



Planning Statement

Project: North Barn at Allenmead Farm, Patney, Devizes, SN10 3RG

Date: 6 March 2026

Client: Mr & Mrs Snook



Introduction

This application seeks consent to demolish an existing barn and replace it with one special barn style dwelling of the same size, and mass. The reason this application seeks to demolish and replace rather than convert the existing building is the new building has been specially designed to meet the '**Passivhaus Plus standard**'. This could not be achieved by converting the existing barn, primarily due to the current roof configuration/orientation and the requirement for an insulated raft foundation.

The Passivhaus Plus standard is a high-performance, net-zero-ready certification requiring buildings to meet strict efficiency criteria while generating more renewable energy on-site than they consume annually. It limits Renewable Primary Energy (PER) demand to 45 kWh/m²/yr and requires a minimum of 60 kWh/m²/yr of onsite generation. This standard means the dwelling will additionally feed clean energy directly back to the village of Patney.

This standard is recognised as a particularly ambitious standard, and there are currently only 27 such certified homes in the UK. This is clear evidence that this proposal is of outstanding architectural merit.

Site

The North Barn at Allenmead Farm, Patney, Devizes, SN10 3RG was historically used as a cattle shed. When the farm moved away from cattle this then became an agricultural storage facility.

The site itself is located on the Eastern side of the northern end of the village and is shown in the aerial photo (Figure 1) below bounded in red for context.



Figure 1: Satellite Photo showing the existing building

The existing barn is part of the village scene and built environment and is not in a good state of repair. Please see Figure 2 below looking onto the Northern Elevation.



Figure 2: Photo of the Northern Elevation

The main vehicular access is directly off the existing farm road. The site is relatively level with a gentle slope down towards the North.

Design

The proposal seeks to maintain the same size, overall foot print and building height as is currently on the site but seeks to re-orientate the roof so that the main roof aspect faces due South. This creates the opportunity to maximise solar generation with the 22 solar panels sited on the roof. The PV generation will total 14.3kW and will have 10kWh of high voltage solar battery storage to provide the night time energy requirements to the homes.

The glazed areas face to the South, East & West which maximise the solar gains during the winter months, heating the home. This is also why there is no glazing on the Northern elevation as this will lead to building fabric heat losses with no benefit from solar gain.

The windows on the Eastern Elevation will have external solar blinds, which will be controlled so they are automatically lowered at night. This is to prevent any light spill out towards the unbuilt space to the East. The windows to the South and West elevation will also have solar shading with their primary purpose to provide solar shading during the hotter summer months preventing the dwelling from overheating.

The home will have an insulated raft foundation, providing a good thermal mass which will regulate the home's internal temperature, aiding in keeping it warm during the winter and cool during the summer. The external walls will consist of 300mm thick insulation with cold bridging mitigated throughout the design, providing a super insulated home. All windows and doors will not only be triple glazed, but will have insulated frames.

The home will achieve such low u-values that sufficient heating from the use of appliances, ovens, TVs and indeed body heat will cover the majority of the heating requirement. Only a small top up may be required during prolonged periods when conditions are both sub-zero and overcast, due to no solar gains in this condition.

The home will be constructed with airtight detailing / membranes and a Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery (MVHR) system. This will provide superior air quality with a constant flow of fresh air and heat recovery year-round. The efficiency of the MVHR system is so good that if it were 20°C inside and 0°C degrees outside, fresh air would be provided at 18°C. For the MVHR system to be this efficient the home must be airtight. The airtightness is also key in preventing heat losses through air leakage from the home and will be below 0.6 ACH @ 50 Pa (a typical new build home must be below 10 ACH @ 50 Pa by contrast).

There are 2 designated plant rooms which will accommodate the MVHR system, PV inverters, and solar batteries. An Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) will be installed to provide the domestic hot water requirement, so there will be no reliance on fossil fuels. An Electric Vehicle Charge Point (EVCP) will also be installed.

The design of the home's structure is timber frame with stone and timber cladding. Timber is the most carbon responsible of all the construction materials, providing a carbon negative option when factoring the carbon removed from the environment over the course of the tree's life.

New planting of a mixed native hedge along the Northern and Southern fence lines (shown in Figure 3 below) will significantly aid in increasing the biodiversity of the site.

The entrance driveway and parking area will be permeable gravel to minimise surface run-off (SUDS).

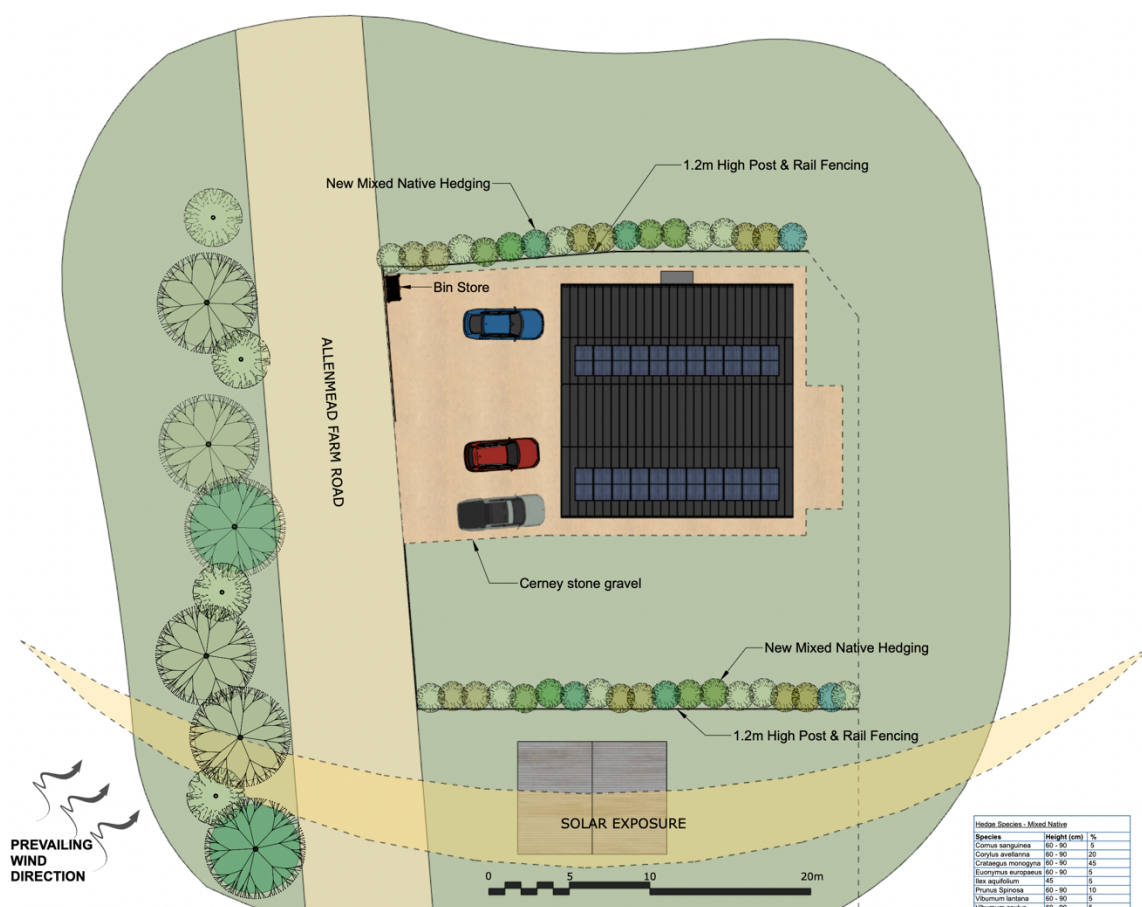


Figure 3: Site Plan

Planning Policy

In Wiltshire the adopted development plan is the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) (WCS) which was for the period up to 2026. The draft New Plan is currently unable to be adopted as Planning inspectors (Philip Mileham BA (Hons) MA MRTPI and Gareth Wildgoose BSc (hons) MSc MRTPI) recently wrote on the 27 February 2026 confirming that Wiltshire's revised Local Plan has problems with housing need, site selection, sustainability and legal compliance.

The current position is to fall back on the outdated plan in determining current applications however, whilst agricultural planning had traditionally focused on economic viability and environmental impact, the scope has broadened to include the "social dimension" of rural sustainability, supporting rural communities, and enhancing local well-being in the following ways:

- **Support for Rural Communities:** Planning policies, particularly in rural areas, should now aim to maintain the social framework by supporting farm diversification and, in some cases, residential development that supports the agricultural business and keeps people living and working locally.
- **Housing for Workers:** The need to house farm workers, and enabling them to live near their work, is a key social factor considered, especially in relation to farm diversification.

The now outdated *Core Policy 48: Supporting Rural Life* goes some way to addressing this need but has been identified as needing to be broadened and indeed Policy 82 of the Draft Local Plan as well as Policy 77 does indeed go further to meet these new requirements. However, these policies have not been formally adopted but their existence is clear evidence that Core Policy 48 is no longer fit for purpose to adequately support rural life today.

The applicant and their ancestors have lived and farmed in Patney for 4 generations, since the early 1920's. The family, last year, suffered a tragic loss when their son, who was taking over the farm, took his own life. Being of retirement age, they are now having to reconsider the farm's future and make new plans. Their daughter and family are looking to return to Patney in order to support and enable the continuation of the farm.

Consequently, the applicants plan, via this application, is to construct a bungalow for themselves, this will better support them in their later years, whilst allowing them to still remain on the farm to support and guide their daughter during this transition. Their daughter can then move into the current family home with her family.

Therefore, in determining this application, significant weight should be given to support this local farming family and allow it to continue to function. Particularly, in light of the fact that CP48 currently falls short in reiterating and addressing the importance of this need and supporting rural life as it is now in 2026.

The Development Plan: At paragraph 1.3 of the WCS key principles that underpin the strategy to help build more resilient communities are identified including: • "Working towards lowering Wiltshire's carbon footprint through the appropriate location of development, and through renewable energy and sustainable construction."

Paragraph 1.10 states: "The overarching priorities are to help build and protect resilient communities through..... tackling the causes and effects of climate change"

Paragraph 2.10 states: "Climate change is a central issue to be addressed by the WCS....."

The WCS sets out that addressing climate change as a strategic objective stating at paragraph 3.5 that: “Climate change is possibly the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today.”

Core Policy 41 seeks to help to reduce Wiltshire’s contribution to climate change through improved design and construction methods.

Core Policy 42 sets out that the principle of stand-alone renewable energy projects is acceptable.

As the Council is carrying out a Local Plan Review, and the direction of travel is reflective of wider strategic policy already adopted by Wiltshire Council, such as the Wiltshire Climate Strategy, adopted February 2022. This builds on the Council’s February 2019 resolution to acknowledge a climate emergency and subsequent commitment to also make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030.

Consequently, a suite of replacement policies has been included within the Draft Local Plan to further reduce Wiltshire’s contribution to climate change and foster better community resilience to impacts from climate change. The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (NPPF) sets out the UK government’s position on planning in England.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states: “The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.”

Paragraph 152 states: “The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.... It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”

In terms of the future national direction of travel the 10 Point Plan, Net Zero Strategy, Heat and Buildings Strategy and the Sixth Carbon Budget are very clear. The intentions include: • More renewable energy and storage technologies.

The Wiltshire Councils own climate team officer, James Taylor wrote on another application that they *“actively and strongly encourages developers of all scales to put the mitigation of and adaption to climate change as a golden theme to run through their development project. This will mean different things depending on the scale of the project, but to support the transition to a low carbon future, radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over the existing status quo will be required.”*

This proposal to be the 28th certified Passivhaus Plus home in the UK, is one of outstanding design, of which only a handful of homes in the UK have met. It will help to support the transition to a cleaner energy system, being less reliant on imported energy and fossil fuels. Policy is clear that radical reductions in greenhouse gases are required to reach a low-carbon economy, and that this should be supported by the planning system.

Socially, this transition is critical as it all helps to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change in the future, meaning less climate adaptation will be necessary and our communities in Wiltshire will be sufficiently resilient to change.

In conclusion, the proposal should be given great weight to lead the way for others to follow suit and learn from the methods that have been incorporated in this design. This aligns with the spatial objectives of the development plan and the national planning policy framework, including the environmental, social and economic elements of sustainable development.

Fallback Position – Class Q

Under Class Q permitted development, the conversion of the barn subject to approval from the AONB is a possibility and therefore the judgement in *Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council* [2017] EWCA Civ 1314 is relevant, where Lindblom LJ confirmed the legal considerations in determining the materiality of the 'fall back' position as a planning judgement were as follows:

– The basic principle is that for a prospect to be a real prospect it does not have to be probable or likely, a possibility will suffice.

From the outset, the Planning Officer, Rebecca Davies, from the North Wessex Downs AONB has been consulted and they have kindly guided the design to ensure the effects of the development will enhance the site. Rebecca Davies has confirmed this is an email of which an extract is included below:

We have no objections to the conversion which will ensure the continued operation of Allenmead Farm within the family and support a passive house design. We are in a climate emergency and welcome this approach.

You have used the colour guide well in the selection of materials, although not commonly used locally the earthy tones of the sandstone buff walling will mute the northern elevation into the landscape (as per the colour guide for this landscape type), the dark roof will also allow this to happen from long distance views. I note from our discussions that the roof has been flipped to allow for maximum exposure for the proposed solar panels, a welcome addition in accordance with our management plan. As discussed, the expansive glazing on the eastern elevation gave us concern due to the potential for light spill in what is a dark environment, but we are satisfied that the addition of external solar sensor blinds/shutters would alleviate that concern. We are satisfied that this could be controlled by a condition (has been tried and tested at appeal in the South Downs National Park).

From the key viewpoints the building will retain some agricultural character/identity and will sit comfortably against the backdrop of existing dwellings and barns. The native hedge boundary planting will provide a soft edge to the site and replicate that which encloses the adjoining field and beyond.

Given that all other criteria stipulated under Class Q are met, and the AONB Planning Officer is supportive of this design we therefore believe this Fallback position is material and relevant when determining this application. Particularly when considering what is proposed will support a local family farm and allow a building of outstanding architectural merit to be built, leading the way in sustainability and green living.

Conclusion

It is our conclusion that this proposal:

- Will allow a local family farm to continue, supporting them through a tragic circumstance and thereby allow the next generations of the family to remain and continue on with the farm.
- Demonstrates 'high quality' design independently verified and certified by the Passivhaus Institute.
- Is supported by the North Wessex Downs AONB Planning Officer
- Respects the constraints and maximises on the opportunities presented by the site and its location / orientation.
- Will enhance the architecture of the area.
- Demonstrates an extremely high sustainable approach to energy conservation.
- Meets Planning Policy.

We therefore hope that the presumption in favour of sustainable development will allow Wiltshire Council to approve this application.