Wiltshire Council's response to Derry Hill & Studley PC, 23rd October 2026

Thank you for your letter dated 20 October 2026, regarding Lower Compton Household Recycling Centre (HRC) and the Council's HRC booking system pilot.

I appreciate the concerns raised by Derry Hill and Studley Parish Council and welcome the opportunity to clarify the Council's current position and respond to the questions raised.

Before addressing the individual questions, it is important to clarify that Lower Compton HRC is not currently scheduled to close in the immediate future. Following consideration of updated contract costs, Full Council approved arrangements in February 2026 which enable both Lower Compton and Purton HRCs to remain open while work progresses on a new HRC in the north of Wiltshire. The current extension for Lower Compton is structured as one year with two further one-year extension options

In respect of the proposed closure of Lower Compton HRC:

Could you set out the reasons why the current Lower Compton HRC is not fit for purpose and what changes would be required to upgrade it to modern operational standards?

The proposal to develop a replacement facility was not solely based on Lower Compton HRC simply being declared "not fit for purpose". Lower Compton remains operational and continues to provide an important service for residents.

The proposals to close Purton and Lower Compton HRCs were brought forward due to the significantly higher costs associated with operating the two contractor-owned sites compared with the Council's eight council-owned facilities. Additionally, a review of the sites identified that key infrastructure and equipment had reached the end of its serviceable life and required investment to remain safe, efficient and reliable. This would have added to the overall cost of retaining the sites.

Following further negotiations with Hills Waste Solutions, the owner and operator of both facilities, a revised position was reached, and the closure proposals were not progressed. The Council has subsequently made provision for capital investment in infrastructure and equipment at the existing sites to support their continued operation during the extended contract period.

Alongside this, the Council has been reviewing the longer-term configuration of its HRC network. An independent HRC assessment identified the opportunity for a larger, Council-owned facility in the Royal Wootton Bassett area.

The site was identified following an extensive search and assessment process. It is council-owned, of an appropriate size to accommodate a modern recycling facility, has suitable access arrangements and is well positioned to serve residents currently using both the Lower Compton and Purton HRCs. By identifying this site, it does not mean a final decision has been made. A significant amount of technical, environmental and planning work must still be completed before a planning application can be submitted. The next phase of work is focused on determining whether the site is suitable for development and preparing information needed to support future decision making. Both the Lower Compton and Purton HRCs will continue operating as normal for three and four years respectively, throughout the development of the new facility.

Do Wiltshire Council intend to publish a Cost Benefit Analysis justifying the replacement of the Purton and Lower Compton HRCs with a new facility at Royal Wootton Bassett?

Work is currently progressing on the business case for a prospective new HRC in north Wiltshire. The project arrangements include the development of a comprehensive business case covering capital and revenue requirements, site design and layout, followed by the appropriate Council decision-making process.

The Council has not currently committed to publishing a separate document specifically described as a “Cost Benefit Analysis”. Relevant information supporting future decisions would, however, be considered through the Council’s formal decision-making process, subject to the usual requirements concerning commercially sensitive information.

Will Wiltshire Council publish a Carbon Impact Assessment of the changes, taking consideration of additional journey times to the replacement HRC, as well as the transportation of materials from the replacement HRC to the Hills’ Materials Recovery Centre at Lower Compton?

Environmental and transport impacts will form part of the further assessment of the proposed site. Current project work identifies the need for ecological and environmental surveys and traffic assessments before the Council can confirm that its preferred location is suitable and progress a planning application.

At this stage, the Council has not committed to publishing a separate document specifically described as a Carbon Impact Assessment. The concerns raised by the Parish Council around additional journeys and the environmental effect of future waste movements are, however, relevant considerations as the proposal is developed.

Has Wiltshire Council considered taking on the operation of Lower Compton HRC directly under a negotiated long-lease arrangement?

Lower Compton HRC is privately owned. The Council’s strategic work has therefore considered longer-term alternatives for HRC provision in north Wiltshire, including the benefits associated with securing a Council-owned facility. The HRC network

assessment identified that ownership of a new northern facility could give the Council greater control over its HRC assets.

Will the replacement of Lower Compton and Purton HRCs with a new HRC in Royal Wootton Bassett increase or decrease the capacity of household recycling centres in Wiltshire?

Any new HRC would be designed to replace existing capacity whilst also taking account of planned housing growth, population increases and long-term demand for waste and recycling services in north Wiltshire.

The intention would be to provide a modern facility capable of meeting residents' needs for several decades, with sufficient capacity, infrastructure and layout to accommodate future demand safely and efficiently. Detailed capacity requirements will form part of the business case, feasibility and design work currently being undertaken.

As the project is still at an early stage, no final decisions have been made regarding the size, layout or operational arrangements of any future facility. These matters would be informed by forecast demand, site constraints, affordability and the wider needs of the Wiltshire HRC network.

Given the extent of housing development taking place around Calne and to the south of Chippenham, and the need to improve recycling rates above the current level of 42.4%, has Wiltshire Council assessed the HRC capacity required to meet future needs to a reasonable planning horizon.

Future demand is one of the reasons the Council is progressing plans for a new facility in north Wiltshire. The current project brief specifically identifies the objective of helping to meet future demand and improving recycling facilities for residents in the north of the county.

Wiltshire Council has undertaken, and continues to undertake, extensive work to understand both current and future demand for Household Recycling Centre services across the network, including the impacts of planned housing growth and changing waste management requirements.

The potential development of a new HRC in the Royal Wootton Bassett area is being considered separately from the long-term needs of the Chippenham area. Any future facilities in north Wiltshire would be intended to replace existing capacity, accommodate planned growth and provide a long-term solution capable of meeting residents' needs for several decades.

At the same time, the Council recognises that longer-term infrastructure projects take many years to develop and deliver. As a result, Wiltshire Council is also considering shorter and medium-term measures to help ensure the network continues to operate effectively. These include the HRC Booking System Pilot, which is helping us better understand site demand and usage patterns, and helping us better manage current demand at sites.

When Lower Compton HRC closes, will Wiltshire Council extend the opening hours of our next nearest HRCs at Melksham and Devizes?

As set out above, Lower Compton remains open under the current contract arrangements and there is no immediate closure associated with the original August 2026 proposal.

No decision has therefore been made to extend opening hours at Melksham or Devizes because of a future closure of Lower Compton. The Council will continue to consider demand and operational requirements across the network as its longer-term HRC plans develop.

In respect of the HRC booking system trial:

How long will the trial of the booking system go on for?

The pilot began in September 2026 and is expected to continue until at least spring 2027. Running the pilot over this period allows the Council to assess its operation across different seasonal conditions before decisions are taken about its longer-term future. No decision has yet been made to make the booking system permanent.

How will the results of the Booking Pilot be assessed?

The pilot has been introduced to gather evidence on its impacts rather than to assume a particular outcome. Evaluation includes measures around:

- Customer satisfaction and resident feedback.
- Booking numbers and utilisation levels.
- Queueing and congestion on sites and surrounding roads.
- Operational efficiency.
- Site safety and health and safety performance.
- Accessibility and customer experience.
- Impacts on waste and recycling performance.
- Changes in resident behaviour and use of the HRC network.
- Incidents of fly-tipping.

Resident feedback also forms an important part of that assessment.
The Council has publicly stated that it will specifically assess whether the pilot has improved customer service, reduced queues, improved safety, made visits more efficient and improved site operations. The findings will inform any future decisions regarding the booking system.

Will Wiltshire Council publish data on the impact of the system on utilisation of the HRC?

Utilisation data forms part of the information being gathered through the pilot, including booking numbers, attendance levels and site usage patterns. Should the Council bring forward recommendations following the pilot, the supporting evidence

and analysis would form part of the reporting and decision-making process, including any future Cabinet report.

Will Wiltshire Council be assessing whether the booking system trial has an impact on incidents of fly-tipping in the county?

Yes. Fly-tipping forms part of the pilot's evaluation framework and is being monitored throughout the trial. This is one of the issues most frequently raised by residents. National research commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which reviewed data from 54 local authorities operating HRC booking systems, found no evidence of a link between booking systems and increased fly-tipping. Nevertheless, Wiltshire Council will continue to monitor local fly-tipping levels throughout the pilot period alongside other performance measures.

I hope this provides useful clarification on the issues raised by Derry Hill and Studley Parish Council. I recognise the importance of Lower Compton HRC to residents in the Calne area and the concerns that proposals for the future of the HRC network have generated.

Both Lower Compton and Purton remain open under the current arrangements while the Council progresses the work required to assess a potential new facility in north Wiltshire. Further information will be made available as that work and the booking-system pilot progress through the appropriate Council decision-making process

Kind regards
Helen Tribbel
Contracts and Compliance Officer
Waste Management Team