

Wiltshire Local Plan Scoping Consultation

Response from Great Bedwyn Parish Council

Draft for council approval · September 2026 · Deadline 11:59pm, 30 September 2026

Great Bedwyn Parish Council asks to be notified of every further stage of the Wiltshire Local Plan's preparation.

Q1 – Informing the vision

Our single biggest concern for the next 20 years is that Great Bedwyn becomes steadily less affordable and loses the amenities that make it a living village rather than a dormitory. Those amenities are the railway station, GP surgery, post office, shop, café, garage and pub. Their loss would change the character of the village permanently.

These pressures are linked. The population is ageing, and young people and families increasingly cannot afford to live here. Our December 2025 Housing Needs Survey found that most respondents cannot buy on the open market. Only seven of the parish's 117 social homes were re-let in three years. The station, like our other services, depends on a working-age population using it. Without a mix of ages and incomes, the village risks becoming a satellite of Newbury, Reading and London, with fewer residents taking part in village life.

We believe this pattern is common across rural Wiltshire. Many villages are worse served than Great Bedwyn, including poor access to banking, and the Plan's vision should address rural sustainability directly.

Q2 – Shaping the spatial strategy

Large-scale growth should be concentrated in existing towns, such as Marlborough, and on the edge of Swindon. Those towns already have public transport, sewerage and services, and they are where new homes can do the most good with the least car dependency. This support is conditional on infrastructure being delivered first.

The Plan should prioritise regenerating town centres over edge-of-town estates. Empty and under-used high-street buildings, including former banks and shops, should be converted into well-designed apartments, with commercial uses retained at ground level. This keeps town centres alive and supports walkable communities. There is an obvious gap for good-quality, lower-cost apartments aimed at young people and first-time buyers, comparable to what over-55s housing provides for older residents. Repurposing buildings in the centre of Marlborough has shown this can be done well.

Land should be used in a clear order of preference: brownfield first, then greenfield. We recognise that brownfield land alone is unlikely to meet the level of need.

For Great Bedwyn itself, we support modest growth broadly in line with county trends. It should consist of a mix of housing types and prices, weighted towards lower-cost homes where our survey shows demand exceeds supply. It should come through infill within the existing village settlement boundary. We do not support large estates or development that breaches the village

boundary into open countryside. Once that boundary is broken, it becomes very difficult to resist further outward expansion.

Q3 – Informing locally specific policies

We ask for three policies in particular.

1. **Stronger protection for village services.** The Plan should include materially stricter policies protecting village shops, pubs, post offices, surgeries and similar services from change of use.
2. **Infrastructure before development.** Permission should depend on confirmed capacity in electricity grid connection, water supply, wastewater treatment and sewerage, with development phased so it does not come ahead of that capacity.
3. **A sequential approach to land.** Brownfield land and existing buildings should be used before greenfield land. Rooftops and previously developed land should be used for solar generation before agricultural land, and where solar farms are permitted, they should allow grazing beneath the arrays.

We also ask Wiltshire to test the viability of the following standards for new development:

- on-site solar generation sized to the building's calculated load
- dedicated off-street parking
- off-street bin storage
- properly installed EV charging points
- rigorous delivery of biodiversity net gain
- Environmental considerations to house building – solar panels and air source heat pumps etc.

Q4 – Evidence requirements

We ask Wiltshire to commission the following evidence:

- **Grid and water capacity studies**, covering water supply and pressure as well as treatment.
- **Sewerage and flood modelling.** In Great Bedwyn the sewer network is Victorian, there have been repeated repairs to a failing road, a water leak contributed to local flooding, and water pressure in parts of the village is poor. We are concerned the network is already beyond its design capacity, and additional housing would increase the risk of failure.
- **A bus network gap analysis, with specific attention to bus–rail connections.** Bedwyn station draws commuters from a wide area, including Marlborough, but with no connecting bus service almost all arrive by car. The result is serious traffic and parking pressure in the village. Transport, housing and parking cannot be planned in isolation from each other.

- **A rural services audit**, covering banking (including the case for banking hubs), shops, GP access, mobile coverage and broadband. Mobile mast failures in our area have been frequent, and promised broadband improvements have been slow to arrive.

Q5 – What else the Plan should contain

The Plan should take a joined-up approach. Housing including environmental considerations, transport, utilities and digital infrastructure must be planned together, because each fails without the others. Existing infrastructure in rural areas is already under strain, and the Plan should be candid about what investment is needed and who will fund it.

Q6 – How you should engage

A digital-first approach will not reach much of a rural parish like ours. Many older residents do not use online or social media channels. At the other end, some residents have lost faith that taking part makes any difference. Even our own Housing Needs Survey, delivered by hand to every door, drew a limited response. Hard copies held only in larger libraries are not enough.

We ask for:

- **Drop-in events held in villages**, not only in towns.
- **Early sight for the Parish Council** of any site proposals affecting the parish.
- **A briefing for parish councils** before the April–May 2027 consultation on content and evidence.
- **Specific engagement with parishes that hold recent local evidence**, such as a Housing Needs Survey or neighbourhood plan.

Great Bedwyn Parish Council offers to host a public meeting in the village hall during the next consultation stage. We ask Wiltshire Council to attend with officers who are responsible for drafting the relevant policies, so residents can see their views reaching the people who will act on them.

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