not, therefore, lead to different conclusion.

Drainage and flood risk

The application site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 but an area where Wiltshire Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identifies groundwater flood risk and the Flood Map for Planning identifies an increased risk of surface water flooding in future.

The application is not supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment; however, the development is proposed on part of the site at a lower risk of flooding, and it involves installing a domestic appliance.

The PPG² advises that minor developments, like householder developments, are unlikely to raise significant flood risk issues, and the nature of the development is such that this is likely to be the case. For these reasons, the development would not conflict with INP1 of the AKNP, CP67 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy or F4, 7 and 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecological matters, including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

² PPG, Paragraph 051. Reference ID: 7-051-20220825 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change#para51>).

The site is within the zone of influence of the North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC) where Wiltshire Council has published an Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy (2023-2028). The development would not create an additional residential unit and is not likely to have significant adverse effects on the Special Area of Conservation through recreational pressures. A financial contribution to mitigate impacts on the Special Area of Conservation would not, therefore, be required.

The development would not cause a loss of habitat, and the Local Planning Authority can be reasonably certain protected species would not be adversely impacted. The development is also exempt from the requirement to deliver 10% BNG, introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021), and the decision notice shall include the relevant informative note.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The development would have acceptable effects in respect of matters of acknowledged importance to the public interest, subject to the recommended conditions. Furthermore, it would not conflict with the development plan, and other material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. The statutory requirements have therefore been fulfilled, and the application should be supported.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

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

Location Plan. Received 28 July 2026.

PANASONIC OUTDOOR CU-2Z50 CBE specification. Received 28 July 2026.

Proposed elevations. 1009/01. Received 26 August 2026.

Block Plan. Received 26 August 2026.

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