



RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY



Site: 1 High Street, Ramsbury, Wiltshire, SN8 2PE

Proposal: Change of use of former retail space to part of existing dwellinghouse, replacement rear extension and internal alterations.

On behalf of: Toby and Olivia Bartholomew

Date of Issue: December 2025



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PLANNING AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction and Background	1.0
Site Context	2.0
Planning Policy	3.0
Planning and Heritage Assessment	4.0
Conclusion	6.0

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicants to support their planning application to allow the existing retail space to be utilised as residential accommodation, in conjunction with the rest of their home, known as number 1 High Street, Ramsbury. The property stretches over three floors, with the former retail space located in part of the ground floor area. The proposals also show the replacement of a modern conservatory style extension and modest internal alterations.
- 1.2 Up until August 2009, the retail space had been occupied by Hills Stores. It was then used by Hills Stores Charity Shop between September 2009 and January 2024. The charity shop, rebranded as Ramsbury Community Charity Shop, relocated in January 2024 to new premises created through the conversion of the former public toilets. The former retail area at 1 High Street has therefore remained vacant since this time, with the applicants moving into the property in late 2023.
- 1.3 The applicants are now seeking to use this former retail space as part of their home. The works required are minimal and include a new stair arrangement within this space to achieve access to a new bedroom in what was an attic storage area for the shop. They also want to take the opportunity to replace a modern conservatory with a new extension and propose removal of an internal wall to create an open plan kitchen, dining and living area. A former door would be re-opened at ground floor level to the former shop and a new door opening is proposed at first floor level into the new bedroom. A detailed schedule of works by DRA Architects forms part of the planning application and sets out in further detail what changes are sought. This report should be read alongside this Planning Statement.
- 1.4 The property itself is Grade II listed and lies within the Ramsbury Conservation Area. Along with the village and wider landscape, it also falls within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
- 1.5 The statement will therefore examine how the proposed development relates to the site and its context. It will also provide an explanation and justification for the scheme having regard to the national and local plan policies as well its heritage context.



2.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 This application concerns 1 High Street in Ramsbury; a Grade II listed building situated within the Ramsbury Conservation Area. The property is at the eastern extent of the High Street before one enters The Square, within the centre of the village. There are a number of listed and significant unlisted buildings within the High Street, The Square and village as a whole.
- 2.2 The High Street is characterised by its continuous frontage of buildings facing towards the built area, with those on the southern side benefiting from their contrasting long gardens and open water meadows to the south. The array of buildings and their uses have evolved in response to the village's changing social and economic requirements. Over time, a number of the traditional buildings have alternated between commercial and residential use, demonstrating the area's capacity for adaptive re-use. Within the High Street, there are a variety of property types including dwellings without shopfronts, dwellings which have incorporated former retail areas/ shopfronts and other commercial units.
- 2.3 These transitions and adaptation of the High Street is described in the Ramsbury Conservation Area Statement – extract below:

High Street

The present architectural appearance of the High Street is a product of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The replacement of buildings following the fires that devastated the village in 1648, 1781 and 1862 created a uniformity which is still evident today. Much of the High Street is 18th and 19th century and, although the scale of buildings is modest, the quality of individual buildings is high. The uniformity is however disturbed by 20th century developments such as the bungalows, the Fire Station, and the houses of Saxon Forge, at the western end of the High Street. The alignment of the street is important, especially at its eastern end where the view changes as you approach The Square. This gives particular prominence to the buildings on the outside of the curve, although looking west from The Square the buildings on the north side are the more obvious.

Shops and former shops together with the Burdett Arms PH, the library and the Memorial Hall emphasise the importance of High Street as a former commercial centre although shop closures reflect the changing times and illustrate the greater demand for housing. Oaks House, the former Ramsbury Institute, is a prominent building by virtue of its size and position just outside the Lych gate to the churchyard. Although listed as early 19th century, the building contains heavy timber framing and was clearly a property of considerable status and this was revealed several years ago during major restoration.

(Extract from Kennet District Council - Ramsbury Conservation Area Statement, June 2003)



- 2.4 Although Ramsbury is a modestly sized village, it remains well-served by a range of facilities and services, including a separate post office (6 High Street) and local convenience store (Costcutters at 14 Oxford Street). Ramsbury is also well placed being only 6.5 miles from Marlborough and 5.5 miles from Hungerford where there is a wide range of shops and services.
- 2.5 The position of the site is shown below at Figure 1, whilst Figure 2 is a photograph of the property as viewed from the High Street, whilst an example of the wider streetscene is shown in Figure 3.

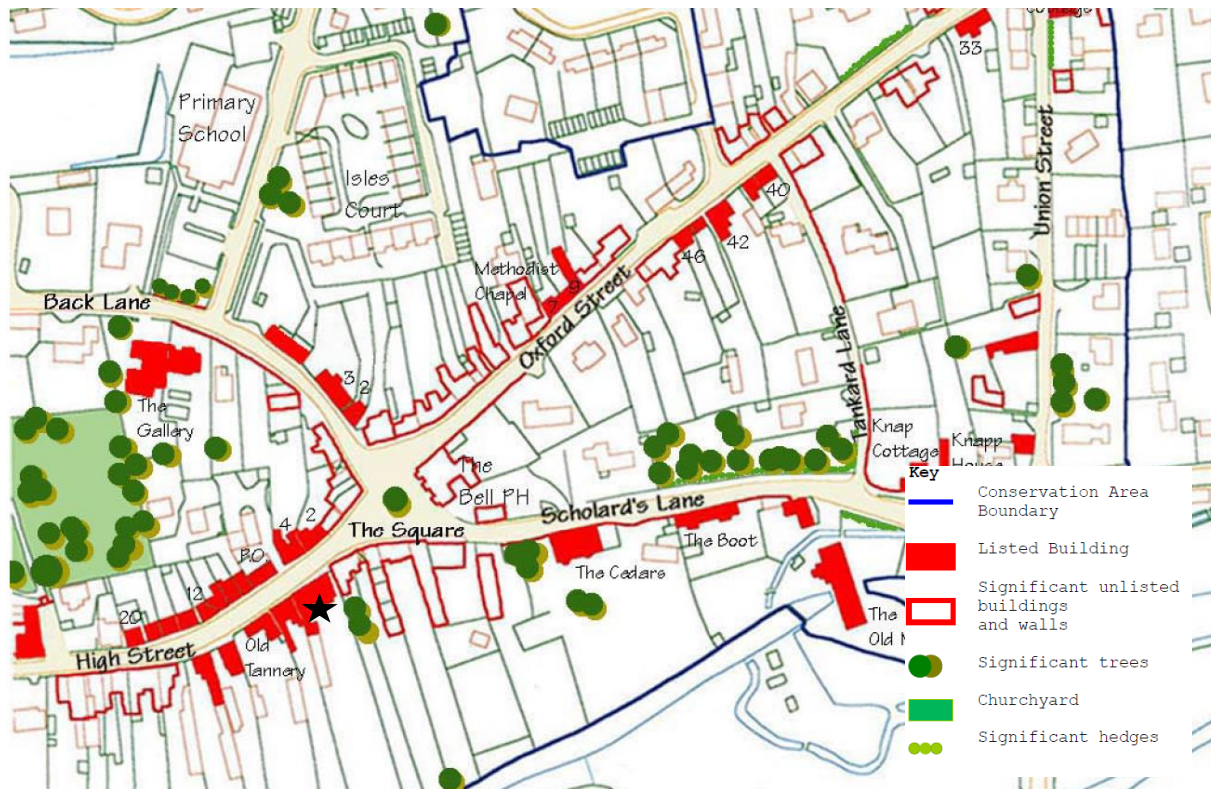


Figure 1: Extract from the Ramsbury Conservation Area Statement - No.1 annotated with ★



Figure 2: No.1 High Street – shop front and signage evident



Figure 3: Post office at 6 High Street



Figure 4: Properties on The Square



Figure 5: Golden Lion Gallery, 5 The Square



Figure 6: Properties opposite the application site



Figure 7: Internal view of former shop



Figure 8: Internal view of rear of former shop



Figure 9: Rear elevation – modern conservatory extension to be replaced

2.6 As previously described, the application building has historically been in a mixed use of residential and retail, resulting in both part domestic and part retail fenestration to the front elevation. The majority of no.1 was put to

residential use but a small portion of the ground floor had been in use as a local village stores. The retail space is very modest in size (circa 32 square metres) with a small area of attic storage space and staff kitchen/WC. As is commonplace, changing retail habits meant that the shop was no longer viable and it ceased trading in 2009. It was subsequently occupied by the village charity shop who then achieved funding to refurbish the redundant toilet block and relocate. This funding had already been secured before the applicant purchased no.1.

- 2.7 The applicants are now seeking consent to actively include this former retail element within the residential use of their property, as well as carry out other modest alterations to the property.
- 2.8 The property itself is largely of red brick construction under a slate roof. The official listing entry describes the building as follows:

10/193 No 1

22.8.66

GV II

House. c1820-40. Diaper brickwork with slate roof. 2-storey, 3 bays with later addition left containing shop. 4-panelled door in centre bay with reeded doorcase and simple bracketed canopy. 16-pane sashes with wide moulded boxes. Brick dentilled eaves. 4-flue stack between bays 2 and 3 where blocked window on elevation.

Listing NGR: SU2754071555

Source: Historic England

- 2.9 Whilst the residential element of no.1 is being occupied, the shop remains redundant and is in a very poor state of repair. As the viability of the shop steadily declined over the years, so did the investment into this part of the building. There is a leaking roof which needs addressing, asbestos tiles on the roof and there is no heating and the space is suffering from damp problems. The space therefore requires significant investment. Consequently, in its present poor state of repair, the shop could not be placed on the market for rent. A viability report has been submitted in support of the proposals and is discussed in section 4.0 of this statement.
- 2.10 This application seeks to change the use of the building to part of the residential unit but retain the shop front. Repairs and improvements also form part of the proposals and represent a significant investment in the listed building that would otherwise not be forthcoming.
- 2.11 This statement will now detail the planning policy context before the discussion of the planning merits and heritage implications of the proposal.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 The main planning policy framework relevant to this proposal is the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015 (WCS). There is no neighbourhood plan covering Ramsbury.
- 3.2 Material considerations comprise Government guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). At local level, the Ramsbury Conservation Area Statement (2003), Wiltshire Design Guide (2024) and the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011- 2026 Car Parking Strategy are a relevant material considerations.
- 3.3 The tables below list the relevant policies and guidance for decision making.

WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

Policy	Title
CP 1	Settlement Strategy
CP 2	Delivery Strategy
CP 14	Spatial Strategy: Marlborough Community Area
CP49	Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities
CP50	Biodiversity and geodiversity
CP51	Landscape
CP57	Design and Place Shaping
CP58	Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment
CP60	Sustainable Transport
CP 61	Transport and Development
CP64	Demand Management

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Chapter	Title
2	Achieving sustainable development
5	Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
9	Promoting sustainable transport
12	Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
15	Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
16	Conserving and enhancing the historic environment



4.0 PLANNING AND HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

4.1 The key planning issues relevant to this proposal are:

- Principle of the scheme;
- Design and relationship with heritage assets;
- Ecology and BNG;

Principle of development

- 4.2 In first considering the principle of the proposed change of use, the majority of the building is already utilised as a residential dwelling within this centrally located area, where the usual planning policies would not normally prevent the principle of an increase in the size of residential floorspace. In this situation, it is clear that the proposals would not harm residential amenity, and neither would they result in any notable visible changes to the appearance or character of the building.
- 4.3 However, in this particular instance, the NPPF encourages at both Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 that planning authorities should look to retain community facilities and services through their planning policies. This has been included as part of the WCS in Core Policy 49.
- 4.4 CP49 seeks to ensure that community facilities and services are not lost without first seeing whether it can be retained in that use or for other similar or community uses. Indeed, the policy starts out that proposals involving the loss of a community service or facility will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the site/building is no longer economically viable for an alternative community use. It goes on to note that:

“Redevelopment for non-community service/ facility use will only be permitted as a last resort and where all other options have been exhausted.

In order for such proposals to be supported, a comprehensive marketing plan will need to be undertaken and the details submitted with any planning application. Only where it can be demonstrated that all preferable options have been exhausted will a change of use to a non-community use be considered”.

- 4.5 However, we consider that in this specific instance, the marketing of the property is unnecessary. In looking at the purpose of core policy 49, it is clear that it specifically seeks to protect existing services and community facilities in the rural areas. Underpinning CP49 is Strategic objective 6 of the core strategy. This objective seeks to ensure that infrastructure is in place to support communities with one of the key outcomes being:

“Existing infrastructure services and facilities will have been protected, unless they are no longer needed, or there is alternative provision elsewhere”

- 4.6 Whilst the need to protect community facilities is understood, we consider that the specific set of circumstances here warrants a different approach. Firstly, the village still retains a separate post office (6 High Street) and local convenience store (Costcutters at 14 Oxford Street). Sustaining a third local shop is simply not feasible within a village and this was clearly the case with Hills Stores.
- 4.7 There is a great deal of evidence along the High Street and within The Square of properties which have changed use classes over the years, reflecting and responding to current retail and service trends. For example, there are a number of dwellinghouses with shop fronts, indicating their former retail use and there are a number of residential or 'other' properties being put to retail or community uses, for example the conversion of the former public toilets to a retail unit, the Golden Lion Gallery and Susie Watson Designs.
- 4.8 Whilst it is clear that the intention of the Development Plan taken as a whole, is to prevent ill-considered/ short-term changes away from such community uses, in an attempt to preserve community uses which are then less likely to be reinstated, it is clearly not the intention to prevent all such changes of use, where there is sufficient evidence that no harm would arise from its loss.
- 4.9 It is also abundantly clear from a site visit and the evidence submitted with this application (photographic evidence and viability appraisal) that this part of the listed building is in a poor state of repair and in need of significant and urgent investment and repair.
- 4.10 The viability appraisal clearly by Strakers demonstrates that the continued use of 1 High Street for commercial purposes is not economically sustainable, whether as retail or office accommodation. Demand for small-scale commercial space in this rural village location is limited, and when set against the significant costs of refurbishment, professional fees, finance and marketing, both options result in an estimated financial loss of approximately £34,000. In contrast, conversion to residential use as part of the adjoining dwelling is shown to be financially viable, generating an estimated 'profit' of around £64,000, reflecting a level of return acceptable to mainstream lenders. On this basis, the appraisal concludes that residential use represents the only viable and deliverable option for the long-term repair and reuse of the listed building.
- 4.11 Furthermore, it is widely understood that over recent decades many traditional village shops in the UK have closed due to a combination of economic and social factors. Increased competition from supermarkets and online retailers, rising overheads, and changing shopping habits — where residents drive to larger centres for weekly shops — have steadily reduced local trade. Population changes, including the migration of younger people to urban areas and limited public transport, further diminish footfall. As a result, small independent stores often struggle to remain viable as there simply isn't the demand. This was the case for the former retail unit that occupied the premises as set out in a newspaper article at the time of its closure - <https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/2419850.closing-after-214-years/>

- 4.12 It is also important to highlight the significant push by Central Government to increase commercial flexibility in sustainable locations. Changes to permitted development rights and the Use Classes Order have extended the flexibility for converting commercial properties to residential use and simplified the process. These changes were introduced to address the declining demand for retail space and the pressing need for housing, as well as support the adaptive reuse of buildings in response to changing economic conditions. For example, Class MA of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) (Amendment) Order 2021 allows for the conversion of a Class E building to residential subject to the prior approval process. Although this can't be applied here because of the listed status of no.1, it nonetheless is clear evidence of the Government's drive to make best use of vacant premises.
- 4.13 Within the aforementioned context, it has been clearly demonstrated that the retail occupation of the unit is not commercially viable. This, coupled with the fact that Ramsbury already benefits from the local post office and a separate local store, is considered sufficient evidence. We therefore submit that a separate marketing exercise is not necessary in this instance and the proposal conforms with the 'spirit' of CP49, along with the guidance contained within the NPPF.
- 4.14 We therefore submit that the principle of this proposal would therefore accord with the spirit of Core Policy 49 as well as the guidance set out in the NPPF.

[Design and relationship with heritage assets](#)

- 4.15 The starting point for assessing the design of any scheme is the context in which it will be read. Indeed, CP57 states that a high standard of design is required in all new developments, and proposals are expected to create a strong sense of place, drawing on local context and being complimentary to the locality.
- 4.16 Core Policy 58 requires that development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment, and should not have an unacceptable impact on the historic environment, particularly where this could be avoided or mitigated. The impact of the development on the listed building is considered later in this statement.
- 4.17 The Wiltshire Design Guide was formally adopted by Wiltshire Council as a Supplementary Planning Document was on 25th March 2024. This notes that:

"An understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region is necessary when making decisions on the siting, design and identity of new developments. It ensures they are well grounded in their locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion. The section on Identity elaborates on physical context".

- 4.18 Having regard to the listed building application, Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning



authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest when considering whether to grant listed building consent.

- 4.19 Section 66 of the Act requires local planning authorities, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 4.20 Section 72 of the Act, requires local planning authorities, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a conservation area, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.
- 4.21 Chapter 16 of the NPPF sets out the tests to be applied to proposals which affect designated heritage assets.
- 4.22 Internally, the former shop and its associated attic storage space will be integrated with the main house, creating a further reception room on the ground floor and a new bedroom in what was the attic space. This involves the re-opening a historic doorway, creating a single new first-floor door, and locally trimming the attic floor within the shop to accommodate the new staircase. Because the attic level sits approximately four steps higher than the main first floor, this adjustment is both necessary and discreet, ensuring the original structural form remains legible.
- 4.23 Within the existing residential element of the property, the plans show the removal of the poorly related modern conservatory and removal of a section of internal wall to create an open plan kitchen, dining, living area.
- 4.24 The replacement of the modern conservatory will enhance the listed building's character by revealing the original brick corbelling, a feature currently obscured. The proposed replacement extension will be sympathetically detailed so that the outline of the historic rear projections remains evident, allowing the evolution of the building to be clearly read.
- 4.25 The limited opening up of walls to the rear is similarly low-impact. These rear sections are later additions of lesser historic significance, and their alteration will not erode the primary 19th-century fabric of the building.
- 4.26 In heritage terms, a key benefit is the repair and long-term conservation of the disused shop structure itself. Without these works, the former shop is likely to continue to deteriorate, which would represent a far greater risk to the significance of the listed building. Overall, the scheme offers a balanced approach: essential repairs and sensitive integration of spaces that sustain the building's use and secure its future, while causing no more than a minimal degree of change to its special architectural and historic interest.
- 4.27 In considering the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area, the proposal will not result in any material changes. The historic character of High Street is based upon its mix of residential, commercial and retail uses existing cheek by jowl. The proposed

conversion of this small element of no.1 will simply add to this mix. Externally, there are no alterations proposed to the property.

- 4.28 We therefore conclude that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the minor harm caused by the removal of small areas of historic fabric, primarily in ensuring that the former shop has a sustainable long term future as a well-cared-for building, no longer under threat of neglect and decline. The proposals will also involve removing the poorly related conservatory, replacing it with a more in keeping extension that better reveals historic features.
- 4.29 The scheme is therefore considered to comply with the relevant design criteria of policies CP57 and CP58 of the WCS as well as the relevant advice contained within the NPPF.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.30 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.
- 4.31 The applicant commissioned Ethos Environmental Planning to carry out the necessary Ecological Impact Assessment and advise the design process. Their report should therefore be read alongside this statement. This evaluates the building's potential to support bats and other protected species in relation to proposed internal renovation and loft conversion works.
- 4.32 The report details the internal and external inspection and concludes:
- No evidence of bat roosting.
 - No suitable roosting features such as crevices, gaps, or roof voids.
 - High levels of internal light and generally tight, well-sealed building fabric.
- 4.33 The structure therefore has negligible potential to support roosting bats. No further bat surveys or bat-related mitigation are required to support the proposed development.
- 4.34 The only ecological timing constraint relates to breeding birds (pigeons). The report advises that works should avoid March to August unless birds are excluded beforehand.
- 4.35 The scheme is not required to demonstrate biodiversity net gain (BNG) as it is a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:
- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat
 - 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows
- 4.36 We therefore consider the scheme to comply with the relevant legislation and planning policies and advice having regard to matters of ecology and biodiversity net gain.

Residential Amenity

- 4.37 In addressing matters of neighbour amenity, CP57 seeks to ensure developments respect the residential amenities of both new and existing residents.
- 4.38 As previously noted, this is a village centre location where residential properties lie within close proximity to other commercial and retail uses. The introduction of a residential use to this part of no.1 is therefore compatible with this context and will cause no harm to amenity.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This statement has explained the background to why the former retail unit within no.1 High Street closed and why the unit is no longer viable for such a use. It has also set out a clear and substantiated case as to why the residential use of this space is the optimum use to secure the necessary investment into the listed building and how the proposed change of use from retail to residential conforms to the relevant planning policies and national advice.
- 5.2 The change of use, alongside the modest alterations, will bring into active use vacant floorspace within Ramsbury village centre and conservation area.
- 5.3 This statement has also explained how the scheme is acceptable having regard to matters of ecology and neighbour amenity.
- 5.4 The submitted plans show that the scheme has been specifically designed so as to retain as much historic fabric and character as possible and only seeks very modest alterations to the internal layout to facilitate the change of use and improve the wider residential occupation of no.1, replacing the modern conservatory. The harm to the building is therefore very limited and outweighed by the investment and improvements.
- 5.5 We therefore request that the Council approve the planning and listed building applications without further delay.