**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990**

**THE PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990**

# RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION OF FORMER AGRICULTURAL BARN OFF WEST STREET, GREAT SOMERFORD, WILTSHIRE

## PLANNING STATEMENT
## (including Design and Heritage Commentary)

**Prepared by**

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**Our Reference: SWLC.LPC5416**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 LPC (Trull) Ltd have been instructed by the Cynthia Llewellen Palmer Trust 2010 to present the planning application for the conversion of the former farm building accessed off West Street, Great Somerford, for use as a single two bedroomed new dwelling (Class C3).



1.2 This Statement will describe the site's context and set out what is proposed. The Statement will then provide an overview of the planning policy context and an assessment of the key material considerations, demonstrating the proposal's acceptability.

## 2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE

2.1 The application building lies to the south of West Street and is understood to have historically formed part of West Street Farm on the opposite side of the road.

2.2 It is a single storey brick-built barn, which faces the street, and is set back deeper than the residential building line created by the housing to the east. Photographs of the barn as street views and the aerial view inserted on the following page (blue arrow identifying the building) show its simple form and standalone siting, set in depth from the site frontage to West Street.







2.3 There is a shared access to the barn and the neighbouring property (No 63 West Street), and a separate track that also provides access beyond the barn to the fields south and west. This access is signposted, as shown below as a public footpath. The Council's online definitive map extract below the photograph though indicates the route for GSOM7 is over the neighbour's land. Neither the definitive nor the 'permissive' route on the ground is affected by the application development.

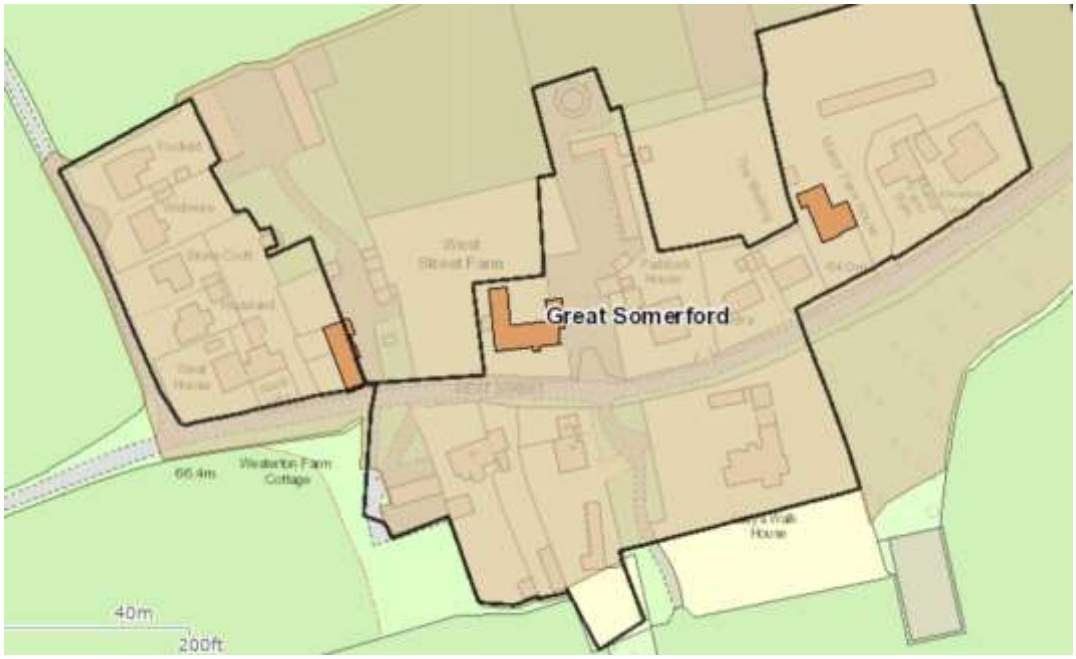





2.4 The land in front of the barn is currently open, where it accommodates the existing tarmacked/hardsurfaced tracks. The rest of the land is grassed and rises slightly from the road frontage. To the rear of the barn there is a large hardsurfaced area.

2.5 The plan extract inserted below shows that the application building lies within the defined settlement framework limits for Great Somerford (black line) and that that boundary includes, although not completely in this area as neither designation reflects the extent of the physical features on the ground, the

village Conservation Area designation (shown washed over in brown). The orange shade buildings are Listed Buildings.




## 3.0 THE PROPOSAL

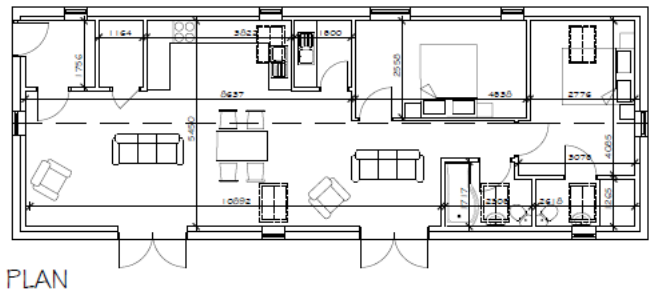
3.1 Unlike most residential barn conversions this building does not lie in a countryside location as defined by the relevant Development Plan policy framework. However, mindful of its siting in the Conservation Area, despite the building's own unremarkable heritage significance, it is not proposed to replace the building, as a typical village housing plot. The application seeks to convert the barn as a single residential unit, with minimal changes.

3.2 For ease of reference in these regards I have inserted the existing (first) and proposed plan extracts below to provide a clear indication of the modest scale of changes necessary to facilitate the new independent chapter of use.





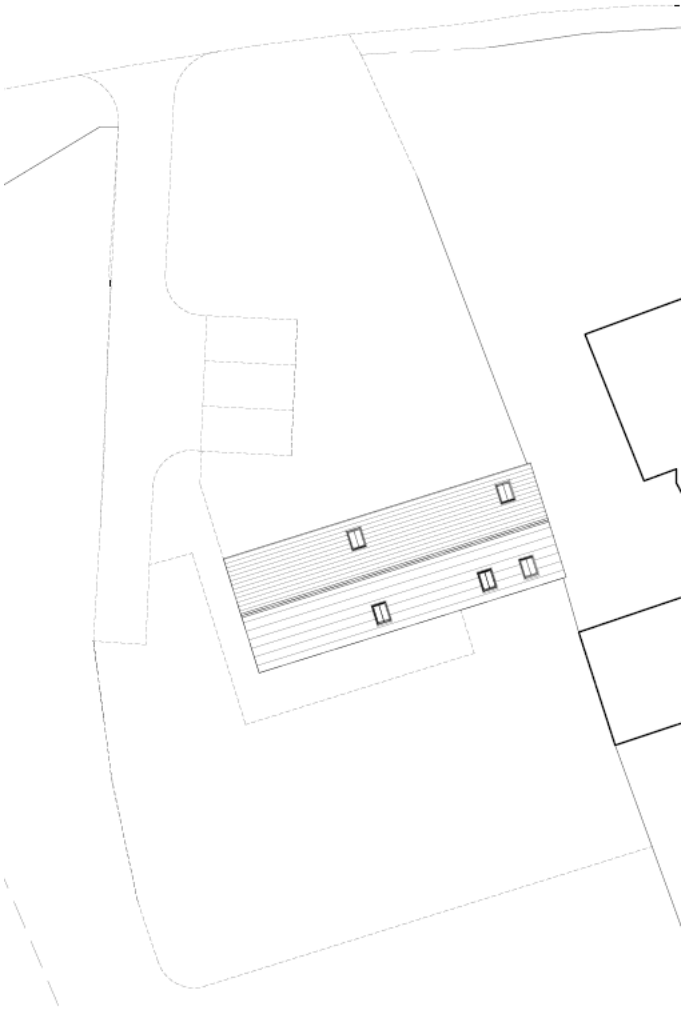

3.3 The converted property is a two bedroomed unit (as shown below) and has a floor area of approximately 87m². The existing brick work will be retained below a slate tiled roof. Additionally, all the internal changes have been achieved without requiring any new openings, other than rooflights providing improved internal lighting, along with the new fenestration to be employed within the existing openings. All such joinery will be timber.






3.4 The land to the front of the barn will be served with a single access, distinct therefore from No 63. Indeed, the hardsurfaced area in front of the barn and track shared with No 63 will be removed entirely and the area will be laid to

grassed as one area. The remaining hardstanding to the rear of the barn, (as shown below) will also be broken up and the new private rear garden space will be provided in its stead. A simple timber post and rail (1.4m high) fence will define the rear garden and a field gate from the western side of the retained drive will continue to provide a shaved access to the adjacent fields.



## 4.0 HERITAGE ISSUES

4.1 Section 72 to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 requires that all development proposals within a Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the area's character and appearance.

4.2 It is also material to note that Section 66 of the same Act is applicable in this instance as the setting of the nearest Listed Buildings is also required to be protected.

4.3 The application building sits at the edge of the village and within the field margin of the open countryside beyond. It is modest in scale and set well back from the road providing a transition between the larger, predominantly two storey dwellings that confine the tighter built grain and sense of enclosure characteristic along West Street to the east (shown below).



4.4 The street is in fact dominated by the varied height natural stone walling that sits upto the footpath edges and provides the characteristic enclosure to the built up areas of this part of the village. The application site contrasts with this character, but by reason of the dense conifer boundary shared with No 63 is not seen within the street scene. Its contribution to the qualities of the Conservation Area relate therefore to the transition created, and its distinct agricultural character and appearance. Indeed, the Neighbourhood Plan at paragraph 4.10 confirm this assessment.

'The narrow, winding roads and lanes throughout the village provide a pleasing rural feel. Grass verges, stone walls, hedges, trees and views onto the countryside through gaps in the built settlement all enhance the rural setting.'

4.5 The creation of a greater area of open grass land to the front of the barn, by removing the shared eastern drive will enhance the transitional and rural character and appearance of the barn and its perceived contribution to this part of the Conservation Area.

4.6 The works proposed to the application building are very minor and, the private amenity space is effectively screened by the building as part of the street scene. There is already parking associated with the application building, which is understood to have been leased previously to No 63 West Street for ancillary domestic storage and workshop use. The character of the building is consequently already no longer typically agricultural. The changes proposed will not therefore materially change its evolved function and form as part of the area's built up limits.

4.7 The modest nature of the changes, which on balance will not harm, and most likely, enhance the area's character and appearance, will similarly not diminish the heritage qualities and setting of the two nearest listed buildings. The degree of separation in itself sets the application outside of their intimate setting and visual confines.

## 5.0 THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning decisions are made in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The relevant Development Plan policy framework for the application site is provided by the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015), and the Great Somerford (incorporating Startley) Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2026 made November 2017.

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England and details how these are expected to be applied. It is a material planning consideration.

5.4 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means 'approving development proposals that accord with and up-to-date Development Plan without delay' or 'where there are no relevant Development Plan policies, or the policies which are

most important for determining the application are out-of- date, granting permission unless: i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as a whole.'

5.5 The following policies from the relevant development plan

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) adopted 2015

CP1 – Settlement strategy

CP2 – Delivery strategy

CP13 - Malmesbury Community Area

CP50 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

CP51 – Landscape

CP57 – Ensuring high-quality design and place-shaping

CP60 – Sustainable transport

CP61 – Transport and development

CP64 – Demand management

5.6 Key Issues - The planning considerations in the assessment of this application are the principle of development, the impact on the character and appearance of the area, neighbour amenity, the visual impact, the impact on the landscape and biodiversity, and the impact on highway safety and parking provision.

## 6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Principle of development:

6.1 The application site is located, within the large village of Great Somerford. Core Policy 2 sets out the delivery strategy for the Council and advises that within the limits of development, as defined on the policies map, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the Principal Settlements, Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Large Villages, like

Great Somerford – where a limited level of up to ten homes (subject to site circumstances) is supported by the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS).

6.2 It is also important to acknowledge that recent planning appeals have confirmed that the council cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land when tested against Local Housing Need (LHN) for Wiltshire (which became a requirement after 20 January 2020 when the adopted WCS became 5 years old), which has been described as a significant shortfall.

6.3 With this recognition, the tilted balance flowing from paragraph 11d) ii of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is engaged. This means that the local plan policies which restrict new housing provision must be treated as being 'out of date', but it does not mean that they carry no weight, since the development plan remains the starting point for any decision making. However, when the tilted balance is engaged, the NPPF indicates that planning permission should be granted for new housing unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

6.4 Whilst it is important to acknowledge that planning judgement is required in terms of setting out the degree of weight that should be given to any 'out of date' adopted local plan policy, noting that full weight cannot be afforded to such policies including CP1, CP2 and CP13 that seek to restrict new housing outside of settlement limits, The application does not trigger such conflict but as the Council continues to have a housing supply deficit the need to support all housing scheme that accord with the development plan is even more important.

6.5 Great Somerford is designated as a 'large village', which is identified having "a limited range of employment, services and facilities" and this windfall development would sit full square with the in principle support provided by

the relevant policy framework for new village housing. WCS Policy CP2, sets out the delivery strategy for the period of 2006-2026 which aims to deliver development in the most sustainable manner through directing new housing growth to the defined settlements and through sites identified in made neighbourhood plans and site allocation plans as in such areas development would have the potential to support existing and new services and facilities.

Impact on the Character and the Appearance of the Area:

6.6 The application site is located distinct from the adjacent housing and in form and location provides a transition to the rural fringe of the village, where view open up through the site frontage. The immediate area is characterised predominantly by residential use, comprising of two storey properties. In terms of building materials, there is a mix with render and stone, along with some limited use of red brick.

6.7 Policy CP57 of the adopted WSC requires a "high standard of design" for all new developments. This policy requires developments to "create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality" with applications encouraged to "make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire" and sets out a list of fourteen criteria that proposals for new development must comply with. Within the list of 14 criteria, the following requirements are included:

i. enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced

ii. the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features, (e.g. trees, hedges, banks and watercourses), in order to take opportunities to enhance biodiversity, create wildlife and recreational corridors, effectively integrate the development into its setting and to justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development

iii. responding positively to the existing townscape and landscape features in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

vi. making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area.

6.8 The latest iteration of the Framework has a greater focus on delivering high-quality design and sets out in paragraph 126 that the "creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve". Paragraph 130 moreover sets out a series of six criteria to ensure development is of high quality over the lifetime of the development, being visually attractive and sympathetic to the local character and history, and creates a strong sense of place.

6.9 The proposed dwelling would utilise the existing brick build maintaining its built form and character within the established context. It has a suitable private amenity space and vehicular access and parking and will be comfortably accommodated as an independent new dwelling on the site.

6.10 As noted already the application site occupies a parcel of land largely within the Great Somerford Conservation Area. The site is also in the vicinity to a number of listed buildings. As such the character and appearance impacts for this proposal need to be assessed against the relevant legislation and policies.

6.11 In terms of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66(1) requires that special regard be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest that they possess. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 meanwhile also requires the

Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

6.12 The Framework also requires that 'great weight' be given to the conservation of heritage assets and advises a balanced approach with the public benefits which may result from proposals being weighed against any harm caused. In particular, NPPF paragraph 199 advises 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. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 200 leads on to require that any harm or loss of significance should require a clear and convincing justification.

6.13 Core Policy 57 of the adopted WCS not only requires a "high standard of design" criterion iv requires new development to be "sympathetic to and conserve historic buildings and historic landscapes". CP58 of the adopted WCS similarly sets that the new development "should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment" and that designated heritage assets and their settings should be "conserved, and where appropriate enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance".

6.14 The degree of changes are so minimal that the heritage assets and environment generally will not be discernibly changed/impacted and thus there is no harm and the heritage character and visual qualities are preserved.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity and Living Conditions for Future Occupiers:

6.15 Policy CP57 criteria vii requires new developments to have "regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants, and ensuring that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself, including the consideration of privacy, overshadowing, vibration, and pollution (e.g. light intrusion, noise, smoke, fumes, effluent, waste or litter)".

6.16 Criterion f) of paragraph 130 of the Framework meanwhile requires the creation of “places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users”.

6.17 The proposed dwelling is a single storey structure and is sited with a restricted aspect facing front and rear. There is a strong vegetated boundary to the nearest neighbour to the east. The orientation and siting will ensure there is loss of privacy between the existing and proposed, furthermore, it is not considered that the proposed dwelling would create harmful overshadowing or overbearing impacts to nearby occupiers. The proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and would therefore comply with CP57 of the adopted WCS and paragraph 130 of the Framework.

6.18 Turning to the living conditions of the future occupiers of the proposed dwelling, all habitable rooms would be served by windows which would provide access to natural daylight. In addition, future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would benefit from sufficient private rear garden area.

6.19 The adopted WCS and Framework do not prescribe what size of residential garden should be provided in new developments, however, the Building for Life 12 (which was published in 2015) sets out an industry standard for well-designed dwellings and places and it advises on page 17 that:

"It is a good idea to ensure that rear gardens are at least equal to the ground floor footprint of the dwelling. Triangular shaped gardens rarely offer a practical, usable space. Allow residents the opportunity to access their garden without having to walk through their home."

It is therefore considered that the future occupiers of the proposed dwellings would benefit from a high standard of amenity in accordance with CP57 of the adopted WCS and the Framework.

Visual impact, including the impact on the landscape setting:

6.20 WCS Core Policy 57 (Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping) must be considered in assessing the visual impact of the proposal. Paragraph (iii) of this policy requires new development to respond positively to the existing

townscape features in terms building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevation design, materials, streetscape and rooflines. Para. (vi.) of this policy furthermore requires that development should make efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area.

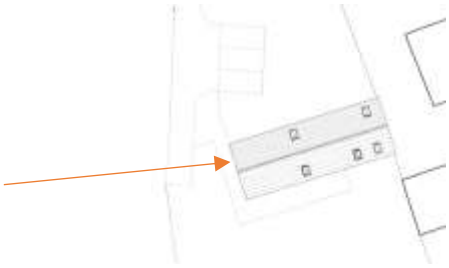
6.21 Core Policy 51 (Landscape) of the adopted WCS states that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character.

6.22 The landscape character is seen as part of the built up limits of the village and looking back at the village the existing building will continue to be subsumed within the wider and taller built envelop. The contribution made to the area's character and appearance includes the rural setting of the village. Taking into account the assessment of the visual impact of the proposed dwelling and its contribution to the area's character, the development would acceptably respect the existing character and form of the settlement, and thus preserves the landscape setting too. The improved grassed area to the front and modest private amenity space, similarly grassed are physical improvements.

Ecology:

6.23 The application includes a protected species assessment prepared by Crossman Associates and which confirms that there is no evidence of bats and that the building provides negligible roosting suitability.

6.24 The report provides recommendations going forward, and as far as the biodiversity enhancements suggested this supporting statement is part of the application documentation and shows on the next page the intended siting of the 2No sparrow nesting boxes (Schwegler 1SP) on the western gable (in excess of 2m above the ground) and which can therefore be conditonally controlled. The private treatment of the new garden area is not a matter for legitmate control and thus no new landscaping details are considerd necessary in excess of the new arreas of grass.



Highways Safety and Parking:

6.25 The proposal seeks to utilise the existing established vehicular access which serves the fields beyond the site.

6.26 Criterion xiv of CP57 requires proposals to satisfy the requirements of CP61 (Transport and New Development). CP61 requires new developments to be "located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives". CP61 also requires in criterion ii that proposals would be "capable of being served by safe access to the highway network". In addition, CP64 requires adherence to residential parking standards. In addition to the abovementioned policies, paragraph 111 of the Framework states that developments "should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe".

6.27 In terms of the Council's car parking strategy, this proposal would not materially affect the on-site car parking provision. There are three spaces shown with sufficient manoeuvring space to ensure access and egress in a forward gear. The parking provision in effect exceeds the required provision but ensures ample space for visitors to park clear of the highway.

## 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The reuse of the existing single storey former barn as a modest two bedroomed new dwelling adds to the supply of sustainable housing in accordance with the encouragement at paragraph 69 to the NPPF that seeks to boost the supply of housing. It accords with the area's spatial strategy and will be achieved without harm to the area's character and appearance and heritage interests. There are no highway grounds or general amenity

concerns and thus there are no reasons to resist the grant of permission as sought.