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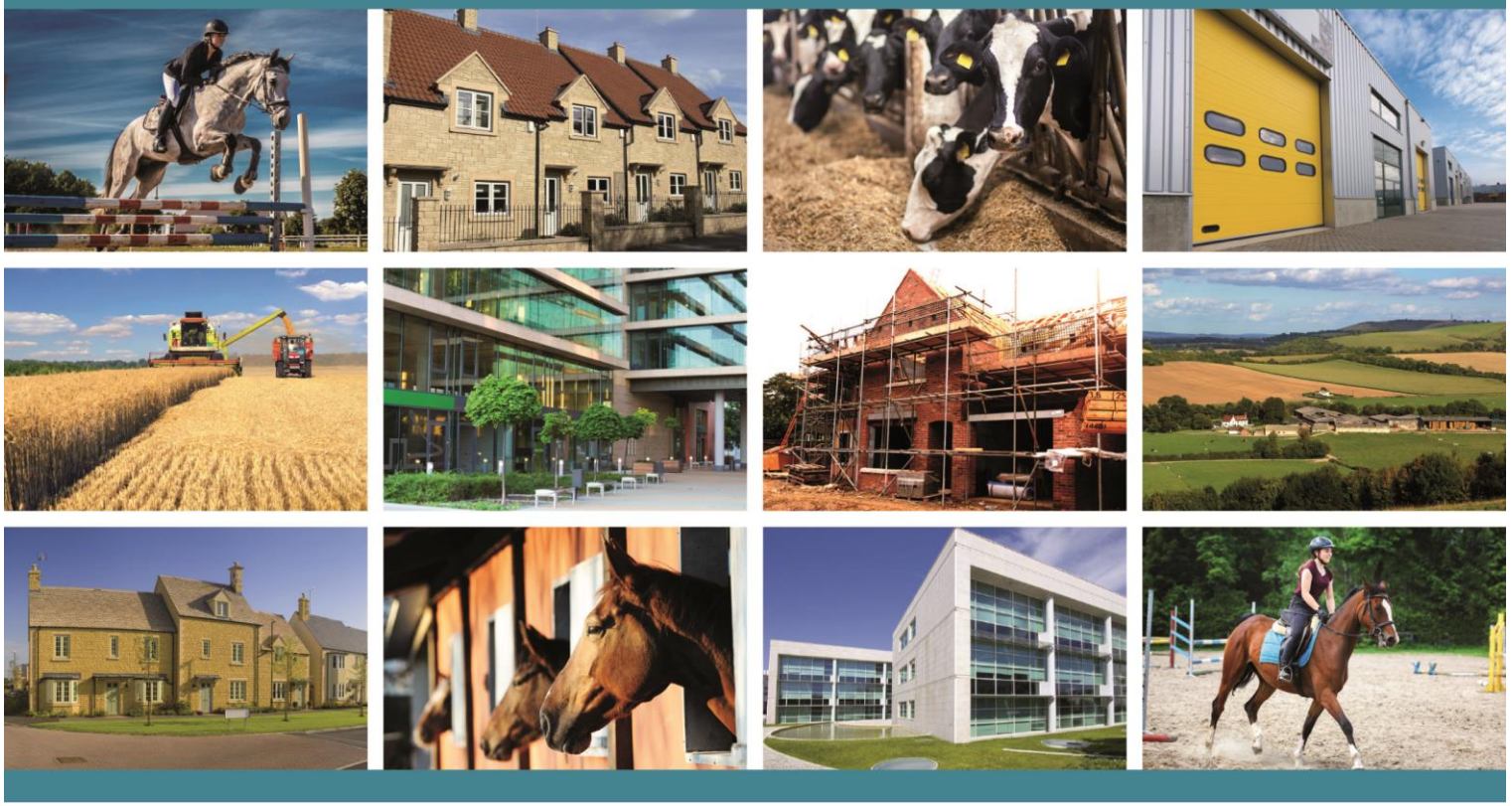

Site: The Store, Land North of Close Farm, Close Lane, Marston, Devizes, Wiltshire, SN10 5SN

Proposal: Conversion of building to 2 bedroom dwelling and associated works

On behalf of: Mr Chris Pearce

Date of Issue: September 2023

RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicants to support their full planning application for the conversion of an outbuilding (store building associated with construction business) at Close Lane, Marston to a 2-bedroom residential dwelling. The proposed plans also show how the site would be divided up to create a new residential curtilage with a parking and turning area and new garden area.

1.2 As the proposal is not a 'major' development, or development within a designated area a Design and Access Statement is not required.

1.3 The statement will however examine how the proposed development relates to the site and its context. The statement will also provide an explanation and justification for the scheme having regard to the national and local plan policy context.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND SITE CONTEXT

2.1 This application relates to land and a single store building at Close Lane, Marston (defined as a small village within the core strategy). Marston lies around 4 miles southwest of the market town Devizes and 0.2 miles southwest of the village of Worton (defined as a 'large village' in the core strategy). Worton contains from a range of local facilities including a public house, primary school, pre-school, church and village hall. A bus stop lies close to the entrance of Close Lane, with frequent bus services running in both directions towards Trowbridge and Devizes. Consequently, although the site lies within a 'small village' insofar as planning policy is concerned, it does benefit from good access to a wide range of local and larger facilities which are on offer in the area.

2.2 Marston is a contained settlement, with development generally focussed close to or along the lanes leading northeast towards the fields separating the village from Worton. To the south of the main settlement, The Green is a characteristic feature of the village. The Marston Conservation Area Statement provides a useful, generic, description of the village as a whole.

"To the casual visitor, the village's main focal point and abiding visual image is the large green, crossed by narrow lanes and stream and fringed, on its northern side, by picturesque thatched and tiled cottages. From The Green, the lanes wind into the distance, flanked by wide grassy verges. The majority of the village's houses, however, are located away from The Green and any passing traffic, alongside a pair of lanes which led to the north into the fields – Plough Lane and Close Lane. Development here is largely low density with individual houses located in generous plots. The two lanes are unconnected for vehicular traffic and linked only by a series of footpaths across the intervening strip fields. To the north, Plough Lane continues as a footpath across the Raybridge to Worton and the parish church".

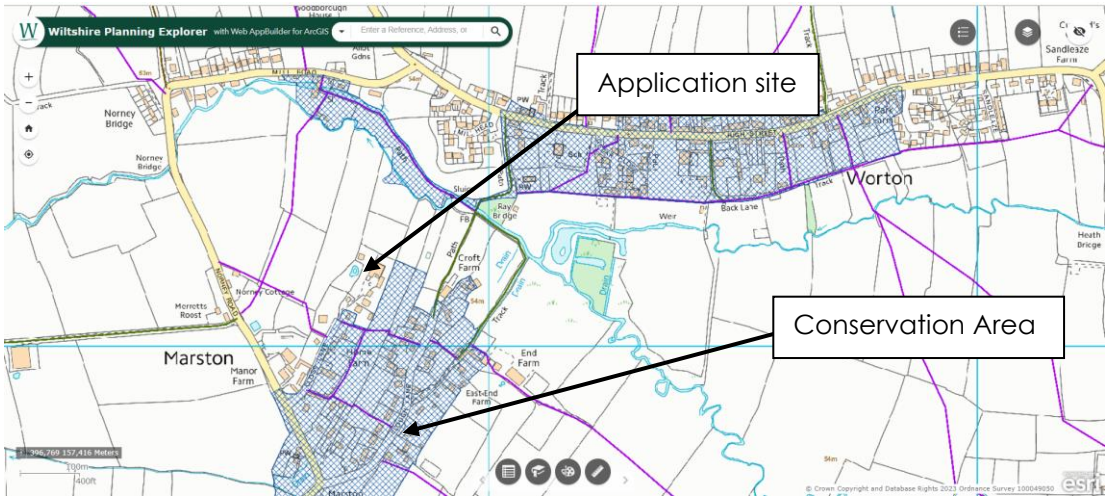

Figure 1: Location plan showing the site in relation to Marston and Worton. Solid green and purple lines show the PROW network (source: Wiltshire Council)

2.3 The application site is positioned circa 110m north of the conservation boundary, at the northern tip of Close Lane. Close Lane, along with Plough Lane to the immediate east, comprises the main residential and built-up area of the village. Development along these two lanes is generally linear in form, with ad hoc clusters of buildings along their length. The gaps between dwellings, presence of landscaping and close proximity of all aspects of the village to open land create a generally tranquil and bucolic character.



2.4 The building to which this application relates is currently used for the storage of goods and equipment associated with the applicant's construction company. The wider site comprises two further modern buildings, a stable block and hay store but these do not form part of the application site. The land between and surrounding the buildings is grassed, with the existing driveway and parking area informally and loosely hardsurfaced. To the site boundaries, there is some hedging and a number of trees which serve to both filter views of the site and add to its semi-rural character.



Figure 3: Existing wider site layout

2.5 The application building itself has a floorspace of circa 115m². It is single storey and constructed of blockwork under a profiled concrete tile roof. The front elevation is constructed in brick, partly clad in timber, while the side and rear elevations are in blockwork. Photographs of the building are included below and overleaf (figures 4 – 5).



Figure 4: Store building, with store and stables buildings to the right



Figure 5: Store building and parking area to the front

2.6 The application building is now underutilised and will soon no longer be required for commercial storage as the applicant is due to retire. The building is now therefore at a crossroads where it will require investment if it is not to fall into disuse and state of disrepair and a future use needs to be secured. The building benefits from an existing vehicular access and sufficient space for an appropriately sized garden area. The site and its layout therefore readily lends itself to the creation of a separate, modest, dwellinghouse with its own defined curtilage.

2.7 This application includes a viability report by Strakers and should be read alongside this planning statement.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The tables below list the planning history in so far as they relate to the storage building the subject of this application and the adjacent stable and hay barn which lie within the same site but outside of the red-line application site.

Planning history pertaining to the storage building subject of this planning application

Ref. No	Description	Status
19/03801/PNCOU	Notification for Prior Approval under Class P for a Change of Use of Existing Storage Unit to Create 1no. Dwelling (Class C3)	Prior approval not required
K/52906/F	Change of use of agricultural building to general storage building	Approved under Appeal Decision APP/E3905/A/06/2013716
K/34403	Change of use of agricultural storage building to storage of building materials including small office.	Refused

3.2 The change of use of the application building to a general store building was approved at appeal subject to a planning condition that restricted the use of the building to expressly that of Class B8 storage. The condition reads as follows:

> **Appeal B: APP/E3905/A/06/2013716**
>
> 15. I allow Appeal B, and grant planning permission for change of use from agricultural building to general storage building on land at Close Farm, Close Lane, Marston, Devizes Wiltshire, SN10 5SN, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref K/52906/F, dated 25 July 2005, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the condition that no non-agricultural materials, products, containers or waste whatsoever shall be stored on the land outside the building.

3.3 Unfortunately, the 2019 prior approval scheme to convert the building to residential was never implemented. The applicant's previous advisors did not inform them of the necessary timescale and the scheme was not implemented before the relevant permitted development rights were removed. The only option now available is to apply for planning permission to convert the building.

Planning history pertaining to the stable building and hay barn that lie outside of the application site but are within the wider site and applicant's ownership

Ref. No	Description	Status
19/10254/FUL	Reconfigure and Convert the Existing Newly Built Stable into a 4-Bedroom Dwelling.	Refused and appeal dismissed APP/Y3940/W/20/3245229
PL/2021/03423	Conversion and extension of a stable to form a 4-bedroom dwelling, the change of use of a storage building to a stable, the cladding of the proposed stable and an existing store, hard & soft landscaping and associated works.	Refused and appeal dismissed APP/Y3940/W/21/3282586
14/10960/FUL	Construction of stable block and hay barn/store	Approved

3.4 In considering the current application, the two appeals relating to the extension and conversion of the stable block (to north of the current application building) to a 4 bedroom dwellinghouse are material considerations. However, these appeal decisions relate to significantly different proposals both in terms of scale and design, including an extension into the fields to the north. These schemes sought consent to extend and convert the stable block, with the existing store and hay store buildings utilised as stables/storage buildings. The proposal related to a large 4 bedroom dwellinghouse and the residential curtilage extended into the field to the north – beyond the existing boundary line. These schemes are not directly comparable to this new application which only seeks consent for a modest two-bedroom conversion of a smaller building positioned further south and away from the boundary. The comments of the Inspector in the decision made in August 2022 reinforce this position:

> 20. It may be that the conversion of the storage building which has consent would be constrained in terms of its design, but it would not include significant extensions or a large curtilage. It would also be in a less prominent position than the proposed dwelling with this appeal. As such, this fallback alternative would have a lesser visual impact than the proposals with this appeal. I therefore give the fallback position limited weight with this main issue.

3.5 The previous appeal decisions therefore hold limited weight as material considerations due to the lack of comparison and the key planning history is the previous PDR application allowed on the building subject of this application.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 The main planning policy framework relevant to this proposal is the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS). No saved policies of the Kennet Local Plan (2004) are considered of relevance to the application.

4.2 At the national level, National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) is the foremost material consideration. This is supplemented with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The Marston Conservation Area Statement is also a a relevant material consideration.

4.3 The relevant policies and guidance are set out in the tables below:

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Chapter	Title
5	Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
11	Making an effective use of land
12	Achieving well designed places
15	Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
16	Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

Chapter	Title
CP1	Settlement strategy
CP2	Delivery strategy
CP12	Devizes Community Area
CP48	Supporting rural life
CP50	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
CP51	Landscape
CP57	Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
CP58	Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment
CP60	Sustainable transport
CP61	Transport and new development
CP64	Demand Management

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 The key issues for the consideration of this proposal are:

- The principle of the development
    I. Housing Land Supply
    II. Policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy
- Design and visual impact
- Highway safety
- Impact on biodiversity;
- Residential amenity
- Impact on heritage assets
- Planning balance

Principle of development

I. Housing land supply in Wiltshire

5.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A significant material consideration is the advice and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF requires LPAs to identify a five-year supply of specific deliverable sites to meet housing needs, with an appropriate buffer. Where Council's are unable to demonstrate this, planning policies concerning housing delivery (including those within a made neighbourhood plan) are considered out of date and applications for housing development should be considered in line with paragraph 11d of the NPPF.

5.3 The 'Housing Land Supply Update' (May 2023) confirms that Wiltshire Council can only demonstrate 4.6 years of housing land supply (based on April 2022 data). As such, policies CP1, CP2 and CP48 of the WCS are considered out of date and applications for housing development should be considered in line with paragraph 11d of the NPPF. The relevant extract is set out below:

> For **decision-taking** this means:
>
> c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
>
> d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date[8], 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[7]; 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.

5.4 Whilst it is accepted that the triggering of paragraph 11d) of the NPPF does not mean out-of-date development plan policies should be ignored, the weight afforded to them is weakened and the 'tilted balance' is engaged. The term 'tilted balance' is used to define Paragraph 11 of the NPPF when engaged as the 'planning balance' is tilted from a neutral balancing exercise where if the harms outweigh the benefits planning permission is usually withheld, to a tilted balance where the harms should significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits for permission to be withheld.

5.5 Focussing now on the contents of subsection d) paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application site is not within 'an area of particular importance' nor does it 'contain any assets of particular importance' (as defined by footnote 7). The proposal will therefore be assessed in terms of its 'benefits' and 'harms', using the planning policies of the local plan as a starting point. Section 5.0 of this statement will conclude with a discussion of the 'planning balance'

II. Development Plan Policies - Wiltshire Core Strategy

5.1 Having regard to the principle of residential development in this location, CP2 of the WCS identifies exceptions to the general approach of the core strategy towards the location of new development. These exceptions seek to respond to both local circumstance and national policy.

5.2 The policy 'exception' to the provision of housing only in the most sustainable of locations has been permitted in order to help meet the Government's clear aim to significantly boost housing supply as set out in Chapter 6 of the NPPF and numerous ministerial statements, through in this instance, the re-use of existing under-utilised rural buildings. This is a better means of providing housing by efficiently using buildings which are already in existence, to limit the pressure on untouched countryside to provide for the growing demands on housing supply. Both national and local policy accept that residential conversions may be deemed acceptable even in isolated rural locations, which is certainly not the case here, given the site falls within a WCS designated small village and just beyond a WCS designated large village.

5.3 The NPPF at paragraphs 79 and 80 support the principle of new housing in rural locations in certain exceptional situations. At paragraph 79 the NPPF states:

"To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities".

Paragraph 80 of the NPPF concerns development which would secure the reuse of a redundant building in the countryside, stating:

"Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

…c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting…"

5.4 Similarly, the permissible exceptions set out in the WCS include the conversion and re-use of an existing rural building to an alternative use, subject to the criteria set out in policy CP48. In the first instance, the core strategy seeks the use of the building for employment, tourism, cultural or community uses. If this is not a practical proposition, a residential use would then be considered. Policy CP48 states:

"*Proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses will be supported where it satisfies the following criteria:*

i. The building(s) is / are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building; and
ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas; and
iii. The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure; and
iv. The site has reasonable access to local services ***or***
v. The conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long term safeguarding.' ***(Taken from adopted version of WCS which has not been correctly transposed in the online version)***

Only where there is clear evidence that the above uses are not practical propositions, residential development may be appropriate where it meets the above criteria. In isolated locations, the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for residential purposes may be permitted where justified by special circumstances, in line with national policy".

5.5 It is not therefore necessary to demonstrate compliance with both criterion iv) and v) of policy CP48, but only one of the two.

5.6 To accept the principle of a residential use of the site, CP48 firstly requires applicants to demonstrate that the conversion and/or re-use of the building for employment, tourist, cultural and community uses cannot be made viable or are not practical propositions. To this end, a viability assessment has been commissioned to inform this process, to assess the returns against the investment needed, and to help establish a viable new use for the building. This report is submitted in support of this application and serves to demonstrate that the conversion of the building for other potential uses would simply not be viable or practical propositions, given the likely values/rents achievable and the investment needed. This includes an alternative B8 use. To sell or rent the

building for a new B8 use would still require works to upgrade the building and meet the necessary requirements as stated in the report. For this reason, a new B8 use is also not viable.

5.7 Furthermore, in terms of whether an alternate use would be a practical proposition, the site is located in a small village close to the larger villages of Worton and Potterne as well as the market towns of Devizes, Melksham and Trowbridge where there is unlikely to be the need, desire or funding for a community building in this location. The car movements associated with an alternative community use would also be higher than the proposed residential use and even more likely to be considered unsustainable by the Council.

5.8 Moreover, an alternative community or employment use is likely to generate a much greater level of noise disturbance than the proposed modest dwelling to the detriment of the occupiers of the nearby residential dwellings and again is unlikely to be acceptable.

5.9 There would be, in all reality, no interest in the building for an alternative use. In this event, with no active use or financial input into the repair and upkeep of the building, the building would become redundant and dilapidated to the detriment of the appearance of the area. Likewise, it would also represent the waste of a valuable resource, i.e. a building that has already been constructed. It is clear therefore that a sympathetic residential conversion of the building is the only practical and viable option.

5.10 This statement will now address the relevant criteria of CP48, namely i-iv, having regard to the principle of development.

i) Is the building capable of conversion

5.11 The building is a modern building constructed of blockwork. It is clearly evident from the photographs contained within this report, the details contained within the viability report and a site visit that there is no question over the structural integrity of the building. To this end, the commission of a structural report was considered excessive and unnecessary.

5.12 The building is in a good condition, with both the roof and walls being solid and with no signs of decay. The viability report lists the types of works required to facilitate conversion and none of these are structural or significant in conversion terms. It is therefore evident that the building is suitable for conversion without significant modification or demolition.

5.13 The proposal would significantly 'lift' and improve the appearance of the building by the cladding of the existing blockwork walls with timber and the creation of new high-quality timber door and window openings. The materials chosen ensure that the building retains its original proportions whilst creating an aesthetically pleasing and simple dwelling that reflects its semi-rural setting. Internally, the building is divided using simple partitions and insultation added with new stud walling.

ii) The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas

5.14 Although the site is situated in a rural location, it does not occupy an isolated location and cannot be described in the truest sense as having the character and appearance of open countryside. Instead, the application site is already a developed site and includes three buildings and rough planting/gravel surfaced areas for parking. It is also close to other residential and agricultural buildings, being positioned at the termination of Close Lane, a residential lane.

5.15 The conversion of an existing building to create a single dwelling would clearly relate to the existing built form on the site. The alterations have been kept purposely simple with the blockwork elevations upgraded with timber cladding, ensuring the building assimilates better into its semi-rural context. Likewise, the domestic curtilage is also very modest in scale and well-contained within the site. Part of the wider site will remain in use as stables and hay store.

5.16 In comparison to the schemes dismissed at appeal (for the extension and conversion of the stable block to a 4-bedroom dwelling), this proposal has a significantly reduced scale and does not extend the curtilage out into the surrounding field network. Consent is now only sought for a two-bedroom dwelling by means of a conversion with a very limited garden. Furthermore, the proposal would offer improved views from the Public Rights of Ways (PROW), with the timber cladding softening the appearance and prominence of the building in comparison to the stark blockwork elevations. The proposals would not therefore detract from the character and appearance of the area.

5.17 These matters are dealt with in more detail in the design/visual impact and neighbour amenity sections below.

iii) The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure

5.18 The proposed plans show the use of the existing vehicular access serving the site. The existing access has historically been used for traffic associated with both agricultural and commercial B8 use. The traffic associated with the residential conversion would be much less. As such, it is considered more than 'adequate' to serve the proposed single modest dwelling. Highway matters are dealt with in more detail in the relevant section below.

5.19 Mains electricity and mains water supply already exist at the site.

5.20 Consequently, it is demonstrated that the site is already served by adequate access and infrastructure.

iv) The site has reasonable access to local services

5.21 In considering this criterion, it must firstly be remembered that policy CP48 is a policy which seeks to permit rural development within the countryside, outside of the usual 'sustainable' settlements. It therefore follows that 'access to services' in this regard should not be assessed in the same manner as non-exceptional development located within the settlements, and that there will

necessarily be reliance on the private car to access local services. Nonetheless, we submit that this site is not unduly remote.

5.22 There is a bus route linking the village to both Trowbridge and Devizes (and a number of the villages along the route), with a stop less than 150m to the north of the entrance to Close Lane.

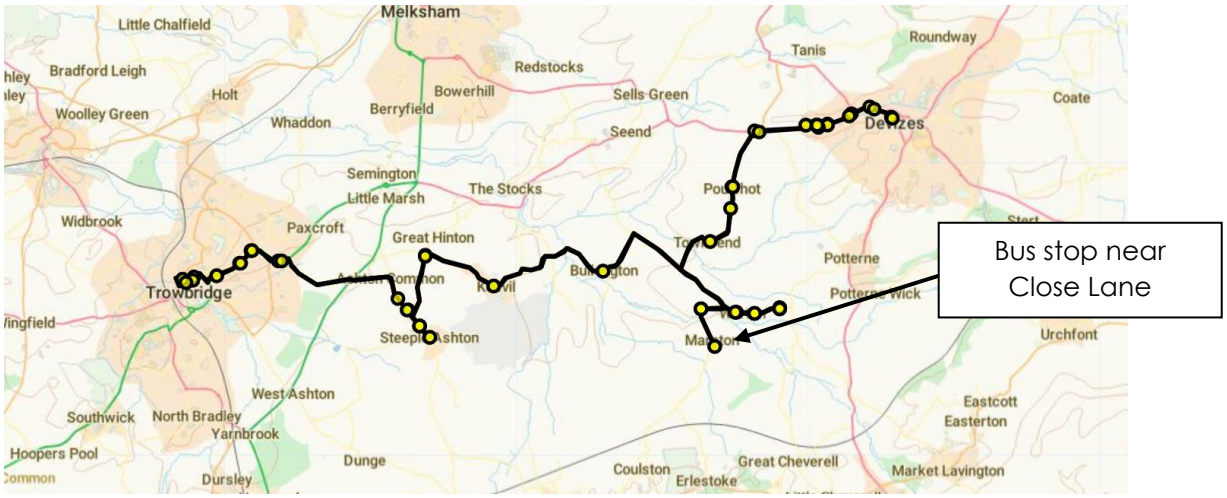

Figure 6: No.76 Bus route: Trowbridge - Steeple Ashton - Worton – Devizes

5.23 It is accepted that the site lies within a countryside location, but it is less than a mile from Worton (the closest 'large' village) again with access via a regular local bus or easily by foot and/or cycle. The NPPF recognises at para 78, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. This would be the case here.

Design, visual impact and relationship with heritage assets

5.24 Policy CP57 of the WCS recognises that good design in new developments can help development respond positively to the existing townscape and landscape in terms of building layout, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, design, materials and streetscape. In terms of the wider landscape impact, policy CP51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance Wiltshire's distinctive landscape character.

5.25 With regard to environmental impacts, it is noted that the application site is not covered by any nationally designated special landscape or heritage designations (although it does lie close to Marston Conservation Area as discussed below). It is not of high ecological importance, nor is it located within an area prone to flood risk

5.26 As noted above, although the site is situated in a rural location, it lies at the end of a largely residential lane and the conversion of the building to residential would not impact upon this character. The remainder of the site would stay in equestrian use, a typical settlement fringe use. Furthermore, the scheme would not appear isolated but would be viewed in close association with the existing buildings on the site and the established residential properties of Close Lane.

5.27 The proposal does not extend the built form, neither does it extend into any of the surrounding field network. As previously described, it is well contained within its site. We therefore submit that the proposals would have a negligible impact on the character of the existing settlement.

5.28 The conversion scheme maintains and utilises the existing structure and proposes the general upgrading of the building and the addition of insulation to improve its thermal properties. There will be no changes to the overall scale or form of the building, with the eaves height and ridge height of the building remaining the same. The building is well established within the existing building complex and sits comfortably in this position.

5.29 Having regard to the detailed elevational treatment, the existing block work is to be replaced with new timber cladding. The new openings have purposely avoided a typical domestic approach to fenestration with openings separated by a vertical timber inset panel. Consequently, the building as proposed has a significantly improved appearance. The 'restrained' scale and design of the conversion will therefore ensure that the building is overtly domestic in appearance and instead represents a significant improvement in the appearance of the building and the site as a whole.

5.30 In terms of the wider landscape impact of the change of use on the land, the outbuilding already sits within a site containing a small cluster of three buildings, to the north of other established residential properties. As a result, this site already extends the urbanised form within this rural landscape. Existing and proposed boundary vegetation and the network of trees within the surrounding field network serve to filter views of the site and help to ensure that it remains well assimilated into its rural context. New hedging will be planted to the site boundaries to create a modest and contained domestic curtilage. The proposals will be largely hidden in views from the north by the existing buildings. In those views from the south and glimpsed views from the north, the timber cladding will ensure the building is less visually prominent in comparison to the existing blockwork. As such the change of use of the site proposed, is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the area.

5.31 Turning to the impact upon historic assets, paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires developers to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. Importantly, it emphasises that "*the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance*". The application site lies outside the Marston Conservation Area but the impact of the proposal upon the setting of this heritage asset must be assessed.

5.32 The Marston Conservation Area Statement describes the rural setting of the village and the historic influence agricultural has played in this. In referring to Close Lane and Plough Lane (the two main residential streets within the village) it notes that:

"*Development is generally low level and the majority of buildings are informally sited along the lanes. The absence of large scale, modern estate type development, or continuously built-up frontages, creates an unpretentious character. The comparatively large spaces and gardens around most houses are as important as the buildings in defining the quality. The property boundaries of the older buildings are generally marked by mature hedgerows which contribute to the informal and bucolic nature of the Area*".

5.33 The statement also refers to the area of Close Lane that has been specifically excluded from the conservation area, which includes the application site.

"*In order to create a sensible boundary, modern development on the north-west and north of Close Lane is also excluded*".

5.34 Neither the application building nor application site play a particularly important role within the setting of the conservation area. Rather, it's the wider relationship between this northern edge of Close Lane and the surrounding field networks that is important in creating a transitional area with the countryside beyond. As previously noted, this application seeks consent for the conversion of an existing building on an already developed site. It is by no means an isolated site or an undeveloped area of the settlement. The simple conversion of the existing building with its modest domestic curtilage would cause no harm to the setting of the conservation area. It would not introduce a new building within the setting and, in fact, would be a significant improvement upon the appearance of the existing building with its modern blockwork elevations.

5.35 Due to the positioning, and limited scale of the proposal, it is therefore considered that it would not have a harmful impact on the visual amenities of the area or the setting of the conservation area.

5.36 It can therefore be concluded from this assessment that the conversion of the existing building will deliver an appropriate development that relates effectively to the locality and wider character of the area. The scheme is therefore considered to comply with policies CP51, CP57 and CP58 of the WCS.

5.37 The development will also accord with sections 12, 15 and 16 of the NPPF, which highlights the significance of good design to the principles of sustainability and paragraph 130, which requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history.

Highway safety and parking

5.38 Turning to matters of highway safety, policies CP60 and CP64 aim to ensure developments adequately address matters of access arrangements and road safety alongside adequate parking provision.

5.39 The submitted scheme proposes that vehicular access to the new dwelling is via the existing access point on to the junction with Norney Road. The

proposed layout also shows space for separate turning and parking areas to serve the new dwelling.

5.40 Norney Road is a very quiet section of road with low traffic volumes. The junction onto Norney Road from Close Lane has sufficient visibility in both directions. As previously detailed, the accesses at both this junction and the application site are well-established and well-used to provide access to the surrounding residential dwellings as well as the equestrian uses on site and the storage use associated with the applicant's business. The proposed new dwelling would not generate unacceptable volumes in traffic over and above that which already exists along Close Lane. In fact the Council came to this same conclusion when assessing prior notification application 19/03801/PNCOU for the conversion of the building to residential. As such, the application is considered acceptable on transport and highways grounds.

5.41 In terms of parking provision, two parking spaces are to be provided adjacent the new dwelling, in in accordance with the Council's minimum parking standards.

5.42 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that:

'D*evelopment should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'*.

5.43 The scheme is considered to comply with the requirements of CP60 and CP64 having regard to highway safety and parking provision and for the reasons set out above, it is submitted that the proposal would not have a severe impact on the road network and instead that it includes and provides adequate parking and suitable access to the site and therefore refusal on these grounds cannot be warranted.

Impact on ecology

5.44 Policy CP50 of the WCS recognises that Wiltshire's natural environment is one of its greatest assets and requires that development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation. The policy also advises that development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Chapter 15 of the NPPF provides further guidance on conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

5.45 This application submission includes an Ecological Appraisal prepared by Malford Environmental Consulting.

5.46 The development site is within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (Salisbury Plain) for residential development, but strategic solutions for recreational impacts are in place. The extract below from the ecological appraisal addresses this and explains that the impacts upon this SPA are mitigated through the CIL system.

The development site falls within the Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA) 6.4km recreation buffer (the area within which 75% of visitors to Salisbury Plain live). The SPA is designated for breeding stone curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*), quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and hobby (*Falco subbuteo*), and over-wintering hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*).

The Council's housing plans are mitigated through a project funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which works with farm managers to maximise breeding success. The project provides an effective, timely and reliable means of mitigating any additional effects arising from new residential development. This strategy appears to be adequate to support housing numbers up until 2026 even if these are above figures in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Housing Site Allocations Plan. It can therefore be concluded beyond reasonable doubt, that new development proposed under this application would not lead to adverse effects on the integrity of the Salisbury Plain SPA.

5.47 The report details the survey work undertaken and concludes that there is no evidence that the building is being used or has ever been used by bats for roosting or as a place of rest, and the building is considered to provide negligible potential to support roosting bats given the physical conditions of the building. It is therefore concluded that the conversion of the building does not require a Natural England licence under the provisions of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. No mitigation for the protection of bats is necessary. It is also concluded that the building and immediate surrounding land does not support any other protected species

5.48 Section 5.0 of the report sets out the features that could be included within the proposals to provide an enhancement for wildlife. These are new nesting bird boxes and a bat roosting box.

5.49 As a result, it can be concluded that the proposal will not have any adverse impact on wildlife within or adjacent to the application site and therefore meets the requirements of policy CP50 of the WCS and the guidance contained in section 15 of the NPPF.

Impact upon residential amenity

5.50 Policy CP57 (vii) requires development to have regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and the impact on amenities of existing neighbouring occupants. In this case the closest neighbours are Wellaway, some 65m+ to the south-east and Close Farm House, circa 85m to the south.

5.51 The application building is already in situ and because of the separation distances and intervening buildings and landscaping, its residential conversion will have barely any perceivable impact upon the neighbouring properties. As a result, there will be no undue disturbance to the occupiers of the adjoining properties.

5.52 Additionally, the layout plan shows that the proposed dwelling itself would be served by sufficient amenity space.

5.53 As a result, the illustrative layout demonstrates that the terms of criteria (vii) of policy CP57 of the WCS can be satisfied.

Planning Balance

5.54 As outlined in paragraphs 5.2-5.5 of this statement, as the Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, the relevant local plan policies are out of date and the 'tilted balance' as set out in Paragraph 11(d) is therefore engaged.

5.55 As detailed within this report, the proposed dwelling fully complies with the core policies of the local plan, being the conversion of an existing rural building that specifically complies with the criteria of CP48. As shown on the submitted plans, the scheme is well designed and does not result in any adverse impact upon the host building or the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, this statement has also demonstrated that the impact of the dwelling upon neighbours is considered acceptable as are its impacts in terms of highway safety and ecology. The dwelling would contribute towards the persistent lack of housing supply within Wiltshire.

5.56 It is accepted that this proposal only relates to the gain of one dwelling, but the cumulative impact of such developments play an important contribution to housing land supply at the County level. This has been the case for other applications across the County where the erection of a single dwelling was considered to make a small but important contribution to the lack of housing land supply. In the examples cited below, the contribution a single dwellinghouse made to housing provision was an important material consideration.

72 West Winds, Netherstreet, Bromham, SN15 2DP: Outline planning permission was approved under PL/2021/04596 for the demolition of a bungalow and erection of two dwellings. The relevant committee report notes that "*the development would bring a benefit in terms of a net increase of one dwelling in the local housing stock*" (paragraph 9.3). The site was described as being part of a "*small linear enclave*" of Netherstreet and the development was permitted despite the site being c0.5 miles beyond the closest point of the LOD of Bromham.

18 Locks Lane, The Common, Purton, SN5 4HD: Outline planning permission PL/2021/06368 approved alterations and extensions to the existing dwelling, alongside the erection of a detached four-bedroom dwelling (in place of an existing workshop). Here, the site is positioned alongside only one neighbouring dwelling and 0.12 miles from the LOD boundary of Purton. The delegated report considered the scheme in terms of its 'planning balance' and noted the lack of housing land supply and the position of the site in relation to existing built-form. The report also states that "*due to its relationship to the settlement of Purton, it is considered that the proposed dwelling would be located where it would, to a limited degree, maintain the vitality of a rural community*". In conclusion the limited harm arising from the conflict with policy was weighed up against the benefits the scheme, this was despite the fact that the Council openly acknowledged it was "*considered unrealistic to believe that future*

residents would walk to Purton" and "*the proposal would likely lead to a reliance on the private car*".

The Brick Store, Dunkirk Hill, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2BD: Appeal decision APP/Y3940/C/20/3261363 relates to the occupation of a holiday let as a permanent dwelling (in breach of an occupancy condition). The Inspector acknowledged the site was outside of the LOD for Devizes (some 0.3miles) and that it is "*not one where unrestricted residential development would normally be permitted*". It was also accepted that it would be likely that there would be heavy reliance on travel by car, but this harm would be limited, because of the closeness of the site to Devizes, so that many car journeys would be short. Having regard to the lack of housing land supply and planning balance the Inspector stated:

> **Housing land supply**
>
> 15. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. Whilst the shortfall is not great, it has worsened in the time that the appeals have been under consideration. Although there is no shortfall in this particular part of the county, this does not prevent paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework from being applied here, and the relevant policies most important for determining the appeal are out-of-date. There are no policies applicable here which protect areas or assets of particular importance, and thus the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies.
>
> 16. I have identified small harm arising from the need to travel, along with a conflict with the development plan. Although the addition of the dwelling to the housing stock would make the smallest possible increase, in view of the importance which the Government attaches to increasing the supply of housing, I give this benefit modest weight. Weighing these factors, I find the adverse effects of allowing the appeals would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

5.57 In terms of benefits, the proposal would contribute towards the persistent lack of housing land supply within Wiltshire. It is acknowledged this is only an increase in one dwelling, but other decisions (cited above) have given this weight, particularly considering the NPPF's requirement to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The scheme would also make the best use of a soon to be redundant building. There would also be economic benefits associated with the proposal both through its construction work to convert the building and the spending associated with the future occupants of the site and the additional Council Tax payments which would be attracted.

5.58 In line with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, a conclusion needs to be drawn as to whether the identified harms significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits as listed above. It is clearly evident that in this case there are no harms arising from the proposal and it should therefore be approved.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 This statement has justified why the proposed scheme is entirely compatible with both the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the advice and guidance contained within the NPPF.

6.2 The site contains an outbuilding which is now surplus to the requirements of the applicant and a viable active use for the building needs to be found. The site already benefits from an established and suitable access and can readily accommodate any necessary parking provisions.

6.3 This statement, together with the submitted viability report has justified that the proposed conversion to residential is the only realistic use which will allow for the viable conversion of the building, thereby securing its long-term future in a manner that is sensitive to the wider landscape. The compliance of the scheme with policy CP48 has also been explained within this statement.

6.4 The submitted ecological survey fully assesses and identifies likely impacts of the proposal on protected species and outlines adequate mitigation and ecological enhancements. This statement also explains why the proposal will not result in any severe impact on highway safety and will preserve residential amenities.

6.5 The proposal therefore complies with planning policy at all levels and accordingly, the Council is requested to approve this application.