

THE GOAT BARN,
MARRIDGE HILL, RAMSBURY, WILTS. SN8 2HG
PLANNING & HERITAGE STATEMENT
FOR APPLICATION FOR CONVERSION TO A DWELLING.

for Robin Belither

By Apt Planning Ltd.

15th September 2025.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION - THE HISTORY OF GOAT BARNs.

Evidence of goat farming in Britain dates from at least the Early to Mid-Roman (1st-3rd century AD) and Late-Roman times (4th century AD). A total of 3,000 identified vertebrate remains of cattle, sheep, pig, horses and goats were found at Scole Dickleburgh, on the Norfolk-Suffolk border, (Historic England AML report in 1998 on The Vertebrate Remains from Scole Dickleburgh, excavated in 1993 as part of A140/A143 road improvement project).

- 1.2 Evidence of goat farming in Turkey, Syria & Cyprus dates back to the 9th century BC, (Origins of Caprine (goat) Herding by Douglas Baird, 2014, National Academy of Science USA).
- 1.3 The Historic England Listing Selection Guide on Agricultural Buildings, 2017, identifies the major contribution of agricultural buildings to the richly varied character of our countryside. It illustrates the historic interest in agricultural buildings in the long history of farming in the English landscape since the Middle Ages.
- 1.4 Farming practices have varied enormously between regions, resulting in great diversity of building type, size, & layout. For example, older timber-framed agricultural buildings, such as that subject to this planning application, are concentrated on clay, such as Gault clay, found on the lower-lying areas of The Ridgeway, underlying Cretaceous-era chalk, (Factsheet on Geology & the Landscape of the North Wessex Downs, 2012, North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- 1.5 The Wiltshire Ordnance Survey 6 inch Map 1st Edition, surveyed in 1844 – 1888, & the later edition 1888-1913 OS map, both show the timber-framed Goat Shed, Marridge Hill, Ramsbury, as part of a group of five farm buildings, to the east of Baydon Manor, (Know your Place – Wiltshire Edition & National Library of Scotland). In the 1937-1961 OS 1:25,000 scale map, the Goat shed was no longer attached to the group of farm buildings, which had been reduced from five to three buildings.
- 1.6 The site is not therefore an isolated house in the countryside. The proposed development complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 84 b) & c) 110, & 125 d), because it would represent a viable use of a heritage asset, retain its character, re-use redundant or disused buildings & have a neutral impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Baydon Manor.

1.

2. BASIC DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR GOAT BARN.

- 2.1 The scale & open-sided design of the six bay Goat barn is in keeping with typical goat barns, as at Bucklebury Farm, West Berkshire. The scale of the goat barn is 108 sq. metres (18m x 6m) gross floor area. The British Goat

Society recommend a minimum of 2-4 sq. metres per goat, whether housed separately or in groups. The goat barn would therefore be suitable for 25-50 goats.

- 2.2 Its single storey height, with a headroom of c.2.5m high is sufficient for goat keepers to work standing upright. Its 6m width would be suitable for a central corridor for providing hayracks at head height, feed, water & waste management. These are normally placed outside pens, with goats feeding by placing their heads through a slatted barrier, to prevent bullying. Pens would normally be 1.3m high, to provide good lighting & ventilation, and allow goats to see each other, even if penned.
- 2.3 The goat barn is located in a paddock, & is set well back from Marridge Hill, to allow a sufficient area for grazing. Where goats have access to grazing, they require housing at night, in bad weather and during the winter, to provide a dry, draft-free shelter with suitable headroom.
- 2.4 It is concluded that the timber-framed Goat Barn, at Marridge Hill, Ramsbury, is a good example of the historic design of goat barns, and is therefore an unlisted heritage asset, whose use & character should be retained in the longer-term.

2.

3. THE PROPOSED USE OF THE GOAT BARN.

- 3.1 There is no longer a requirement for a Goat barn at Baydon Manor, Marridge Hill, Ramsbury. There is therefore a need, in the words of the County Council's Senior Conservation Officer on the adjoining Conservatory, for:
"a creative solution to retain the building, and the essence of its character."
"An active use is the key to the long-term survival of any building, whether

listed or not.” A residential conversion has been accepted at this location.

3.2 A residential use is the optimal viable use because an employment, tourist or community use, would not be viable in such an isolated location.

3.3 The location of the Goat barn is well related to Baydon Manor & its Coachmans Cottage & Conservatory, being on the opposite side of Marridge Hill from these existing buildings, & adjoining The Tile House.

3.4 There would be no adverse impact on the National Landscape in the North Wessex Downs AONB because the proposal relates to an existing agricultural building, & the proposals retain the essence of the character of the building.

3.5 There would be no adverse impact on highway safety due to the existing access to the small scale of the proposal for a single dwelling. Access & car parking would comply with the Highway Authority requirements, due there being an adequate visibility splay and there being an adequate area for proposals for two parking spaces within the site.

3.6 The Mathewson Waters Floor & Elevation Plans for the Goat Barn, plan no: 24006-109A, show a barn conversion for its use as a small two bedroomed dwelling, with a Structural Survey by Mann Williams, Structural Engineers.

3.7 The plans show a single storey open-plan layout, to reflect the openness of the Goat Barn. This provides a kitchen/dining/living area of c. 9m x 6m, with symmetrical bedrooms at either end of 4.5m x 6m. The gross internal floor area is therefore about 100 sq. metres.

3.8 The elevations show no roof lights on the front elevation. The proposed materials are timber cladding with a slate roof. The front elevation is limited a timber front door, two door sized windows, & a bathroom window. The rear elevation includes 6m long bi-folding doors in the central two bays, with two door-sized windows for each of the two bedrooms. The side elevations are limited to a single bathroom window at each gable end of the building.

3.9 It is concluded that the proposals would retain the essence of the character of the Goat Barn because there are no extensions to the existing floor area, & the design & materials are in keeping with its character as an agricultural building. An electric charging point & cycle parking aids sustainable transport.

3.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES FOR AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS.

4.1 The Permitted Development Order Class Q classes the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings as Permitted Development, to address the housing shortage & to allow the re-use of redundant agricultural buildings. This planning application is required because the site is in a National Landscape (North Wessex Downs AONB).

4.2 Section 16 & 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act requires Councils to have special regard to preserving or enhancing the building or setting of any features of special architectural or historic interest.

4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Dec. 2024, paragraph 84 b), states that development in the countryside, that would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset, would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.

4.4 NPPF paragraph 110, accepts that opportunities for sustainable transport in urban & rural areas will vary, with limited opportunities in the rural areas outside Marlborough in its community area, with an exception in Policy CP48.

4.5 NPPF paragraph 125 d) supports the development of under-utilised land & buildings, especially if it helped to meet identified needs for housing, where housing land supply is constrained, as it is in Wiltshire.

4.6 NPPF, paragraphs 203 d) & f) & 210, requires Councils to take account of the desirability of sustaining & enhancing the significance of heritage assets, by putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, & of new development making a positive contribution to local character & distinctiveness.

4.7 NPPF, paragraph 215, states that any harm to heritage assets should be weighed against the public benefit from securing its optimum viable use.

4.8 Wiltshire Core Strategy, adopted in 2015, includes:

Policy CP1 & 2 direct housing to settlements, in this case in the Marlborough community area (Policy CP14), but adopting an approach that allows the Council to respond positively to opportunities without being over-prescriptive or rigid. An exceptions policy, Policy CP48, supports rural life with residential conversions being an exception, "in line with national policy."

National policy in the Dec 2024 NPPF, supports residential conversions.

Policy CP48 i), which supports the conversion of structurally sound buildings capable of conversion without major building, which preserves the character of the building, & Policy CP48 iv), which supports development where its conversion would lead to the viable long-term safeguarding of a heritage asset, as an exception in isolated locations. 4.

Policy CP57, which seeks to ensure a high standard of design to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context.

Policy CP58, which requires designated heritage assets & their settings to be conserved, & where appropriate, enhanced.

4.9 The Wiltshire Local Plan Review. The Local Plan Examination Stage 1 hearings were completed, so Stage 2 can proceed in September 2025.

- 4.10 Policy 82 2) on Housing in the Countryside states that new housing will not be supported unless the proposal would enable a viable & sensitive alternative use of a heritage asset in the manner that secures its protection & longevity, & retains its valued characteristics.
- 4.11 It is concluded, that the application for a new dwelling is supported by:
- i) NPPF 2024, paragraphs 84, 110, 125, 203-210 & 215,
 - ii) Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP2, CP48 i) & iv), CP57, CP58,
 - iii) Local Plan Review Policy 82 2),
- 4.12 The proposal would enable a viable & sensitive alternative use of a heritage asset in a manner that secures its protection & longevity, & retains the valued characteristics of a Goat Barn.
- 4.13 An Appeal Decision granted permission for conversion of an agricultural building into a dwelling in May 2022 at Upper Farm, Wexcombe, Marlborough SN8 3SQ, ref: PL/2021/04069 dated 20th April 2021, concluded that material considerations outweighed limited conflicts with the development plan as one of the buildings was not structurally sound, see Appendix 1.
- 4.14 The issues were whether the site was a suitable location, & if harm outweighed other material considerations. In this case, the Inspector found that the proposals complied with Policies CP1, 2, 18, 48, 60 & 61, due to Policy CP48 on rural life being an exception to CP2, 60 & 61. She found that there would be a modest heritage benefit of providing a viable use for a heritage asset, & a neutral impact on the setting of a listed building.
- 4.15 There was no dispute that the Council could not demonstrate a 5-year land supply. The main benefit was providing additional housing, with a modest benefit from providing a viable use for a heritage asset, & from economic benefits with the proposed works & to future occupants. The presumption in favour of development applied & carried considerable weight, & the appeal was allowed. This application shares the benefits of the appeal.
- 4.16 In this application the Structural Survey by Mann Williams, Structural Engineers, shows that the original building is structurally sound & capable of conversion to a dwelling, the contentious issue in the appeal decision, & hence complies with Core Strategy Policy CP48 (i).

5.

5. THE NEED FOR NEW HOUSING.

5.1 The Phasing in Local Plan Review 5-year Housing Land Supply Position is:

2020-24	4 years x 2,020 units per year (8,080 units 2020-24),
2024-31	7 years x 1,470 units per year (10,290 units 2024-31)
2031-38	7 years x 2,624 units per year (18,370 units 2031-38).

5.2 However, limited weight can be given to the draft Local Plan Review, because recent appeals have been allowed by calculating Local Housing Needs using the latest Dec 2024 NPPF as meeting NPPF paragraph 60, for supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

5.3 For planning applications, the latest Dec.2024 NPPF, paragraph 231, requires:

i) Existing housing stock May 2024	231,098 dwellings
ii) 0.8% of housing stock	1,849 dwellings
iii) adjusted for affordability	x 1.907
iv) Local Housing Need	3,525 units per year

The Council's 5-year Housing Land Supply Statement, June 2025, Table 2a.

	Dwellings
i) Local Housing Need with buffer, April 2024	18,506 (3,701 per year)
ii) 5-year Deliverable housing land supply	8,945
iii) Housing land supply (8,945/3,701 units)	2.42 years supply.

5.4 The Local Plan Review 2020-38 does not meet that Local Housing Need. The implications of not having a 5-year housing requirement is to introduce a presumption in favour of sustainable development, ("the tilted balance"), when determining planning applications, NPPF paragraph 11 d) footnote 8.

5.5 Appeal APP/Y3940/W/24/3345598 allowed for 145 houses at Glenmore Farm, Westbury, on the grounds of a shortfall in the 5-year housing land supply.

5.6 The Council is required to restore a 5-year housing land supply, by preparing a new Local Plan that addresses the shortfall, see NPPF 2024 paragraph 236.

5.7 A significant amount of new dwellings 2024-29, c.18,500 units, will need to be granted planning permission to achieve a 5-year housing land supply, under NPPF, Dec. 2024, paragraph 231, & plans may need to be revised to reflect policy changes.

Conclusions.

5.8 There is a presumption in favour of granting planning permission for this application, due to the shortfall in the 5-year housing land supply (NPPF 11 d).

6.9 The proposal complies with NPPF, Core Strategy, & Local Plan Review policies.
6.

CONCLUSIONS.

6.1 Section 1, the Introduction sets out the history of Goat Barns. It concludes that the site is a suitable location for the proposed development, which complies with the NPPF paragraphs 84, 110 & 125.

6.2 Section 2, on the Basic Design Requirements for Goat Barns demonstrates that the Goat Barn at Marridge Hill represents a good example of the historic design of goat barns, & it is therefore a heritage asset.

6.3 Section 3, on the Proposed Use of the Goat Barn describes the Mathewson Waters proposals for a residential conversion, without major building, to preserve its rural character, & create the optimal viable long-term use that would safeguard

a heritage asset. The Mann Williams Structural Engineers, Structural Report, shows how the original building is structurally sound, & capable of conversion. Employment, tourism, community uses are not viable due to its isolated location.

6.4 Section 4, Relevant Planning Policies, justifies how the proposals comply with:

- i) the 2024 NPPF, paragraphs 84 b), 110, 125 d), 203 d) & f), 210 & 215,
- ii) adopted Core Strategy Policies CP1 & 2, 14, CP48 i) & iv), CP57 & CP58,
- iii) & Local Plan Review Policy 82 2).
- iv) Upper Farm, Wexcombe, appeal decision, see Appendix 1.

6.5 The main benefits of the proposal, as concluded by the Appeal Inspector at Wexcombe, are in providing additional housing, with a modest benefit from providing a viable use to safeguard the long-term use of an unlisted heritage asset. Economic benefits are derived from the proposed works & to the future occupants.

6.5 Section 5, on Local Housing Need, shows why there is a presumption in favour of granting planning permission, based on the lack of a 5-year housing land supply, see NPPF paragraph 11, d). The “tilted” balance therefore carries a presumption in favour of development, which carries considerable weight.

6.6 It is concluded, following the appeal decisions at Wexcombe & Westbury, that:

- i) the site is a suitable location for the proposed development, as it supported rural life, under Policy CP48, an exception to Policy CP2.
- ii) the main benefits were providing additional housing & a presumption in favour of development, which carried considerable weight.
- iii) with more modest benefits in securing a viable long-term future for an unlisted heritage asset, & the economic benefits from the proposed works & to the future occupants.
- iv) a neutral impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Baydon Manor,
- v) these benefits outweigh limited harm to the National Landscape of the North Wessex Downs, because the conversion retains the character of the existing building, & ensures the long-term survival of the heritage asset.
- vi) there is no adverse impact on highway safety, due to its compliance with highway authority standards on visibility & car parking, from an existing access.

7.

APPENDIX 1.

Upper Farm, Wexcombe, appeal decision allowed in May 2022, on application for the residential conversion of an agricultural building within the North Wessex Downs AONB, Ref: PL/2021/04069, paragraphs 1 to 15 and 21 to 25.

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2022

by Helen O'Connor LLB MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3940/W/21/3284520

Upper Farm, Wexcombe, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 3SQ

• The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

against a refusal to grant planning permission.

- The appeal is made by Mr Charles Woodhead of Greatworth Property Managers Ltd against the decision of Wiltshire Council.
- The application Ref PL/2021/04069, dated 20 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 August 2021.
- The development proposed is the conversion of an existing agricultural building into a residential dwelling (C3 Use Class), together with associated residential curtilage, landscaping, parking and a garage. The proposals also include the demolition and removal of two redundant open sided barns and restoration of an existing former chapel.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the conversion of an existing agricultural building into a residential dwelling (C3 Use Class), together with associated residential curtilage, landscaping, parking and a garage, the demolition and removal of two redundant open sided barns and restoration of an existing former chapel at Upper Farm, Wexcombe, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 3SQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PL/2021/04069, dated 20 April 2021, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule

2. The main issues are:

- Whether the site provides a suitable location for residential development having regard to local planning policies and accessibility, and;
- If harm arises, whether this is outweighed by other material considerations.

8.

Reasons

Location and accessibility

3. Core Policies 1 and 2 (CP1 and CP2) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, January 2015 (CS) respectively set out a settlement and delivery strategy for development in the county. Together they seek to direct residential development to settlements at a scale commensurate with their position in the hierarchy described in the CS. The county is divided into community areas in the CS, with each having its respective spatial strategy policy. The appeal site lies within the Pewsey Community Area, and Core Policy 18 reinforces that development should accord with CP1.

4. CP2 of the CS stipulates that residential development is not supported outside of the defined limits of development save for in accordance with six express exception policies in the CS¹. One of these is Core Policy 48 (CP48) entitled

Supporting Rural Life. Core Policies 60 and 61 of the CS generally underline the spatial strategy by requiring new development to be in accessible locations in order to contribute towards reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car. However, they do not seek to thwart the exception policies of the CS. This aligns with paragraph 105 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which allows for the variance between urban and rural areas to maximise opportunities for sustainable transport solutions to be taken into account in plan-making.

5. The appeal site lies outside of any defined limits of development and is therefore, treated as countryside for the purposes of the CS. The parties disagree as to whether the proposal would comply with criteria in CP48 whereby the conversion and reuse of rural buildings may be considered appropriate for residential purposes. The area of disagreement can be narrowed further to one criterion, namely CP48(i) that requires the building(s) to be structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.

6. Policy CP48 does not define what constitutes major rebuilding, in the absence of which my attention is drawn to case law² which considered broadly similar territory with respect to permitted development rights for the conversion of agricultural buildings to dwellings contained in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). Whilst there are parallels, the wording of CP48 is not identical to the permitted class of development. However, the case established that whether a proposal constitutes a conversion or a rebuild is a matter of planning judgement and the nature and extent of the proposed building operations are a relevant consideration in making that assessment. Equally, whether the proposal before me meets the requirements of CP48(i) requires the exercise of planning judgement. This is generally reflected in the examples of planning decisions and appeals provided by the appellant.

9.

7. The main subject of the proposal concerns a former agricultural building at the northern end of the site. The main part of the building is a three-bay portal frame with high eaves levels which includes crane beams and lifting equipment. It has a concrete ground floor and double pitched steel-framed roof comprised of sheeting supported by steel angle purlins. The external walls are mostly blockwork to eaves level, above which there is corrugated sheeting but with large openings in both gable ends.

8. The submitted structural assessment confirms that the building is in a good condition, and finds that the steel frame, masonry walls and concrete floor are all capable of being re-used as part of a residential conversion. I have not seen substantive evidence that would undermine these findings. It goes on to outline that those elements would be retained as part of the proposals and that the building works proposed can be supported by the structure without the need

for additional foundations. Therefore, the structural information prepared by a qualified engineer shows that the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without significant structural intervention, which aligns with requirements in CP48(i).

9. The drawings and Barn schedule of works document provided reveal that the asbestos roof and upper walling sheeting would be replaced with metal sheeting and vertical timber boarding respectively. In addition, new windows and doors would be inserted, for the most part utilising existing openings. Furthermore, internal works would include a mezzanine floor and insulation to meet modern thermal and waterproofing standards. On this basis, the proposal would retain the steel portal frame and concrete floor as well as the existing blockwork walls. I acknowledge that the extent of these works is considerable involving some rebuilding but given the amount of original fabric retained in this case, I am satisfied that it would not amount to major rebuilding of the structure.

10. Furthermore, CP48 only permits necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building. The provision of internal walls and insulation would be generally required to meet regulatory standards necessary to make the building warm, dry and suitable for human habitation. It would be important and necessary to remove the existing asbestos cladding in the interests of health. The combination of sympathetic external finishes and use of existing openings would assist in preserving the rural utilitarian character of the original building. Hence, overall, the proposals in respect of the north barn conversion to a dwelling would accord with criterion (i) of CP48.

11. The proposals also include works to a former chapel building to form a home office associated with the proposed dwelling. The chapel is at the end of a former stable and coach house range that was historically associated with the Grade II listed Wexcombe House to the east. Given the separation distance and division of ownership that occurred prior to the listing of Wexcombe House, both parties agree that the former chapel does not form part of that listed building, rather it is a non-designated heritage asset. On the evidence before me, I have little basis to disagree.

11.

12. The structural assessment provided does not cover the chapel building, but the submitted Heritage Statement describes the building to be in considerable disrepair with relatively little of its historic fabric surviving. It states that only a few rafters, part of a truss and a small area of lathe and plaster ceiling remain of the roof. The entire south-east elevation has been lost. The brickwork of the remaining elevations has been subjected to later alterations and is in poor condition with embedded timbers which have rotted. This was generally consistent with my observations.

13. Evidently, significant building work and new material would be required to restore the collapsed walls and roof of the chapel and bring the structure back to a useable state. Even if this is done sympathetically in matching brick, recycled clay tiles and using steel casement windows, this would amount to major rebuilding. Hence, with respect to the chapel it is not shown that it is structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding. As such,

this aspect of the proposal would conflict with CP48(i). The impact on heritage assets is a matter I shall deal with later in my decision.

14. Accordingly, I find that for the most part the proposals would fulfil the requirements of exception policy CP48 and therefore would provide a suitable location for residential development having regard to Core Policies 1, 2, 18, 60 and 61 of the CS.

15. However, this would not be the case in relation to the restoration of the former chapel into a home office where there would be a conflict with the requirements of CP48 of the CS. I shall consider the weight that should be attributed to this as part of the overall planning balance.

12.

Planning balance

21. There is no dispute between the parties that the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year land supply. The appellant suggests a recent briefing note produced by the Council indicates 4.72 years' supply of deliverable housing sites. In these circumstances footnote 8 of paragraph 11 of the Framework deems that the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date. There is nothing otherwise before me to show that the Framework policies in footnote 7 provide a clear reason for refusing the proposal. Consequently, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

22. The main benefit of the proposal would be the provision of an additional dwelling towards the overall supply. In addition, there would be a modest

benefit arising from the restoration of the chapel which is a non-designated heritage asset. There would be economic benefits associated with the proposed works, as well as the activity of future occupants. Overall, I attribute moderate weight to the benefits of the proposal.

23. Balanced against this would be the limited conflict with policy CP48 of the CS, as the extent of the restoration works to the non-designated heritage asset would not entirely fall within the specified criteria for the reuse and conversion of rural buildings. However, I am mindful that this element of the proposal could be severable from the conversion of the northern barn, which I otherwise found complied with CP48. Given the benefits to the historic environment that would entail, it would be clearly preferable to include the restoration of the chapel rather than omit it. Overall, I attribute limited weight to this conflict with CP48 of the CS.

24. Therefore, in this case, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposal would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. It follows that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in this case and represents a material consideration of considerable weight.

25. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the material considerations carry sufficient weight to outweigh the limited conflict with the development plan that I have identified. Hence, the appeal should succeed.