

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Application No: PL/2025/04774

Proposal: Variation of conditions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8, and removal of condition 9 of PL/2025/04414 to allow minor amendments to plot layouts and accommodate revised house types following the acquisition of the site by Bellway

Site Address: Land off Melksham Road, Great Parks, Holt, BA14 6QP

Case Officer: Julie Mitchell

Application files indexed (28.09.26)

Policy and guidance:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy, Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' (Abbreviated CP57)
- 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)

Draft Wiltshire Local Plan ('WLP')

At Full Council on 19 May 2026, the elected members of Wiltshire Council agreed to withdraw the previous 'emerging' Wiltshire Local Plan. The said Plan has no material weight for the purposes of the application.

In accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, on 30th June 2026 Wiltshire Council published a notice of intention to prepare a new local plan for Wiltshire.

The next stage is a Scoping Consultation which commences on 2 September 2026. This plan is at a very early stage and currently carries no weight for decision making.

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.

Observations

The comments submitted by Holt Parish Council have been carefully reviewed and are acknowledged as a detailed local observation on the application. The Parish Council raises concerns regarding the potential cumulative impact of the proposed amendments on the approved scheme's design quality, landscape framework, ecological strategy, architectural character, parking arrangements, public realm and local distinctiveness. Particular emphasis is placed on retaining the design principles established through the approved Reserved Matters scheme, including a landscape-led village frontage, strong ecological and landscape structure, high-quality public spaces, integrated affordable housing and architecture that responds positively to Holt's character. These observations are noted and have been taken into account as part of the urban design assessment of the proposals.

Objection

Overall, the cumulative effect of replacing of house types has led to a reduction in design quality which means the scheme does not meet the design standards required by Core Policy 57. Whilst it is acknowledged that house types are being replaced due to the change in developer, this should not result in the design quality of the approved reserved matters scheme changing or diminishing. Of particular relevance is point DP4 2C of the new NPPF which states 'Not allow the quality of approved development to be materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes proposed following its initial approval (for example through changes to approved details)'.

Wider Site Issues

- 1) I echo the concerns raised by the Parish Council regarding the proposed relocation of the electricity substation. The approved scheme positioned this infrastructure in a more discreet location, thereby reducing its prominence within the public realm. Furthermore, insufficient detail has been provided regarding its appearance. The approved Reserved Matters scheme indicated a stone clad building with a hipped roof, whereas the revised proposal appears to rely on a GRP enclosure with no equivalent commitment to architectural quality. As this amendment relates to infrastructure rather than changes in housing mix or house types, there is no clear justification for this reduction in quality. The loss of stone cladding and traditional building form represents a significant departure from the approved design approach and risks creating an engineered feature that is poorly integrated into the development. In addition, the loss of trees from the community orchard would further diminish the landscape quality of this area. Collectively, these changes represent an unnecessary erosion of the design quality secured through the approved scheme and should be amended to better align with the approved Reserved Matters consent.
- 2) The concern raised by the Parish Council regarding the eastern boundary and the relationship of the proposed dwellings to the bat corridor is noted and should be addressed by the applicant. The approved scheme established this corridor as an important landscape and ecological feature. Any reduction in the buffer has the potential to affect its function and erode the landscape-led approach that underpinned the approved layout. The applicant should therefore demonstrate that the slight increase in development adjacent to the corridor will not compromise its ecological role or its contribution to creating a well-landscaped and sensitive edge to the development.
- 3) The approved scheme utilised car ports effectively as a means of reducing the visual dominance of parked vehicles within the street scene, helping to create a more attractive and landscape-led environment. Their dark timber construction provided visual interest and reflected a rural character. Importantly, car ports enabled boundary planting and landscaping to be brought closer to parking areas, strengthening the green infrastructure of the scheme and helping soften the appearance of vehicles. In contrast, open parking arrangements can often discourage residents planting near the parked vehicles, due to trees and shrubs depositing leaves, sap and other natural debris on parked

cars. The removal of car ports therefore risks increasing the prominence of vehicles, reducing opportunities for meaningful landscaping and eroding the carefully considered balance between built form, parking and greenery achieved by the approved scheme. Their loss is considered detrimental to both the character and overall design quality of the development. It is recommended that the car ports are returned to the proposed scheme.

- 4) As noted with the loss of car ports, car parking will be affected on the scheme and the changes are largely detrimental to how this will be experienced. The parking to the affordable units on the village green is an example of where parking appears to have lost two visitor spaces. This can have a detrimental effect on parking and cause greater number of anti social parking across the scheme as noted in p.87 of BfHL. In this particular scenario the parking design has been rearranged from a mews like street, and placed parking in more visible locations which adds to the street clutter. Furthermore, the consented scheme benefitted from two car ports which helped to enclose the parking in the mews street at either end and keep it relatively discrete and hidden. The change to this area represents a reduction in design quality and should be adjusted to suit along with the typology change described earlier to the affordable flats in this location.

Proposed Scheme



Approved Scheme



Architectural Design

- 5) When read individually some house types appear acceptable, however when read as a whole in wider context of the street, and the site, these amount to considerable changes. Losing gables in the below example results in the loss of character, distinctiveness, and a feature which gave interest and rhythm to the street elevation. House type 'Turner' is a good example of this, seen on plots 22-25 below. Individually this appears an acceptable amendment, particularly when compared with the 'Highclere Option 1' house type from the consented scheme which had a comparable roof design. However when read in this street composition below, there is tangible loss of architectural variation and distinctiveness which ultimately amounts to a diminishing of design in line with DP4(2)(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026, which seeks to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished through subsequent amendments.

Proposed



Approved Scheme



The amendment from house type 'Chilworth' to 'Scrivener' is not acceptable in this regard, as this would result in the loss of a defining gable which helps to give variation and character to the streets.

- 6) The approved scheme provided an elegant and contextually appropriate solution for delivering one-bedroom flats, with the flats arranged as a terrace or almshouse style building that responded positively to the character of Holt. The proposed amendments replace this building with two bedroom houses and redistribute the one bedroom homes across the site within less successful house types, resulting in a loss of architectural coherence and distinctiveness. Similarly, plots 53-64 of the approved scheme benefited from a carefully composed elevation featuring well proportioned gables which gave rhythm to the elevation and equally sized windows. The removal of the gables and reduction in some window sizes materially weakens this composition. Collectively, these changes reduce the design quality established through the approved scheme and diminish the development's architectural character and sense of place, creating a design which is arguably more generic and less specific to place. For these reasons the proposed amendments to this house type appear contrary to DP4(2)(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026, which seeks to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished through subsequent amendments, and conflicts with the objectives of Core Policy 57 in securing high quality and locally distinctive design. It is recommended that the design and appearance of these units is amended to be comparable to the reserved matters scheme.
- 7) The proposed Weaver house type, which appears to replace the Marlborough house type approved under the Reserved Matters consent, represents a reduction in the overall design standard of the development. The Marlborough house type incorporated a hipped roof, a particularly successful design feature given that these dwellings are typically positioned on prominent corner plots. The hipped roof form assisted the building in turning corners, reducing the perceived roof mass, and created a softer and more elegant relationship with the street. In contrast, the proposed gabled form appears more abrupt and visually dominant. At the wider street scene level, the inclusion of hipped roofs also contributed to a varied and interesting roofscape, helping to avoid repetition and reinforce the individuality of these homes which are often situated on key corners.

Furthermore, the Marlborough house type incorporated a range of considered architectural details, including stone window heads, enhanced entrance treatments, and ground-floor bay/ oriel windows. These features added depth, character and visual interest to the elevations, elevating the architectural quality of the development and contributing to a stronger sense of place. The proposed Weaver house type omits many of these details, resulting in a simpler and more generic appearance. It is therefore recommended that the Weaver house type incorporates the key detailing and roof design principles of the approved Marlborough house type to ensure greater architectural coherence, enhance local distinctiveness and maintain the design quality established by the approved scheme. It is also recommended that other hipped roof types are re introduced to more closely align with the approved scheme.

- 8) Plots 80 and 79 (House Type shipwright) represent a significant deviation from the consented scheme as they are now three storeys. This increased height appears inconsistent with the

established character and hierarchy of the consented layout, where building heights create a coherent townscape composition. There is no obvious placemaking justification for the additional storey, such as emphasising an important corner or landmark location. As a result, the increased height appears arbitrary rather than being driven by a clear urban design rationale. The amendment risks disrupting the balanced scale and character of the approved development and represents a further erosion of the design quality previously secured. It is therefore recommended that these plots revert to the previously approved house type and height, thereby maintaining consistency with the wider scheme and preserving the carefully considered character established through the Reserved Matters approval.

- 9) Typically the house type amendments are not acceptable and should be more closely aligned with the approved scheme. Some house type changes seem more appropriate however such as the 'Baker' and 'Bellman' types, but on the whole the changes should more closely resemble the approved scheme.
- 10) The orientation of homes should also be considered and match the approved scheme. Some plots have rotated frontages and this is to detriment of the design. The example below highlights where a frontage had been positioned to be viewed when entering the site and occupying a key corner. This is now a side elevation with limited articulation in the form of windows to this facade. Orientation of plots should be amended to align with the approved scheme.

Proposed Scheme



Approved Scheme



Detailing

- 11) Detailing is another area where the revised scheme appears to be materially diminished in comparison to the approved development. Roof verges are now significantly more prominent and appear to utilise dry verge systems, in contrast to the restrained slim detailing shown on the approved scheme. This increase in visual bulk reduces the overall refinement of the architecture and introduces a feature commonly associated with modern volume housebuilding rather than the locally distinctive character of Holt. The Wiltshire Design Guide (paragraph 4.5.18) advises that, in areas characterised by traditional architecture, development should avoid 'off-the-peg' components and instead utilise traditional detailing, including 'slim or mortared verges' and roofs that reflect local building traditions. The proposed verge treatment appears contrary to this guidance and fails to respond positively to the established character of the village. In contrast, minimal and wet verge details are more characteristic of traditional buildings within Holt. The amendments therefore diminish the architectural quality secured through the approved scheme and do not satisfactorily address Core Policy 57(i) and (ii), which seek development that responds positively to local context and reinforces local distinctiveness.
- 12) The revised scheme also proposes the use of GRP chimneys. This represents a further diminution in quality from the approved scheme and introduces an artificial architectural feature that fails to reflect traditional building forms. The Wiltshire Design Guide, at paragraph 4.5.18, specifically advises that development should avoid 'off-the-peg' components in favour of authentic traditional detailing, whilst paragraph 4.5.8 notes that fake plastic chimneys should be avoided. The proposed GRP chimneys are therefore contrary to the principles of the Wiltshire Design Guide and risk creating a less authentic and more generic architectural character. As such, this amendment further erodes the design quality secured through the approved scheme and does not support the objectives of Core Policy 57 in achieving high-quality, locally distinctive development.
- 13) Quoin detailing was a positive feature of the approved scheme that contributed significantly to its architectural quality and local distinctiveness. The use of quoins provided visual interest and articulation helping to break up elevations and create a more considered composition, particularly when combined with areas of render. Quoins also served to emphasise corners, door surrounds

and window openings, adding depth and hierarchy to the façades in a manner characteristic of traditional building forms. It appears that these details have largely been removed from the amended scheme, resulting in simpler and less distinctive elevations. The loss of this detailing represents a further erosion of the design quality secured through the approved scheme and contributes to a more generic housebuilder appearance. Reintroducing quoin detailing is therefore recommended, as it would help restore architectural richness, reinforce local character and re-establish the attractive variation and visual interest previously achieved throughout the development.

- 14) Many House types appear to show on the coloured elevations stone cills and lintels however on the rear or sides this is then changed to brick headers. This appears arbitrary and inconsistent with the elevation as a whole currently. These should be amended to be consistent with the stone cills on the front and consistent with the elevations of the approved scheme.

Summary

The proposed amendments are considered to result in a cumulative and material reduction in the design quality secured through the approved Reserved Matters consent. Whilst it is acknowledged that changes to house types may arise from a change in developer, this should not come at the expense of architectural quality, local distinctiveness or placemaking. It is worth noting that in some cases, the house type switch appears acceptable however in the other instances referenced these should be amended. Collectively, the amendments introduce a more standardised and generic appearance through the loss of architectural features. These changes diminish the character, variety and sense of place established by the consented scheme and weaken its relationship with the local context. As such, the proposals raise significant concerns in relation to Core Policy 57 and appear contrary to paragraph DP4(2)(c) of the NPPF, which seeks to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished following approval. It is therefore recommended that the scheme is revised to more closely align with the design principles, architectural quality and placemaking approach secured through the approved Reserved Matters scheme.