

Dan Pike
Whitley,
Melksham.

8th October 2026

Isobella Wise
Planning Officer, Wiltshire Council
By email: Isobella.Wise@wiltshire.gov.uk
CC: developmentmanagement@wiltshire.gov.uk, Melksam Without Parish Council, Cllr. Peter Richardson, Cllr. Philip Alford

Dear Ms Wise,

Objection — PL/2026/06103: Permission in Principle for two self-build dwellings, Land at First Lane, Whitley SN12 8RL

I object to this application. A grant of permission in principle decides whether a site is suitable in terms of its location, land use and the size of the development. This site is not suitable on two counts: (a) it lies within the designated green wedge between Whitley and Shaw; and (b) it drains into a watercourse that is known to flood the B3353 immediately downstream.

1. The site is within the Whitley-Shaw green wedge (JMNP2 Policy 19)

Policy 19 of the Joint Melksham Neighbourhood Plan 2 (made August 2025) requires development to respect the separation between Whitley and Shaw. It states that proposals “which would result in the loss of, or an unacceptable reduction of the contribution which it makes to the separation of the settlements concerned will not be supported.”

The extent of the wedge is set by the Green Gap and Green Wedge Assessment (AECOM, March 2023), and Policy 19 refers to that study. It considered and listed this piece of land, specifically. Figure 9 and paragraph 4.11 define its northern boundary as “the southern edge of Whitley, comprising First Lane and the southern boundary of Lagard Farm”. The application is to be allowed to develop the fields immediately south of First Lane, between Lagard House and No. 78 Corsham Road. It is inside the Green Wedge.

Table 2 names SHELAA site 3459, which the applicant’s Planning Statement confirms is the paddock containing the site, as one of three sites “located between the two settlement boundaries” (paragraph 2.6). The Green Wedge study found that the site “is free from buildings”, that “the southern edge of Whitley is contained by First Lane”, and that the gap between them “measures c. 160m at its narrowest point”. Building two dwellings and a driveway south of First Lane would push the edge of Whitley into that gap.

The Planning Statement lists Policy 19 (paragraph 4.8) but does not assess the proposal against it. The only evidence it offers on separation (paragraph 5.27) is a Landscape Officer comment from 2016, which predates the Green Gap Assessment by seven years. Even that comment recorded that the site “forms part of an open area separating the settlements of Shaw from Whitley”.

This is consistent with previous decisions:

- Application PL/2021/06922 on this site was refused in part because it would result “in increasing coalescence between the settlements of Shaw and Whitley”.
- The appeal for land south of 214B Corsham Road, Whitley (ref. 6003438, PL/2025/08613, dismissed 11 June 2026) was also a permission in principle proposal, for up to 5 dwellings in the same wedge. The Inspector found it would

harmfully extend the settlement edge of Whitley “into the open countryside and erode the gap that distinguishes the separate identities of Whitley and Shaw”, contrary to JMNP2 Policies 6 and 19 and Core Strategy CP51.

2. The August 2026 NPPF supports refusal

The applicant relies on NPPF Policy S5(1)(j). Even if S5 is engaged, the August 2026 Framework gives particular protection to Neighbourhood Plans that were recently made, as applies in this case. Policy S6 states that, for housing proposals, “the benefits of approving development are likely to be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects, where a proposal would conflict with a Neighbourhood Plan”.

In this application:

- (a) the plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the decision. JMNP2 was made in August 2025; and
- (b) the plan contains allocations to meet its identified housing requirement. JMNP2 allocates up to 415 dwellings against a requirement of 270, as recorded in the Secretary of State’s decision on Snarlton Lane (paragraph 27).

Policy 19 keeps its full weight under Annex A paragraph 2. It is consistent with the Framework: Policy S2(1)(c) expressly provides for designations “to safeguard gaps between settlements” where “necessary to maintain the separate identities of the settlements and their physical separation”. The 2023 study is the evidence that this test is met.

The agent’s email of 1 October 2026 states that, following the Snarlton Lane decision (PINS 3373278), “no weight can now be given to the housing policies of the JMNP2”. That decision does not say this. The Secretary of State gave the conflict with Policy 6 *limited* weight, not none (paragraph 14). She found the Neighbourhood Plan conflict not determinative only “in the particular circumstances of this case” (paragraph 30): a large scheme adjoining Melksham town, in which affordable housing carried significant weight. The decision did not consider Policy 19, which is a separation policy, not a housing-supply policy.

3. The benefits are small

I recognise the Council’s housing land supply position. However, this proposal is for two dwellings, for “the applicant and an associate” (Planning Statement, paragraph 1.2), with no affordable housing. NPPF Policy HO7 gives substantial weight to homes meeting “the evidenced accommodation needs of the community, as identified through needs assessments”. For Shaw and Whitley, JMNP2 Policy 6(3)(e), drawing on the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment, identifies the need as “increasing the proportion of two and three bedroom dwellings”. The illustrative scheme provides a double garage and three parking spaces per dwelling (Planning Statement, paragraph 3.8), which indicates large detached houses rather than the homes that the evidence identifies.

Neither is the site “limited infilling within groups of houses” (S5(1)(e)). It is the northern part of an open field, which runs south to South Brook and towards Shaw.

4. Flood risk downstream on the B3353

The site drains directly into South Brook, which passes under the B3353 Corsham Road immediately south-east of the site. The culvert under the road at the point is a large pipe, yet it has overflowed several times since I have lived here.

- I attach two photographs I took on **4 January 2024 at about 20:24**, standing on the Whitley side of the South Brook culvert and looking south along the B3353. They show floodwater across the full width of the carriageway and over the footway, with the "Shaw" village sign standing in water.
- The applicant's own Flood Risk Assessment (paragraph 1.1.5) records that Wiltshire Council's records of the 2014 flood "reported flood debris in the fence at the B3353 Corsham Road / South Brook culvert 0.8m above existing road level".
- JMNP2 (page 36) records "further flooding incidents, including in January 2023 and 2024". It identifies the South Brook catchment as a priority flood risk area (page 37) and quotes the Shaw and Whitley Community Emergency Group: "Any hardening of surfaces will be noticeable at the measuring station at Shaw School ... and will significantly increase flood risk downstream".

The FRA's flood history stops at 2014. It also confirms that the site is itself part of the flow route: "in extreme storm events First Lane itself becomes a flow route ... These flows then discharge across the development site" (paragraph 2.3.4), and the western side of the site has a "low to high chance of surface water flooding" (paragraph 2.3.3).

The Lead Local Flood Authority asked for 2D modelling to show how pluvial flood risk would be managed. The applicant replied: "There is no 2D Modelling currently available for the site" (Covering Letter, item 2). The LLFA also asked the applicant to engage the Parish Council so that local evidence of historic flooding could be understood. The applicant relied instead on desktop sources (item 5.1).

NPPF Policy F7(2) states that development in "a location known to be at risk from any form of flooding" should be refused unless, among other things, "it can be demonstrated that flood risk will not be increased elsewhere". That has not been demonstrated. Policy F5 requires a sequential test in areas "known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding". The application contains none, and without the modelling it cannot show that it is exempt.

This matters beyond the site. The applicant's case on sustainability depends on the bus stops on Corsham Road and the 272/273 services to Melksham (Planning Statement, paragraphs 2.3 and 5.33). The FRA's case for safe access depends on First Lane leading east onto the B3353 (Covering Letter, item 5.3). Both rely on the stretch of road shown flooded in my photographs. Wiltshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4, page 25) recognises that "increased flooding [has] caused disruption over recent years" and that the Council has "a responsibility to increase our resilience".

5. Heritage

The applicant's Heritage Statement concedes "residual slight adverse visual effects" on the settings of listed buildings, Lagard House and 120–122 First Lane (Planning Statement, paragraphs 3.20 and 5.47). Under NPPF Policy HE6, "any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight", to be weighed against public benefits. The public benefit of two private dwellings is small.

Conclusion

The site lies within the green wedge that JMNP2 Policy 19 protects, as defined by the plan's own evidence. The Planning Inspectorate dismissed a comparable proposal in the same wedge in June 2026. Under NPPF Policy S6, conflict with a Neighbourhood Plan less than a year old weighs heavily against approval, and the benefits of two dwellings do not outweigh

it. The site also drains to a road crossing that floods, and the applicant has not provided the modelling the Lead Local Flood Authority asked for.

I ask the Council to refuse permission in principle.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Dan Pike

Appendix: Photographs, 4 January 2024

Both photographs were taken from the Whitley (north) side of the South Brook culvert, looking south along the B3353 Corsham Road towards Shaw School.

Photograph 1 (IMG_0441), 20:24:06. Taken from further back along the road. Floodwater covers the full width of the carriageway ahead. The "Shaw" village name sign (left) is standing in water.

Photograph 2 (IMG_0442), 20:24:29. Taken closer to the culvert. Water covers the carriageway from verge to verge and reaches over the kerb onto the footway (right).



Photograph 1 (IMG_0441), 4 January 2024, 20:24:06. Looking south along the B3353 from the Whitley side of the South Brook culvert.



Photograph 2 (IMG_0442), 4 January 2024, 20:24:29. Taken closer to the culvert, looking south along the B3353.