

REPORT FOR EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	25 April 2024
Application Number	PL/2023/09946
Site Address	Land to North East of Higher Green Farm, Poulshot Road, Poulshot, SN10 1RW
Proposal	Erection of single storey dwelling.
Applicant	Mr and Mrs G Curnow
Town/Parish Council	POULSHOT CP
Electoral Division	Cllr Tamara Reay
Grid Ref	397,075 160,069
Type of application	Full Planning
Case Officer	Jonathan James

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

The application has been called-in by Cllr Tamara Reay, to discuss the scale of development, the visual impact on the surrounding area, relationship to adjoining properties and the design of the scheme.

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to assess the merits of the proposal against the policies of the development plan and other material considerations and to consider the recommendation that the application be refused.

2. Report Summary

Concerns are raised regarding the harm to the setting of the adjoining listed building and to the character of the conservation area; the scheme is contrary to the requirements of both local and national policy for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The development would be contrary to and would undermine the requirements of these policies, and there are no public benefits that would outweigh the identified harm to the designated heritage assets.

3. Site Description

The site is located adjacent to the built form of Poulshot, which is identified as a small village in the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015). The village and surrounding area have a distinct rural quality. The site is bounded on three sides by existing residential properties / residential curtilages and on the fourth side by a paddock.

The site is located within the Poulshot Conservation Area and also within the setting of the adjoining Grade II listed farmhouse (Higher Green Farmhouse). The site is bounded by a mixture of post and wire fencing and hedgerow; it is identified within the Conservation Area Statement that the trees to the south of the site, forming the boundary to 'Higher Green Farm' are 'significant trees'.

The buildings to the west of the site that front on to Poulshot Road and the nearest dwelling to the east on the opposite side of the paddock are also recognised as 'significant unlisted buildings'. Public right of way 'POUL5' (a bridleway) runs to the south of the site, so it would be visible from this public vantage point. The topography of the land is generally level with access along the existing access to 'The Courtyard' to the west of the site.



Mapping Extract identifies the site in relation to adjoining Grade II Listed Building

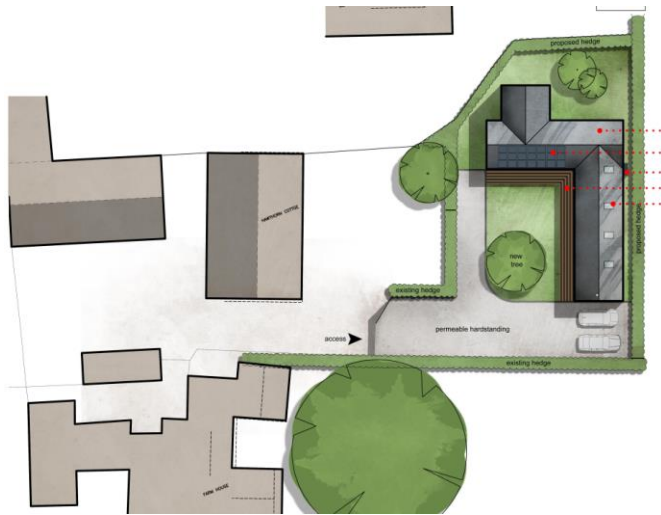
The site has been used as a vegetable garden by the family living in Higher Green Farm, it is laid to grass with seating and some raised vegetable beds and a small shed. The application site does not include any of the paddock situated to the east.

4. Planning History

- K/58224/LBC - Demolition of pantry and garden room extension – approved with conditions
- K/58225/F - Demolition of pantry and garden room extension – approved with conditions
- K/57820/F - Conversion/enlargement of existing boot-room/porch to form assisted shower room – approved with conditions
- K/57311/LBC – Provision of assisted shower room – approved with conditions
- K/59337/F - Hardstanding for parking area – approved with conditions
- K/59598/F - Change of use of land from paddock to garden, with associated landscape works – approved with conditions
- E/11/0441/FUL - Proposed extension and alterations to existing store to form sleep-in and office administrative accommodation in connection with the residential institution use approved under planning permission reference E/09/0481/FUL – approved with conditions
- E/11/0443/LBC - Proposed extension and alterations to existing store to form sleep-in and office administrative accommodation in connection with the residential institution use approved under planning permission reference E/09/0481/FUL – approved with conditions
- 20/07753/FUL - Erection of single storey dwelling - withdrawn

5. The Proposal

The application is for the erection of a new single storey dwelling within an area of land to the rear of Higher Green Farm, with associated access, parking and landscaping. The proposed dwelling would measure approximately 18.5m by 5.0m along its longest part, with an 'L' shape measuring 9.1m by 5.0m and a further 5.0 by 3.6m element extending north again. The proposed dwelling would be 2.45m to eaves and 4.45m to ridge, finished in a slate roof, with multi-red brick walls, timber brise-soleil and powder coated aluminium joinery. The proposed scheme will also include 'integrated solar panels to sit flush with the roof and an air source heat pump to the east elevation.



Proposed site layout

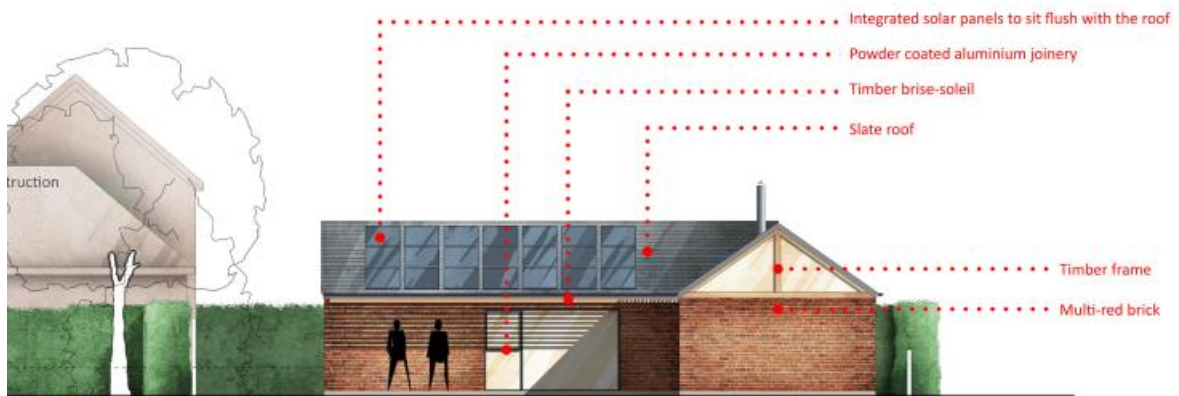
The following extracts from the submitted details show the proposed development:



Proposed North Elevation

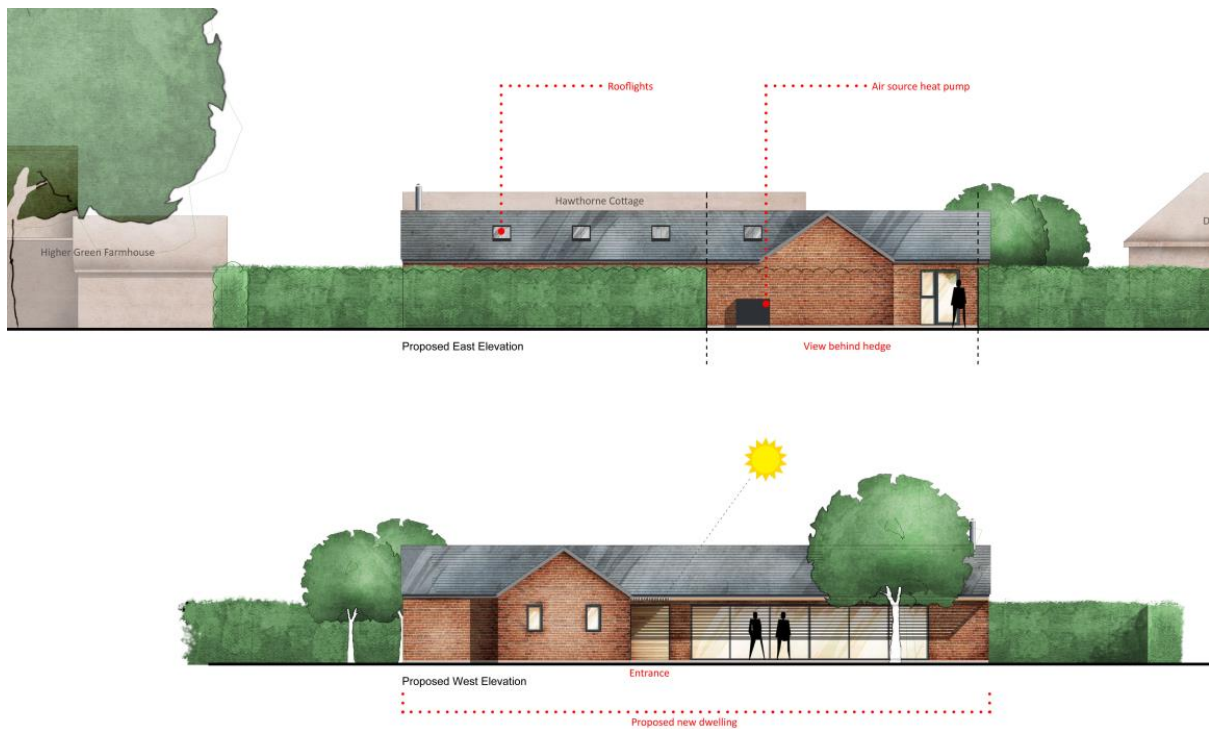


Proposed new dwelling



Proposed new dwelling

Proposed North and South Elevations



Proposed East and West Elevations

The application has been the subject of revised/additional details and a re-consultation exercise carried out in respect of the latest details, The application has been determined in accordance with the latest details.

6. Local Planning Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the development plan comprises the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (2015) and the saved policies of the Kennet Local Plan (KLP) (2004).

Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS):

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy
- Core Policy 15 Spatial Strategy: Melksham Community Area
- Core Policy 41 Sustainable Construction and Low Carbon Energy
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 52 Green Infrastructure
- Core Policy 56 Contaminated Land
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping

- Core Policy 58 Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment.
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable transport
- Core Policy 61 Transport and new development
- Core Policy 64 Demand management

Kennet Local Plan (2004) no saved policies relevant to this development

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)

National Design Guide, Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (NDG) (2019)

Wiltshire Design Guide: Shaping the future: My Place, Your Place, Our Place (2024)

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026: Car Parking Strategy (2015)

Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 and Section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

Poulshot Conservation Area Statement (Aug 2004)

7. Summary of consultation responses

The application has been the subject to revised/additional detail and a re-consultation carried out on the latest details. The comments below are the final comments offered following this consultation. A full set of comments received can be reviewed on the Council's webpage.

Poulshot Parish Council – No objection

WC Highways – No objection; adequate off street parking to meet Wiltshire's current parking standards and turning is proposed within the site. An existing vehicle access will be utilised to access the site which benefits for adequate visibility over a wide grass verge. I wish to raise no highway objection.

WC Conservation – Object; The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

The proposals would result in harm to the character of the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent listed building due to the development being at odds with the historic settlement pattern and historic built forms and would also detract significantly from its relationship with its surrounding agricultural landscape.

Whilst paragraph 208 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits, which could include conservation benefits, in this case no objective justification has been provided for the works and the proposals are primarily for private benefit. As a result, the proposals

fail to meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and I therefore recommend refusal.

8. Publicity

The site has been advertised by letter to local residents, by site notice and within the local press. Representations have been received and these are summarised as follows:

Third party comments:

Support:

- No visual impact
- Sympathetic to surrounding environment
- Add to the housing stock
- Provides alternative type of housing (bungalow) as opposed to recent large new builds adjoining
- Need for single storey properties in Poulshot
- Good design
- Proposal would be consistent in size, style and location with existing properties nearby
- 'Green' credentials of the proposal benefit to the environment
- Sympathetic to the local heritage
- No impact on the Green, visually or otherwise
- Other examples of similar proposals allowed within the area

9. Planning Considerations

9.1 Principle of Development

The site is located in Poulshot which is defined as a small village within the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) (WCS). The application is for the erection of a new dwelling adjoining the built form of Poulshot.

In the interests of promoting sustainable development and the protection of the countryside the policies of the WCS (2015) seek to restrict all new residential development to locations within the Limits of Development defined for the towns and villages. The WCS includes a settlement strategy, Core Policy 1 'Settlement Strategy' and Core Policy 2 'Delivery Strategy' which outline that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development within the Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Large Villages and development should be restricted to within the limits of development other than in exceptional circumstances as set out within the relevant core policies contained within the plan. There are no exceptional circumstances that would allow for a departure from the development plan in this instance.

Core Policy 2 states that at the Small Villages development will be limited to infill within the existing built area. Proposals for development at the Small Villages will be supported where

they seek to meet housing needs of settlements or provide employment, services and facilities provided that the development:

- i. Respects the existing character and form of the settlement
- ii. Does not elongate the village or impose development in sensitive landscape areas
- iii. Does not consolidate an existing sporadic loose knit areas of development related to the settlement.

For the purposes of Core Policy 2, infill is defined as the filling of a small gap within the village that is only large enough for not more than a few dwellings, generally only one dwelling. It is acknowledged that the site is located to the rear of existing dwellings, however, the properties to the west and north are examples of in-depth development and provided this proposal does not raise a technical issue, could also potentially be considered acceptable in-depth development. With regard to this site, it is bounded on three sides by existing residential properties with the fourth (east) side open to the adjoining paddock; therefore in terms of the question as to whether it is infill development, the proposal is considered to meet these requirements. However, there are other concerns with the scheme which are considered in the report below.

9.2 Visual Impact

Core Policy 51 and Core Policy 57 of the WCS (2015) collectively seek, in part, to protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character, enhance local distinctiveness, and avoid harmful impact upon landscape character. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), is in general support of this direction in policy in that it seeks to protect and enhance our natural environment and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

The area does have a distinct rural quality, that is reflective of the historic layout and pattern of development for this area. It is considered that introduction of the proposed new dwelling would result in the further erosion of the rural character of the area, an issue that was identified within the case officers report on application K/59598/F, which sought the extension of the garden area for Higher Green Farm.

The site lies on the edge of the main built-up part of Poulshot and would be viewed within this context. The proposal is for a single storey dwelling and the topography of the land is relatively flat and the site well screened, with existing trees and hedgerow. It is considered in terms of the general appearance, that the scheme would not appear as a dominant and intrusive feature within the streetscene and landscape when viewed from public vantage points.

On balance, it is therefore considered that the creation of a new dwelling, with associated domestic curtilage and access would not have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the area and would therefore comply with Core Policy 51 and Core Policy 57 of the WCS (2015) in this instance.

9.3 Impact on neighbour amenity

Core Policy 57 of the WCS (2015) requires proposed development to be designed to ensure no detriment to residential amenity.

By virtue of the single storey nature, location, screening and intervening distances to any neighbouring properties, it is considered that the proposed development would not give rise to any unacceptable impacts upon amenity in terms of overbearing effect, loss of light, overshadowing or overlooking.

9.4 Highway Safety Impact / Parking

Core Policy 61 - Transport and New Development - seeks to ensure that new development is capable of being served by safe access to the highway network. Core Policy 64 seeks to ensure that parking standards are met as set out in the Council's adopted standards. The NPPF (2023) states that an application should only be refused on highway grounds if *"there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe"*.

Comments received from the highway officer raise no objections to the proposed scheme on highway safety grounds. They are content that the principle of development is acceptable, and that bin collection and other services can take place as per adjacent properties. It is considered that adequate off-street parking to meet Wiltshire's current parking standards and turning would be available within the site. It is acknowledged that an existing vehicle access could be utilised to access the site and which benefits with adequate visibility over a wide grass verge.

Based on highway comments it is considered that the proposal will be served by safe access and adequate parking in line with the requirements of the local and national policies. As such the scheme is considered to meet the relevant criteria of Core Policies 61 and 64 of the WCS (2015) and the WLTP (2011 – 2026) Car Parking Strategy (2015) and with the relevant sections in the NPPF (2023).

9.5 Impact on heritage

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas. This is locally reflected within Core Policy's 57 and 58 and covered within section 16 of the NPPF.

The site is located within the Poulshot Conservation Area and within the setting of several listed buildings and significant unlisted buildings. The proposed dwelling would be located in

an area of land located to the east of Higher Green Farm and to the west of no. 15 The Green. No. 15 The Green is noted as a significant unlisted building in the Poulshot Conservation Area Statement and it is considered worthy as a Non Designated Heritage Asset. Higher Green Farm itself is a Grade II Listed timber framed building that dates from the 17th century. It was faced and extended in red brick in the early 19th century. Despite it now having a concrete tiled roof, the building is believed to originally have been two timber framed thatched cottages that were 'gentrified' by adding a tile roof and brick elevations in the early 19th century. A significant 2 storey rear extension (the 'square-framed rear wing' mentioned in the list description) appears to have been added some 50 years or so later than the original framed buildings. It consists of two storeys with various casement windows, brick elevations, exposed timber framing and roughcasting – a mix of character and styles. To the rear of the farmhouse were previously farm buildings, now replaced by holiday lets (now full-time dwellings) and an area of former redundant farmyard now the subject of a development of 9 dwellings (this development site was previously owned by Higher Green Farm). The site occupies an extremely prominent location within the Poulshot Conservation Area, facing The Green. The principal issues in relation to heritage are the impact on the setting of listed building, impact on the character and appearance of Poulshot conservation area.

Official Listing for Higher Green Farmhouse:

“ST 96 SE POULSHOT THE GREEN (east side) - 4/182 Higher Green Farmhouse - GV II

Farmhouse, C17 timber-frame, faced and extended in red brick in early C19. Concrete tile roof, east end stack and ridge stack at former west end. Two storeys, 3-window range to front with triple casements each side of first floor casement pair and ground floor door. Windowless section to left, chequered brick on west end wall. East end wall is roughcast over timber frame. Rear wall has exposed square framing with angle brace. Square-framed rear wing. [Listing NGR: ST9703260060]”

It is acknowledged that the application is supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment and that a further heritage supporting letter has been submitted on the application following the Conservation Officer's (CO's) original objection. The CO is of the view that the submitted documentation provides sufficient information to understand the impact of the proposal and is proportionate to the scope; the requirements of the NPPF are therefore met in this respect.

In this case the significance of the building lies largely with its historic fabric and architecture – its form, layout and architectural expression/detailing and use of high-quality design materials which have significant aesthetic and architectural interest and which contribute to the character of the conservation area. Its significance also relates to its relationship with its surrounding agricultural landscape which forms part of the setting of this designated heritage asset.

The site is seen in views from The Green and, as stated previously, there is a statutory requirement for proposals to preserve or enhance the conservation area and preserve or enhancing the listed building and its setting; this applies whether or not the proposal is in public view or not.

In this instance, it is considered that the proposed development, would be at odds with the historic settlement pattern and with historic built forms and would detract significantly from the relationship that the farmhouse has with its surrounding agricultural landscape.

The proliferation of further non-traditional type of building form, which does not relate to any former yard layout, and the further spilling into the open agricultural land which previously served the farm, would be at odds with the historic pattern and form of development. The proposed dwelling would increase the level of development around the green.in conflict with the historic pattern of development and with the requirements of CP57 o the WCS (2015).

The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

The proposals would result in harm to the character of the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent listed building due to the development being at odds with the historic settlement pattern and historic built forms and would also detract significantly from its relationship with its surrounding agricultural landscape.

Whilst paragraph 208 allows that a level of harm may be offset by public benefits, which could include conservation benefits, in this case no objective justification has been provided for the works and the proposals are primarily for private benefit.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development fails to meet with the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance and a recommendation for refusal reached in this instance.

9.6 Other matters

Surface water will be dealt with, as identified within the application form, by way of a soakaway, whilst foul sewage remains an unknown. However, it is considered that drainage issues could be reasonably resolved through the imposition of conditions.

10. Conclusion (The Planning Balance)

There are three aspects of sustainable development, an economic, social and environmental role, to which the NPPF identifies that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is seen as a golden thread running through the decision making process and that local planning authorities should approve development in accord with the development plan without delay.

The scheme would not result in a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupiers of any nearby properties or result in a significant visual impact within this location and sufficient space exists that would allow for vehicles to enter and exit the site safely.

It is acknowledged that there is some limited weight to be given to economic benefits through the likely local employment that may be generated by the development proposed for

a limited period of time. As are there likely to be some social benefits through the provision of a new dwelling within the local housing market. However, given the likely cost of a unit of this size, within an attractive rural location, the social benefits would be restricted to those on a higher income and would not likely benefit lower income families and would certainly not add to the affordable housing market within this area.

The applicant's submission argues that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and therefore where there is no clear reason for refusing a scheme the presumption in favour of sustainable development is a material consideration in support of an application.

For housing supply and delivery the revised NPPF (Dec 2023) contains two important amended/new paragraphs, that have altered the Council's position in terms of housing land supply. For the purposes of the revised NPPF Wiltshire Council is a 'paragraph 77 authority'; and, because Wiltshire Council has an emerging local plan that has now passed the Regulation 19 stage of the plan-making process – with both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need – it is now only required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of four years' worth of housing. The Council's most recent Housing Land Supply Statement (published May 2023; base date April 2022) sets out the number of years supply against local housing need as 4.60 years. This means that the planning balance is now level rather than 'tilted'. With a level balance full weight can be given to the strategic housing delivery policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) – namely Core Policies 1 and 2. This is reflected within recent appeal decisions on schemes at Wiltshire.

Fundamentally, the scheme would result in harm to the setting of the adjoining listed building and conservation area and it is considered that the adverse impacts of the development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits when considered against the Framework, consequently, the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 11 (NPPF) does not apply.

It is considered that any limited public benefit that may occur if this development were approved, would not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the setting of the adjoining Listed Building and Conservation Area. On balance it is considered that the proposed development would be contrary with Core Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and the thrust for conserving and enhancing the historic environment as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development of a new dwelling would result in harm to the character of the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent listed building due to the development being at odds with the historic settlement pattern and historic built forms and would also detract significantly from its relationship with its surrounding agricultural landscape. With respect to the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), the harm is not judged to be outweighed by any public benefits.

The application is therefore contrary to the requirements of Core Policies 57 and 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and with section 2 - Achieving sustainable development (paragraph 8), and section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.