Bourne Valley Associates Ltd

Heritage Statement

In support of a Listed Building Application

For

Refurbishment of a lean-to building appended to a listed barn

At

Biddesden Farm, Biddesden Lane,

Biddesden, Ludgershall, Andover SP11 9DN

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1. Introduction

This heritage statement accompanies and supports an application made to Wiltshire Council seeking listed building consent to refurbish a lean-to structure appended to an agricultural barn at Biddesden Farm, Biddesden Lane, Biddesden, Ludgershall, Andover SP11 9DN, Wiltshire. The application is submitted by Bourne Valley Associates, acting as agent on behalf of Biddesden House Farm Partnership, which owns the land.

Planning permission is not required for the works, as there would not be any alteration to the dimensions of the building, nor is a change of use sought. There would be changes to the materials used on the lean-to, because the present materials are in poor condition.

The statement focuses on setting out the heritage significance of the building and assessing the degree of impact on that significance. However, it also fulfils the function of a planning statement, by explaining the need for the refurbishment and examining how the proposed works would accord with planning policy.

2. Site Context

2.1. Site Location

Biddesden Farm is located approximately 2.5kms East of the town of Ludgershall, as shown in Figure 1, which shows the farm's geographical context, with the application site marked by the golden arrow. The farm complex, from which the application site is detached, lies immediately to the North of Biddesden Lane, which runs East from the A342 Andover to Faberstown.

The location plan is formally submitted as Drawing 01930-00-E, Sheet 01. The location of the proposal is marked in red. The rest of the land, other than Biddesden Lane, is shown in blue, because the Biddesden Farm Estate is very large, covering 2300 acres (c 931ha) of farmland, excluding woodlands. There are no rights of way close to the application site.

The farm complex is some 500m to the West of Biddesden House, which is a Grade II listed building (with associated listed structures) and park and garden. The application site lies well outside the designated park, and there is no visual connection between the features. Accordingly, this heritage statement does not further address the significance of the House and park nor consider the possible impact upon them, because the application site lies well away from the setting of those other historic assets.

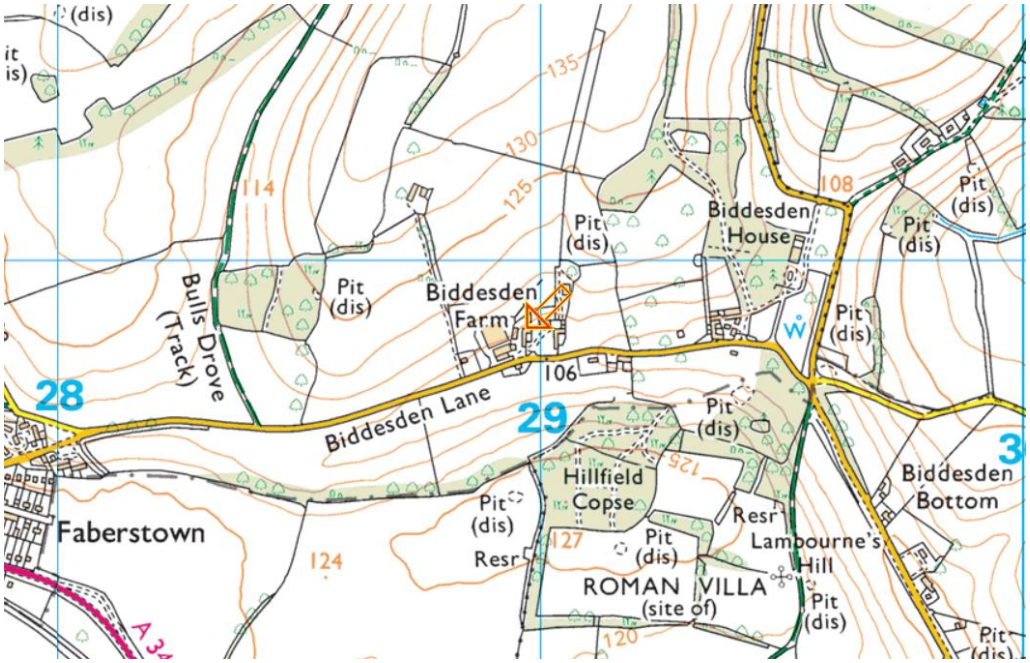

Figure 1 – Biddesden Farm Location

Figure 2 is an aerial photograph of July 2020 with the red arrow pointing to the lean-to on the western elevation of the listed barn which is the subject of this application. There is a second lean-to on that western elevation, but its condition is not critical, and it is not the subject of this application.

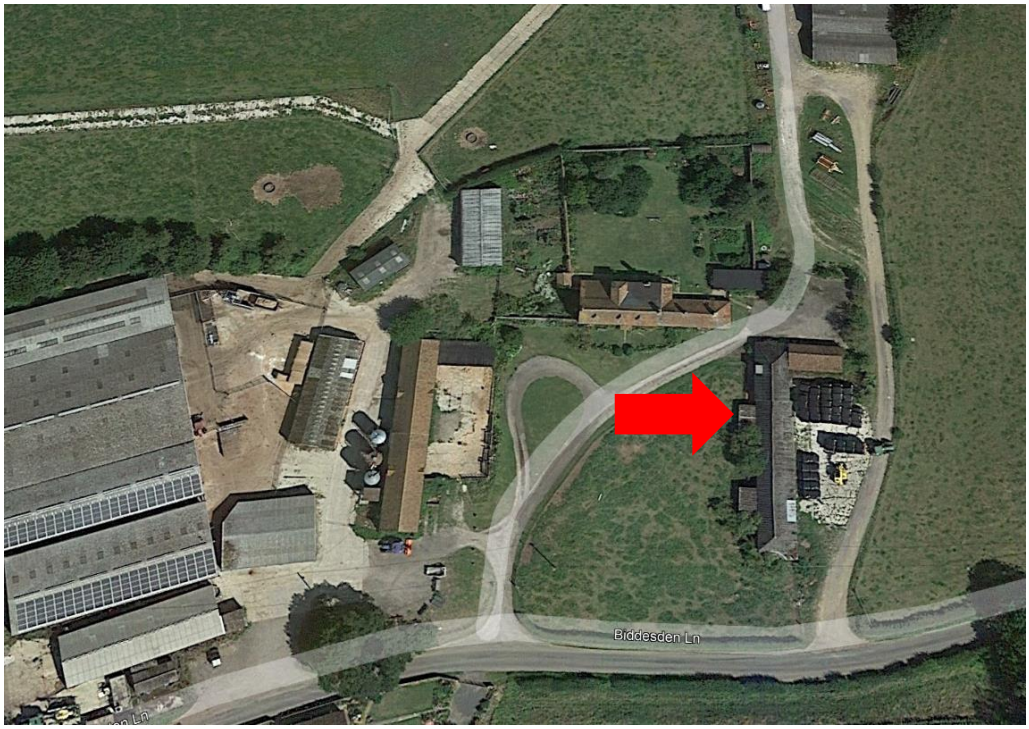

Figure 2 - Aerial photograph (July 2020)

The aerial photograph also shows some of the more modern farm buildings, on the left of the image, with their associated solar panels. At right angles, and to the North-West of the barn is Biddesden Farmhouse. That dwelling is not impacted by this proposal. It is a Grade II listed structure dating from the late 17th century or early 18th century.

2.2. Planning History

A search of the Wiltshire Council online public register suggests there have been no recent planning applications or listed building applications for either the barn, which is the subject of this application, or of Biddesden Farmhouse.

The Estate seeks to maintain and upgrade its agricultural buildings regularly, and has gained planning permission, or prior approval for such buildings at sites across its ownership. The only relatively recent application within the farm complex is a prior notification for a cattle barn located to the north of the site, this is application reference PL/22/03675, the building has been erected and the works are complete. A later application was for the installation of solar panels on the roof of the buildings on the left of the image in Figure 2. That application had the reference E/2011/1119/FUL. Permission was granted with conditions in October 2011. It is only relevant in that the decision bore in mind the possible impact on the setting of the listed buildings. In her report, the officer wrote: *"it is considered that the panels would not be obtrusive features on the roof slopes and any harm that does arise would be outweighed by the renewable energy that would be produced."*

It was also considered not to have any material negative effect on the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in which the farm complex lies.

2.3. Need for the Development

This barn remains in use for agricultural purposes, with the lean-to, which is specifically the part to be refurbished, used to house sheep in winter and bad weather. The lean-to is the more northerly of two additional structures on the West elevation of the barn. The block plan 01930-00-E, Sheet 02 shows the detailed location in context.

Figure 3 shows a representative photograph of the lean-to, viewed from the North-West. It can be seen that the walls of the structure are of rendered blockwork and the roof comprises fibre cement sheets. The date of construction of the lean-to is not accurately known, but it is probably 1950s or 1960s. The structures were certainly present when the building was listed in 1988.

Unfortunately, the poor quality of construction at that time is telling, as can be seen in Figures 4 and 5. Figure 4 shows a view from inside the structure looking at the entrance. It shows clearly that both the blocks forming the wall, and the roof sheets are eroding. Evidently, such conditions will lead to rainfall and wind entering the structure, so that it does not provide adequate protection for stock.



Figure 3 - Lean-to, viewed from North West



Figure 4 - Internal view showing roof sheets eroding

In addition to the roof and joins degrading, the blockwork is in poor condition, as can be seen in Figure 5, which shows a significant crack. If left unrepaired, the wall would certainly fail, and there is a very real danger that its collapse could cause structural issues to the body of the main building, which has the greatest historic value.



Figure 5 - Internal view showing cracks in blockwork

The open and exposed condition of the lean-to minimises any potential for bats to roost within it. There is no evidence of bat droppings at the site. Therefore, based upon evidence, no bat survey of the site has been undertaken, and nor do we consider it is necessary.

3. Heritage Significance

3.1. Description and reason for designation of the barn as a historic asset

The barn was listed as Grade II architectural and historic merit in 1988. That was many years after the lean-tos had been added, so that the assessment took account of their presence.

The citation states:

"Barn and outbuildings in line, south east of Biddesden Farmhouse. C17 or early C18. Timber framed and weatherboarded on brick sills, asbestos sheet roof. Barn of 7 bays, aisled at east side, returning at south end. Slatted vents on west face. Eaves raised over bays 6 and 7 for entrance. Interior has tie-beam trusses on jowled posts, queen strut to collar and single tier of purlins. Corner braces to posts. At north end a brick outbuilding with hipped roof, and wall at junction with barn timber framed with brick nogging. Interior has upper floor, probably used as granary. Some walling of barn replaced with C20 blockwork."

The reference to raising the eaves is not relevant to this case, as the entrance is on the eastern side. The citation is probably correct in suggesting that the building was once used as a granary or for storing hay, and the tall entrance allowed storage at a high level. Therefore, part of the significance of the building lies in its history, as it was an early granary, but at a local level, with far less importance than tithe barns, which are on a much grander scale.

The construction to enable the use is also important in its detailed use of timber, and therefore any development that might prevent the interpretation of the method of construction could be regarded as harmful.

It is only the "outbuilding" at the northern end which is faced in brick. The rest of the barn is largely faced with weatherboarding and sheeting. It is still used for agricultural purposes. The juxtaposition of the two parts of the property can be seen in Figure 6. The lean-to in the centre of the image appears untidy and cracks are appearing in the rendered blockwork. It seems to us likely that the roof sheets, which differ from those on the brick part, were replaced when the lean-to was added. Externally, the materials do not contribute positively to the heritage value.



Figure 6 - Lean-to structure, viewed from the West

Figure 7 shows a similar view, but from the North-West. It also shows the more southerly lean-to. Also shown is an elder bush which is too close, and which would be removed, though doing do does not need consent. The bush does not contribute to the character of the building.



Figure 7 - View from North-West showing full West elevation

3.2. Biddesden Farmhouse

While it is accepted that the proposals could have a direct impact on the significance of the listed barn, there would be no direct physical impact on the nearby Biddesden Farmhouse, which is also listed. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to consider the possible impact on the setting of that heritage asset, in the same way that the planning authority considered the possible effects of the solar panels being placed on farm buildings to the West.

Figure 8 is a useful photograph showing the interrelationship of the two buildings. The farmhouse is on the left of the image, and it can be seen that the barn is on the right. As the two buildings are at right angles to one another, unless one stands back, a typical view would not take in both buildings in full, and - if one focussed on the farmhouse - the only part that the eye would take in, would be the northern, brick part of the barn.

In considering the impact of the proposals on the setting, one should also consider the condition of the barn as it is at present. The contrast between the materials used is significant, and the state of disrepair of the nearer, northern, lean-to structure would only make the contrast more marked.

The farmhouse was listed as Grade II in 1964, which suggests its significance as an asset was recognised early. The citation, copied below, makes no reference to its setting, other than describing the office building to the East:

"Farmhouse. Late C17-early C18. Flint and chalks tone faced in diaper brick. Tiled roof. Two storeys, cellar and attics. Three bays, with entrance lateral to central room. Service wing to right and outshut to rear now incorporated in later alterations. Moulded brick plinth to main house, and elaborate mid

wall string. Six-panelled door in C20 part-propped porch. Tripartite 16-paned sashes with elaborately moulded gauged brick lintels, moulded key bricks and shaped soffit. Sixteen-pane sash window over door. Boxed eaves. Three hipped dormers and gable stacks. Outshut to rear under continuation of roof but rear pitch raised to accommodate 2-storey rear extension on right. Copper fire mark, early Phoenix Co., the number not read. Single storey service wing to right of flint and brick, now office.



Figure 8 - Biddesden Farmhouse

4. The proposals

What is being proposed is minor in nature. If it were not for the reintroduction of a timber door to safely enclose stock, it could reasonably be argued that the works are, indeed, repair. As it is, we recognise that the proposals could amount to "refurbishment", and that word is used in the description.

The proposals are set out at a detailed scale of 1:50 in Drawings 01930-02. Sheets 1 and 2 shows the floorplans and elevations at present. Sheet 3, 4 and 5 show the proposals. The repair of the timber in the ceiling is important to ensure the longevity of the structure, as is making good the concrete floor, as depicted in Sheet 03.

We consider that many of the issues with the condition of the structure stem from the low angle of its roof, and the lack of means of disposal of rainwater run-off. Altering the angle of repose would both by costly and alter the character of the building – it would be in contrast with the other lean-to. However, we have suggested the installation of a new gutter and downpipe (see section and West elevation) to match those elsewhere on the building to prevent water ingress into the structure.

We have included the replacement of new roof sheets to the lean-to. Those on the main roof would not be altered or affected by the proposals.

Although the plans address the existing cracks by the application of straps, we have not suggested the further application of render. This is a conscious decision to avoid the cleaned, or re-rendered surface contrasting markedly with the appearance of the rest of that elevation of the barn.

The timber door would match that used internally within the barn.

5. Impact on Heritage Significance

The description of significance in this statement has pointed out that the building's importance lies in its early historic use as a granary or hay store, and that the entrance to the structure to fulfil that use is on the eastern elevation. "Reading" the history of the building would not be affected by the proposals to the western elevation.

Additionally, the significance lies in the internal timber construction employed. There would be no works that would directly or indirectly impact upon these features.

Aesthetically, the most attractive part of the barn lies at its northern end, closest to the farmhouse. Although one can recognise that fibre cement roof sheets and timber weatherboarding, as used on most of the structure, are typical historic rustic materials, they are not especially unusual.

Moreover, the two lean-tos added to the western elevation are not historic, nor do they contribute to the significance of the building. There is no special reference to them in the citation for listing, which post-dated their construction.

In assessing the impact on significance, one also has to consider what could happen to the building if no remedial action were taken, and the site owners recognise their responsibility to ensure maintenance of the listed building. We consider that, if no action were taken, the lean-to would fall into significance disrepair and potentially could collapse. In itself, that scenario may not prove very harmful to the significance of the listed building, but collapse could, in turn, impact on the structural integrity of the body of the barn itself. That would be extremely harmful indeed.

The material changes that would be apparent are:

- The change of the roof sheeting from fibre cement to steel. As mentioned earlier, the roof sheets are rotting and thus presents a hazard. Replacing it with steel of the same profile as on most of the roof would be a minor, but necessary, change, leading to less than substantial harm. In other terms, the change could be regarded as negligible.
- The introduction of gutter and downpipe. Again, as mentioned previously, this change is necessary to minimise future problems. They would be new features, so we agree the impact would be minor, but would again be less than substantial.
- The introduction of a timber door. It is clear there would have originally been a door, so its introduction is not contrary to the barn's historic evolution. We have suggested that the door matches an existing timber door, but we would be content to be guided in terms of

design, to ensure integration of the designs. The reintroduction of this feature would have a minor, less than substantial, impact.

- The addition of straps to hold blockwork together. Again, this is necessary work to safeguard structural integrity. The straps would be internal, and would help to close the gaps that are currently visible externally. These works would be negligible, but essential, and would lead to less than substantial harm.

In addition, we have considered the potential impact on the setting of the listed farmhouse. There would be no addition of features into the setting, but the replacement or modification to existing features. These would be minor in nature, and would appear insignificant in the context of no changes to the main body of barn.

In summary, while we do not accept that changes to the structure would necessarily cause any harm, if - by definition – there is bound to be harm, that harm would be less than substantial. The NPPF indicates that if there would be less than substantial harm caused by proposals, one has to weigh that harm against public benefit. In this case, that benefit would be derived from the refurbishment of the building leading to its long-term protection and clearly outweighs any potential harm.

6. Planning Policy

6.1. Introduction

This part of the planning statement seeks to review whether the proposals of the planning application accord with policy. Under the "plan-led" approach of the English planning system, proposals should accord with the development plan, which encapsulates policy from governmental through to site specific level. This is detailed in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, there is an examination of the implications of Government policy, specifically through its National Planning Policy Framework; and to local policy, both statutory and non-statutory. The statement considers how development proposals either accord with policy or there is a justifiable exception to policy. In this case, the local authority is Wiltshire Council, the adopted Core Strategy adopted in 2015 is the principal policy document for determining applications.

6.2. National Planning Policy Framework

In September 2023, the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government's policies for England and how it expects them to be applied. This section of the statement sets out elements of the NPPF pertinent to this application, and considers whether the proposals are consistent with the document and its principles.

For decision-taking this means:

<u>Achieving sustainable development</u>

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure; In this case, the applicant will increase the value of the property and will use local businesses and trade to complete the work; *and*

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; In this case the applicant will have the facilities to accommodate their family members comfortably; and

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy. The extension would have a negligible impact on the environment as the important ecological features of the site will be retained.

Part 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy

"83. Planning policies and decisions should enable:

a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside;" These proposals will involve the employment of local people and businesses to construct the extension.

The NPPF within section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. At para 170 states: (relevant parts only):

'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

This proposal will utilise an area already used as patio within the garden so no harm will occur to any wildlife, and biodiversity will be protected and retained.

Achieving well-designed places

The revised NPPF has a specific section on good design – more attention is paid to this aim than in previous policy. Paragraph 127 includes the following:

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks;…"

The proposals will fit into an existing residential dwelling, and the character of the dwelling will be retained by utilising an area of the building with limited historic significance.

The NPPF makes important comments about impacts of new development on the street scene, and that issue is important here. There is no perception from the public realm that the lean-to will have been refurbished. There would be no harmful impact on the street scene.

Heritage Assets

Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets the national policy context for considering development proposals that affect heritage assets. Paragraph 193 states 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. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 194 states that any harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing optimum viable use (paragraph 196).

The assessment the significance of the listed building has been carried out earlier within this statement and it was concluded that the refurbishment of the lean-to should be considered a betterment in design terms and impact on the listed barn.

Accordingly, we believe that the proposals are in line with the revised NPPF.

6.2. Local Planning Policy

The most significant local policy document is the Wiltshire Core Strategy, which was adopted by the Council in 2015. This review analyses those policies within that document that are relevant to this proposal.

Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy

The strategy does allow for carefully managed development outside of settlement boundaries in specific cases, such as new employment investment where there is an overriding strategic interest, or for other local circumstances such as providing affordable housing, allowing new tourist accommodation or supporting diversification of the rural economy. The refurbishment of a lean-to on an existing agricultural barn is supported.

Core Policy 48 (Supporting Rural Life) seeks to support rural life by allowing appropriate development to take place in the rural areas. Core Policy 49 (Protection of rural services and community facilities) is complementary to Core Policies 34 and 48, and seeks to protect existing services and community facilities in Wiltshire.

There is no visual harm associated with the proposals. The proposal, in terms of design, would accord with the general design and amenity policy (CP 57).

The surrounding land is agricultural, the landscape character of the area will not therefore be harmed. The impact to the wider landscape will not be significant.

Core Policy 51 - Landscape

"Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other relevant assessments and studies. In particular, proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures."

Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping

"A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality. Applications for new development must be accompanied by appropriate information to demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire."

Core Policy 58: Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment.

Core Policy 58 aims to ensure that Wiltshire's important monuments, sites and landscapes and areas of historic and built heritage significance are protected and enhanced in order that they continue to make an important contribution to Wiltshire's environment and quality of life.

Designation of a conservation area, listed building, or scheduled ancient monument does not preclude the possibility of new development and the council is committed to working pragmatically with owners to find positive solutions which will allow adaptation of such buildings to reflect modern living aspirations. Such alterations will only be acceptable where they are consistent with the conservation of a heritage asset's significance. Consequently, it is expected that development will be of the highest standard in order to maintain and enhance the quality of the area or building, and be sensitive to its character and appearance. In considering applications for new development in such areas, the council will seek to ensure that the form, scale, design and materials of new buildings are complementary to the historic context.

We have assessed the extent and significance of the setting of the listed building and considered the potential impact of the proposals upon both that setting and also on the significance of the listed building itself and conclude that the refurbishment of the lean-to will not cause any harm to the setting of the listed building or the appearance of the street scene.

Accordingly, we argue that the proposals comply with both national and local policy, especially in respect of the balance of heritage value and sustainable construction and operation.

7. Conclusion

The replacement of the lean-to will bring the building back into useful life and prevent it from collapse and consequently causing harm to the listed barn's structure. The proposed materials will enhance the heritage value of the attached barn. The fundamental historic and architectural features that led to the listing of the barn will be retained.

The proposals will not affect, either directly or indirectly, any designated landscape, building, wildlife sites. Overall, the development accords with policy constitutes sustainable development. We look forward to receiving your approval for these minor works, which would not lead to any environmental disadvantages.