

2nd January 2026

Ms Hilary Quixley
Wiltshire Council
Development Management
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire

via email: hilary.quixley@wiltshire.gov.uk

Dear Ms Quixley,

Objection to Application Ref: PL/2025/09448 at Baydon Manor Farm Building, Marridge Hill, Wiltshire

I write to formally object to the above planning application. I am the direct neighbour to the application site, residing at The Tiled House, immediately to the south of the barn. My objection is made not only as someone who deeply values the rural character and setting of the buildings on Marridge Hill, but also as someone who recognises the serious implications of allowing inappropriate development in nationally protected landscapes. In preparing this representation, I have taken professional advice from an independent planning consultant.

Planning History

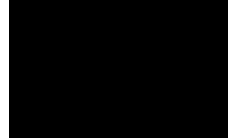
There is a clear and relevant planning history associated with this building. Two previous planning applications seeking to convert this barn into a dwelling were refused. The first was reference: K/041167 dated 18th April 2001 which was refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal. The second was reference: K/043749 which was also refused.

While it is acknowledged that planning policy has evolved since those decisions, including the introduction of Class Q permitted development rights and the adoption of Core Policy 48, which allows for residential conversion of rural buildings in isolated locations. These changes do not alter the fundamental policy test. Both Class Q and Core Policy 48 apply only where buildings are capable of genuine conversion, not where they require substantial rebuilding.

It is important that the Council remains consistent in its decision-making. A more permissive policy framework does not justify approval where the underlying circumstances of the site and building remain materially the same as those previously found unacceptable.

Principle of Development

The key policy by which to assess the proposal is Core Policy 48 (Conversion and Re-use of rural buildings). This policy supports the conversion and re-use of rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses where they satisfy specific criteria. Residential development can only be appropriate where there is clear evidence that the aforementioned uses are not practical. The policy does state that *"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"*. Unfortunately, the submitted Planning & Heritage Statement is unhelpful in explaining how the proposal does/does not comply with policy and contains a number of contradictory statements.



Paragraph 3.2 of the Planning & Heritage Statement simply states: *"A residential use is the optimal viable use because an employment, tourist or community use, would not be viable in such an isolated location."* There is no submitted viability assessment to support this generalised statement. Therefore it cannot be concluded that residential is the most viable and practical use.

It is also baffling as to whether the applicant/agent believes the site is isolated or not. At paragraph 1.6 of the Planning & Heritage Statement, it states *"The site is not therefore an isolated house in the countryside."* [my emphasis] which is the opposite of what is then stated at paragraph 3.2 (above).

In this context, I draw attention to the appeal decision at Treoaks, Butts Lane, Kilmington, Warminster (ref: APP/Y3940/W/22/3312433) (attached). In that case, the Inspector dismissed an appeal for the conversion of an agricultural workshop to a dwelling and concluded that the proposal did not provide a suitable location for housing, even though the site was adjacent to an existing dwelling and therefore not physically isolated. A central issue was the appellant's failure to demonstrate that the building could not practically be used for employment, tourism, cultural or community purposes. The Inspector rejected the appellant's reliance on the "isolated locations" wording of Core Policy 48 and paragraph 84 of the Framework as a means of bypassing this sequential policy test. The decision makes clear that the acceptability of residential conversion cannot be assumed simply because a building is described as isolated or redundant, and that failure to properly assess alternative uses can lead to the principle of development being found unacceptable. The same policy deficiency arises in the current application, where no substantive assessment of non-residential uses has been provided.

At paragraph 2.4 of the same report, it concludes that the barn is a non-designated heritage asset, stating: *"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."* [my emphasis]. If the recommendation from the planning and heritage consultant is to retain the agricultural use (and character), it is confusing as to why a residential use has been proposed.

There is a reference to a Structural Survey prepared by Mann Williams but it is not available to view. I therefore ask if this has been prepared, and if so, can it be submitted and a re-consultation to take place accordingly.

The Planning & Heritage Statement briefly refers to Core Policy 48 but fails to provide any meaningful assessment of the proposals against this key policy. It refers to an approved barn conversion in Wexcombe which was allowed at appeal. However, having read that appeal decision, it does not provide a comparable scheme. The Wexcombe barn conversion was in part a modern, steel framed barn which utilised the majority of the existing walls and openings. The historic chapel conversion was only part of the proposals and the Inspector concluded that there would be a modest heritage benefit but this linked to the social and religious significance and agricultural significance of the adjacent farmhouse.

In the absence of a proper assessment of the proposals, I have therefore undertaken this exercise to assist with your decision making. Below is an assessment against the Core Policy 48 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.

There is no structural survey submitted with the application, despite the reference to one being prepared. It cannot therefore be concluded that the building is structurally sound and a copy of the referenced survey should be submitted to allow a re-consultation to take place.

The existing timber-framed barn is defined by its open-sided bays, simple utilitarian form, and deep corrugated iron roof, all of which are intrinsic to its agricultural function. The proposed works would involve the complete replacement of the existing roof with a dark grey natural slate roof comprising four rooflights. It would also fully infill all open elevations with timber cladding, with no existing openings retained and introduce 12 completely new asymmetrical openings of differing dimensions. These interventions would fundamentally alter the building's original character, resulting in a structure that is indistinguishable from a newly constructed dwelling.

In this case, the cumulative extent of the works goes well beyond "necessary modification" and amounts in practical terms to rebuilding, such that the original goat barn would be neither legible nor appreciable in the finished development. The proposal therefore fails to satisfy the requirements of Core Policy 48(i).

- 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.

The barn is set back from the road behind a grassed area that has historically been used for grazing (as explained in the Planning & Heritage Statement) and forms part of the rural setting of this part of Marridge Hill and the wider setting of Baydon Manor.

The application does not include plans showing the location or extent of the proposed residential curtilage, parking areas or boundary treatments. Given the size of the red line application boundary, it is reasonable to assume that a substantial proportion of the site would be used as domestic garden.

The introduction of residential activity, vehicles, lighting and boundary treatments would change the character of the site from agricultural to domestic. Although there are residential properties nearby, the character of the site and its immediate surroundings has remained agricultural and linked to the historic manor landscape. This would have an urbanising and suburbanising effect that is fundamentally at odds with the open rural character of this part of the National Landscape. The North Wessex Downs Management Plan emphasises the importance of conserving open countryside, dark skies, and avoiding incremental domestication. The proposal conflicts directly with these objectives. The resulting domestication of the site would harm the character of the National Landscape, contrary to Core Policy 48(ii).

- iii. The building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure.

It is understood that previous reasons for refusal were due to the access being unsuitable. The location is unsustainable in terms of highways, but it is important to note that the existing access is poor and an officer's site visit is highly recommended. It is noted that your highways officer offers no objection in regards to highway safety subject to conditions.

- iv. The site has reasonable access to local services.

There are no local services within walking distance and there are no accessible bus routes on Marridge Hill. Further afield, in Aldbourne and Ramsbury are local services but all of these require travel by private car. From my understanding, planning officers have taken varied approaches to this criterion, but in my opinion, the location would not qualify as having 'reasonable access' given the required 5-10 minute drive to visit local services. I would consider this as being 'poor access' and as such fails to meet this criterion.

In considering this criterion, I would light to draw your attention to a site nearby, close to Ramsbury where an application to convert a rural building to a holiday let was refused twice and dismissed at

appeal (ref: APP/Y3940/W/20/3244816) (attached). The Inspector found that the proposal met Core Policy 48(iv) because Ramsbury has a range of services, including a surgery and bus services, which were within a relatively short distance of the site and accessible by car. However, the Inspector distinguished this from the test in Core Policy 61, which requires development to reduce the need to travel by private car and encourage sustainable transport. Although services could be reached on foot, the routes involved unlit footpaths and narrow lanes without footways, which were considered likely to discourage walking and cycling and encourage car use. As a result, the proposal conflicted with Core Policy 61 and this weighed against it. In the present case, the application site is considerably further from Ramsbury and its services than the site considered by the Inspector, and therefore has even fewer opportunities to access services other than by private car.

v. The conversion or re-use of a heritage asset would lead to its viable long term safeguarding.

In this case, the submitted Planning and Heritage Statement concludes that the building is a non-designated heritage asset and further asserts that it is structurally sound. On that basis, it is unclear what threat exists to the building's continued existence that would justify residential conversion as a means of safeguarding. There is no evidence before the Council to suggest that the barn is at risk, redundant to the extent that it cannot be maintained, or otherwise vulnerable to neglect or loss. Where heritage statements for non-designated assets rely on long-term safeguarding as a benefit, this is typically in circumstances where a building is demonstrably disused, structurally compromised, or lacks a realistic prospect of retention in its existing form. None of these circumstances have been demonstrated here. As such, the proposal has not shown that residential conversion is necessary to secure the building's long-term future, and the requirements of Core Policy 48(v) are not met.

Other Matters

I would also like to re-iterate the comments from your tree officer. A tree survey is required to consider the impacts on the woodland.

Finally, and whilst not planning related as such, I would like to add that there is no water on the site. The water to the houses at this part of Marridge Hill is supplied by a local farmer who would not be providing water to the application site. Therefore, the only practical solution here (as far as I can see) is that the applicant would have to dig a borehole.

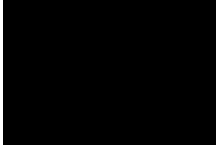
Planning Balance and Housing Need

It is acknowledged that there is a recognised housing shortfall and that national policy seeks to boost housing delivery. However, this does not override the requirement for proposals to comply with the development plan or to avoid harm to nationally protected landscapes. The proposal would deliver a single dwelling in a rural location within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, making only a very limited contribution to housing supply and providing no affordable or locally specific housing benefit.

By contrast, the proposal conflicts with Core Policy 48 on multiple grounds. It would result in the loss of the agricultural and historic character of the building, and would introduce residential domestication harmful to landscape character. Great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing the National Landscape, and the harm identified would be permanent. Accordingly, even when housing need is taken into account, the adverse impacts of the proposal significantly and demonstrably outweigh its limited benefits, and the planning balance weighs against the development.

For the reasons set out above, the proposal does not comply with the Development Plan when read as a whole. The application has not demonstrated that the building can be converted without substantial rebuilding or that the proposal would preserve the character of the building or its setting. It has also

Mr N. Uglow



failed to meet the requirements of Core Policy 48, including the need to assess alternative non-residential uses. Key information, including a structural survey and details of curtilage and boundary treatments, has not been provided.

Given the site's location within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the relevant planning history, the proposal represents inappropriate development.

I respectfully request that Wiltshire Council refuses planning permission.

Yours faithfully,

Mr N. Uglow

Encs