

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

20 January 2025

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(South/West)

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**Application No:** PL/2025/09801  
Land adjacent Long Cottage, North Street, Mere  
Proposed Conversion of Existing Stone Barn, Erection of a New Detached Dwelling and associated works

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

**Recommendations:**

|                                     |                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No comment                                                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Support subject to conditions (as set out below)                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Object (for reasons set out below)                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | No objections                                                               |

**Scope of comments:** the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

**Policy:**

From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66 (PP) requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing listed buildings, **their settings** or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 214-16 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

National Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "**designated heritage assets and their settings**<sup>1</sup> will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy Policy CP57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping': A high standard of design is required in all new developments, including extensions, alterations, and changes of use of existing buildings. Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through drawing on the local context and being complementary to the locality.

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

The following points are taken from the Historic England document "The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning 3" (HE GPA3) that are considered to be particularly relevant:

HE GPA3 Part 1:

"The NPPF makes it clear that the setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset."

"The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. ...views of or from an asset will play an important part..."

"While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset. This is because the surroundings of a heritage asset will change over time."

"The importance lies in what the setting contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance."

#### **Site and assets considered:**

Long Cottage is not a listed building nor is it in the Mere conservation area. However, the grade II listed former Methodist Chapel is listed and the site (Long Cottage) is recommended for inclusion in the conservation area **if** the Council reviews the conservation area boundary.

#### **Relevant planning history:**

ENQ/2025/00338

1no new dwelling and the conversion of a redundant barn at Long Cottage, North Street, Mere

I made the following comments in respect of the pre-application proposals:

*'I have no objection to the demolition of the rear intermediate structures and those to the side of the cottage. Removal of these structures, allowing the historic form of the cottage to be re-revealed, would be a visual improvement and would enhance the setting of the conservation area*

*The conversion of the barn would also be welcomed as it would bring a new use to a building that contributes interest to the area. However, the proposed two-storey extension is an ungainly large addition. Furthermore, it would 'fill in' a gap (glimpse of the sky and tree) that provides a welcome break in the*

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<sup>1</sup> A conservation area is a designated heritage asset

*building line. A single-storey extension, with a pitched roof, would be acceptable. As such, a two-bedroom unit seems overly ambitious for this modest outbuilding.*

*In respect of the new house, a new building in this location would seem to be at odds with the character of development to the rear of houses along North Street. Together with the conversion of the barn (which I do support), the proposals would seem to carve up the plot in a way that is harmful to the current prevailing character. I note that looking at historic mapping, there was development stretching back into the plot historically, but the indication is that the structures were all ancillary to Long Cottage.'*

**Issues:** impact on the setting of listed buildings and the Mere conservation area.

#### **Information considered/provided:**

Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance.

In this case, the applications are accompanied by a "Heritage Statement" which considers the impact of the proposals on the setting of the former Chapel but not the conservation area, although this was flagged up in my pre-application response.

Notwithstanding, paragraph 208 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis.

#### **Significance of assets and contribution of setting:**

The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.

##### **Setting of the Mere conservation area**

As I stated in the preapplication, were we to review the boundary of the CA, we may recommend extending it northwards to include this site. The text for the draft appraisal (never taken forward to adoption) says:

*'North Street forms an attractive group of modest houses focussed around the Methodist Chapel. North Road comprises distinct groups of short terraces set perpendicular and gable end to the road. The latter provides for some distinctive townscape of considerable quality (this area is presently excluded from the Conservation Area).'*

I consider the site makes a positive contribution to the setting of the CA in that Long Cottage is a traditional Cottage constructed in the local stone and set hard back of the road. Its siting at the corner means that the rear aspect is visible from the street. The small stone barn contributes to an appreciation of the former historic arrangement of the plot and that the back of plots were the focus of commercial or ancillary activities rather than residential.

The traditional diminishing scale of structures going back into the plots is largely observed in relation to this plot (although the Victorian extension has a higher ridge). In its current arrangement, it is reflective of the character of buildings within the character area (North Street) of the Mere conservation area.

In respect of the former Chapel, I consider that its significance (for the purpose of this application) is in its architecture, scale and use of local stone. The railings to the front and its degree of set back contribute to an appreciation of its significance and importance within the street. To the rear is an attached single-storey school building and small garden. The school room being single-storey allows an appreciation of the form and architecture of the chapel.

I consider that the houses and the cul-de-sac arrangement to the rear of the chapel and the site, are at odds with the historic character of North Street and have introduced a suburban form at odds with the CA. As such, they cause some slight harm to the setting of the chapel/conservation area.

### **Assessment:**

#### Demolition of the existing single-storey building

As advised in my pre-application comments, I have no objection. I do not consider the structure to be of historic significance and it detracts from the interest of the stone barn.

#### Conversion of the barn with an extension

The proposals would appear to be as presented at pre-application. I consider the proposed two-storey extension harms the special interest of this modest ancillary structure, not least in concealing the entire elevation. As such, I have reservations, however, I have no objection in principle to its conversion to residential, nor the demolition of the existing corrugated iron extension.

#### New dwelling

Again the proposals are as presented at pre-application stage, namely a two-storey detached dwelling at the rear of the plot. That the development would be clearly backland development which in its form and scale would be at odds with the prevailing historic character of development in the area, where development diminished in scale from the front to the rear of the plot.

I consider that the loss of the openness of this part of the plot would have an adverse impact on the character of the area.

### **Summary & conclusion:**

The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

I consider that elements of the proposals will be positive ie demolition of the single-storey link structure and corrugated iron structure; that elements will be neutral, such as the residential conversion of the stone barn (although arguably positive in that it is the re-use of a redundant historic building). However, I consider the development at the rear of the plot would have a harmful impact on the setting of Mere conservation area.

