

Local Plan Principle of High Quality Design.

Planning Committee

9th February 2016

Author: Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage

Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

- To draw attention to the need to give due regard to the Local Plan high quality design principle.
- To ensure that the scale of development is managed in a positive way through the planning system to deliver new neighbourhoods that promote healthy, safe, inclusive and attractive communities that respect, conserve and/or enhance the natural, built and historic environment.
- To ensure that developments on individual sites do not result in separate, insular residential neighbourhoods, but that they achieve a high degree of connectivity to each other and to the existing development in the local area.

Recommendation

That the Planning Committee notes the contents of this report for the purpose of highlighting the need for consistency in decision-making at Planning Committee and at Officer level concerning the principle of high quality design which is enshrined in the Local Plan.

1. Reasons

- 1.1 Issues have arisen over recent years where development pressure on various land parcels in different ownerships and in close proximity to each other have intensified and most have come forward for development through the planning department.
- 1.2 A case in point is the land surrounding the Blunsdon Parish area over the A419 and stretching over to the development sites within the Abbey Stadium area. The applications in this case are at different stages of the planning process, with many having gained either outline or detailed planning consents.
- 1.2 Below is an up-to-date list of the various applications currently proposed / or approved within this particular area and a map follows the report to provide some further context to the specific planning applications listed below:

1 Abbey Stadium

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Garitsis on 466744 or Email pgaritsis@swindon.gov.uk.

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S/07/1365 granted Outline application for the demolition of existing stadium and construction of new stadium, with youth training facilities, 16,745 sq.m. of business (B1) floor space, a care home and 450 no. residential dwellings - Access not reserved. Granted 17th Aug 2011 subject to S106

S/12/1826 (Section 73 application to modify conditions of original outline) outline application for the demolition of existing stadium and construction of new stadium, with youth training facilities, 16,745 sq.m. of business (B1) floor space, a care home and 450 residential dwellings - Access not reserved 8th Aug 2013.

S/RES/13/0344 construction of roads and strategic drainage (part of site) granted RM 25th April 2014

S/RES/13/0951 reserved matters for Persimmon Homes phase (Charles Church) for 66 dwellings 20th Dec 2013

S/RES/13/1188 reserved matters for Persimmon Homes phase (120 dwellings) granted 4th July 2014

S/RES/14/1539 reserved matters for Barratt Developments phase (121 dwellings) granted 19th Dec 2014

S/RES/16/0036 Reserved matters application pending consideration for the erection of a new Stadium and associated development.

2 **Abbey Farm**

S/OUT/14/0080 - Outline application for up to 350 dwellings, a two form entry primary school, a local convenience shop, green infrastructure including open space and associated highways, infrastructure, utilities, demolition and other engineering works - Access not reserved. Granted planning permission 2nd April 2015 subject to S106.

3 **Land at Lady Lane**

S/OUT/15/1025 – Outline application for 52 dwellings – recommendation at November Planning Committee for the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services, Heritage and Libraries be authorised to GRANT planning permission, in consultation with the Ward Councillors and the Cabinet Member - Strategic Planning & Communities and subject to securing footpath and transport links from the site, the completion of a planning obligation to secure the housing tenure and type that is material to the decision required to support the development, and the necessary highway works to mitigate the impact of the development and subject to conditions with authority to vary the content and / or wording of both as appropriate.

4 **Land to rear 99 Ermin Street, Blunsdon**

S/RES/15/0255 – Reserved matters application - Erection of 61 dwellings with provision for open space, allotments and associated works. Reserved Matters from previous permission S/13/1233.

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- 5 **Land to rear 93 Ermin Street, Blunsdon**
S/OUT/14/1121 – Outline application for the demolition of the existing house and outbuildings and erection of up to 14 dwellings (Means of access not reserved).
- 6 **Land to rear 83 Ermin Street, Blunsdon**
S/13/0364 - Erection of 57 dwellings, provision of allotments and associated works (Means of Access not reserves).
S/ RES/15/1702 - Erection of 57 dwellings, provision of allotments and associated works (Reserved Matters from outline planning permission S/13/0364).
- 1.3 The LPA is taking a positive approach to reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, by working proactively with applicants to find solutions to complex sites.
- 1.4 In order to satisfy Policy SD3 of the Swindon Borough Local Plan the Local Planning Authority has to ensure that the scale of development is managed positively to deliver the quality of housing and facilities in a way that promotes healthy, safe, inclusive and attractive neighbourhoods.
- 1.5 While in many respects it is too late within the planning process to develop a masterplan to control the more recent major development proposals that have come forward in this area, this report seeks to draw attention to the Planning Committee of the need to establish a strong sense of connectivity across the various land parcels, and overall good urban design principles for the detailed development layouts in line with Swindon Borough Local Plan Policies DE1, SD3, CM2, the NPPF and NPPG.
- 1.6 Failure to ensure good connectivity across the entire area in a comprehensive way would serve to only weaken the linkages between future and existing communities, creating more isolated development that is unsustainable by generating more car-based trips than a more physically-connected layout would.
2. **Detail**
- 2.1 This report is going to emphasise the need to achieve a high degree of connectivity across development parcels in order to address the main criteria for providing pedestrian and cycling routes in an integrated way as set out in Local Plan Policy DE1, in particular: Accessibility, Connectivity, Permeability, Legibility and Inclusivity; and in doing so also supporting other policies of the local plan such as Policy CM2a: Active, Healthy and Safe Lifestyles.

The reason for each of these is outlined below:

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- 2.2 ***“Accessibility of the development to facilities such as public transport, open space, schools, shops and employment by all modes of transport giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists;”*** (SBLP 2026 para 4.13 bullet point 1).

It is essential that new communities are designed to locate housing with local facilities and amenities within walkable distances. This enables better social cohesion between adjacent neighbourhoods, reduces the need to travel by car and in doing so encourages healthier communities.

Sites adjacent to each other that fail to achieve good linkages to provide for walkability between housing and essential local facilities and amenities will be contrary to policy DE1.

- 2.3 ***“Connectivity of the new development with the existing surrounding area, including strong, direct, safe and desirable linkages as well as visual connection, between housing, green infrastructure and public realm;”*** SBLP 2026, para 4,13 bullet 2.

Developments that fail to connect sufficiently to neighbouring housing, facilities and open space lead to insular development and an over-reliance on vehicular movement, by compromising walkable distances. Strong connectivity promotes walking and cycling and enables healthy lifestyles by encouraging people to walk, run and cycle.

Development proposals must provide good connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between adjacent development areas in a way that is direct, safe and attractive. Direct in order to ensure good accessibility distances; safe through careful planning, overlooking routes; and attractive in order to encourage their use, such as walking and cycling routes between neighbourhoods to nearby schools and open spaces.

“Legibility – through a clear and logical structure that is easy to navigate and understand. This should be achieved through a well-ordered and defined public realm, with clear relationships between uses, buildings, routes and spaces;” SBLP 2026, para 4.1 bullet 3.

A clear and logical layout structure is fundamental to achieving good legibility. A good permeable, legible scheme with strong connectivity, and well-executed access points makes it easy for people to know where they are, to see where they want to get to and how to get there. The opposite occurs in development layouts adjacent to each other that are insular, rely on single points of access and are unrelated and detached from each other through their layout structure.

“Inclusivity across all user groups through the principles of inclusive design. Inclusive access to places, spaces, buildings and public transport is a crucial part of achieving social equality and the prevention of economic, social and physical barriers;” SBLP 2026, para 4.1 bullet 4

“Permeability - ensuring a high degree of ease of movement within and across the development, by adopting a strong layout that avoids closed streets and blocked movements;” SBLP 2026, para 4.1 bullet 7

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New neighbourhoods must provide a layout structure that will deliver good connectivity within the proposed development itself, avoiding blockages that could easily be designed out.

“Policy CM2(a) Active, Healthy and Safe Lifestyles – are enabled by increasing opportunities to walk and cycle and encouraging more sustainable travel choices;”
SBLP 2026

The SBLP 2026 has an important role to play in creating environments that promote activity through high quality design, access to play areas, playing pitches and green space and creating opportunities to walk and cycle safely, thereby promoting social cohesion and healthy, walkable neighbourhoods.

4.0 Alternative Options

4.1 There is no alternative option to applying the requirement of the policy in this regard.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- The costs of necessary infrastructure work will be mitigated through a combination of CIL and s106 contributions from developers.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- Legal and Human rights implications have been considered in preparing this report. The report is considered to be compatible with convention rights.

Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- It is envisaged that the report would enable a high-level steer to be exercised by planning officers when considering and determining applications for development in this area.

Links to the Council's Vision

- This report supports the Council's Vision by ensuring that new development in the Borough be a model of well managed housing growth which supports and improves new and existing communities.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has previously been completed in respect of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 and for the Swindon Residential Design Guide Draft Consultation Document (August 2015). We do not believe that the implementation of this proposal will create an adverse impact on the basis of age, disability, race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief. A copy of the DIA is available from the report author on request.

Risk Management

This report seeks to implement the policy requirements of the Swindon Borough

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Peter Garitsis on 466744 or Email pgaritsis@swindon.gov.uk.

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Local Plan 2026. The Local Plan has been subject to a risk assessment.
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Background Papers

- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)
- Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026
- Swindon Residential Design Guide (Draft) 2015
- **Appendix** – Map of area relating to planning applications referred to in Paragraph 1.2(1 - 6).

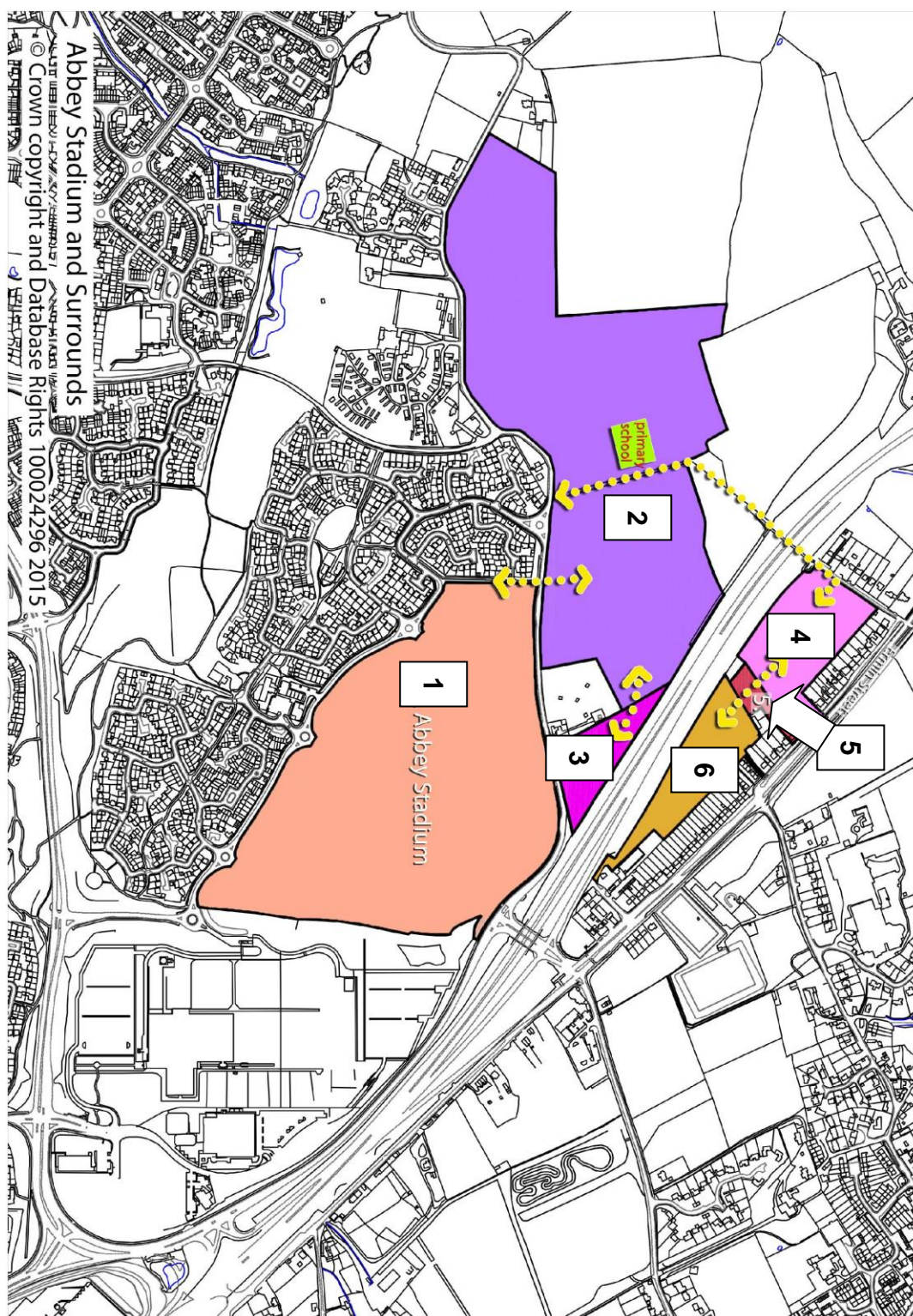
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Appendix

Map below illustrating current planning applications highlighted in Paragraphs 1.2, (1-6)



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