

NICHOLAS MORLEY ARCHITECTS

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

BLACKSMITHS COTTAGE, BOX, CORSHAM, SN13 8EB

Conversion of Existing building into Dwelling
Resubmission of Application PL/2025/05989

Prepared by Nicholas Morley B.A.(Hons) BArch Arb RIBA

HERITAGE and PLANNING STATEMENT (April 2026)

1.0 Introduction

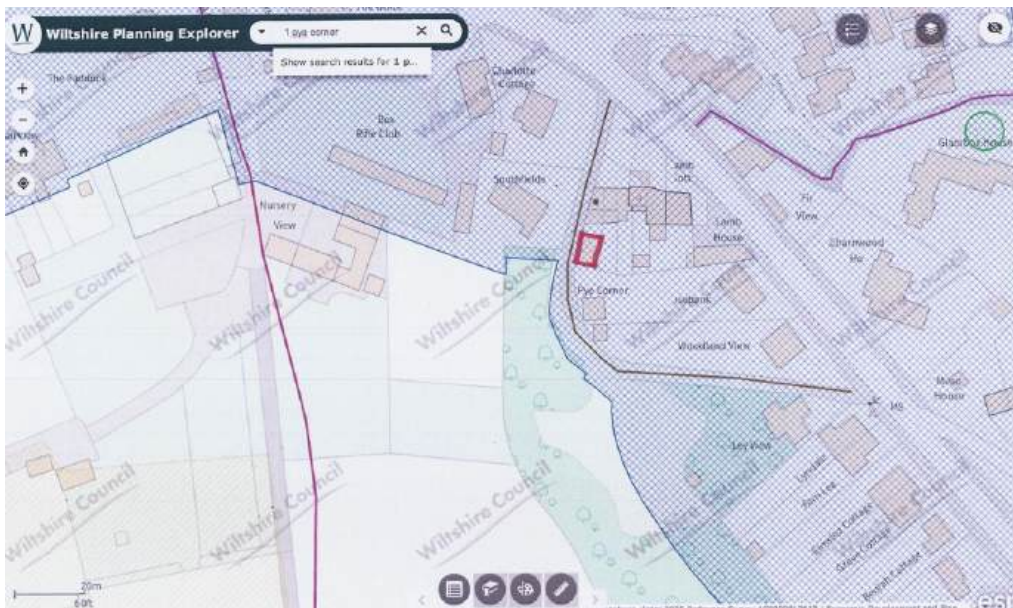
This document is related to the full planning application for the conversion of a two storey former blacksmiths at Pye Corner, Box to a 2-bedroom dwelling. This is a resubmission of refused application PL/2025/5989.

The former blacksmiths forms part of a mixture of dwellings including a short terrace of houses and other detached properties all of which are accessed via a byway (Box 97). The proposed garden for the blacksmith is located across the byway (as are neighbouring gardens) and is of a substantial size.

The blacksmith is within the development boundary of Box and is also located with the Box Conservation Area. The site is also located in the greenbelt and Cotswold ANOB.



The site location is indicated by a red dot



The building which was previously a blacksmiths is marked in red on the plan which also shows the extent of the conservation area and byway. The area of green which is somewhat misrepresented by the images of trees (this area is mainly laid to lawn) beyond the byway is where the garden for the building is located.

The revised planning application is accompanied by updated drawings with heritage, planning and transport matters being dealt with within this statement.

2.0 Planning Application PL/2025/05989

The previous planning application was unfortunately refused on 11th March 2026 despite the best endeavours of the agent and the applicant to avoid this situation happening. It is worthy of note that the application was originally validated on 15th July 2025 and it took until November before a planning officer was allocated the proposal. This is far from ideal.

The applicant has since (1st April 2026) talked to the council Ecologist who had raised a holding objection and has fully explained the intentions for the site and garden. Information was provided to the planning officer and it would appear that if this had been passed on to the Ecologist, then her report would have been updated. This may have also dealt with the reasons 3 and 4 of the refused before the decision was issued.

The applicant's Ecologist has added further explanation to his report to confirm that no changes are intended to the building or garden whatsoever.

There were previously no other consultee objections.

The applicant has since met with Wiltshire Councillor for Box and Colerne (30th March) and the Chair of Box Parish Planning Committee (1st April) on site, to seek further guidance and comment.

There were 4 reasons for refusal:

1 The proposed dwelling would provide restricted outlook and limited private amenity space. The constrained nature of the plot, combined with limited daylight and lack of adequate external space, results in substandard living conditions for future occupants. This conflicts with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Section 12 of the NPPF, which require new development to provide good-quality internal and external living environments.

2 The creation of a separate dwelling and subdivision of an existing garden results in a form of development that is incongruous with the established pattern and character of the area. While the existing building is traditional and the lane informal, the introduction of a second independent household on the plot, with separate domestic activity and limited private amenity space, produces a contrived form of backland development. This arrangement is not consistent with the historic pattern or intended function of the plot, and is harmful to the visual and functional character of development along this lane. The proposal therefore with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Section 12 of the NPPF, which seek well-designed places that respect local character,

3 The proposal involves subdivision of a garden and conversion of an outbuilding in an area potentially supporting protected species. The application does not provide sufficient ecological information to demonstrate that protected species or habitats would not be harmed, nor likely significant effects on the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. In the absence of this, the

proposal conflicts with the wildlife protection requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and Wiltshire Core Strategy policy CP50.

4 The development fails to demonstrate a measurable biodiversity net gain in accordance with Wiltshire Core Strategy and national guidance. The absence of any proposed ecological enhancements or mitigation means the proposal is contrary to the habitat improvement and protection requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy CP50.

The reasons for refusal under 1 and 2 are similar in their assessment, although the planning officer has never visited site, and therefore only limited weight can be given to these reasons. The proposal does need to be assessed 'on the ground', as without this happening, there can be no true understanding of both outlook and context. This is evident within the wording of the text of the decision, which appears to be based only on assumption or at best opinion. The setting of this building was also described by both the agent and applicant in significant detail, which the officer did not take any account of. The dialogue with the officer such as it was stopped at the end of February 2026 as the decision had been made to refuse the application.

The officer also appears to be treating this building as if it was a new build, it is simply a conversion of an existing building into a dwelling. The conversion of an existing building cannot be afforded the same status as a new dwelling as by its nature there are bound to be compromises.

Core Policy 57 states:

enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced

the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features, (e.g. trees, hedges, banks and watercourses), in order to take opportunities to enhance biodiversity, create wildlife and recreational corridors, effectively integrate the development into its setting and to justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and historic landscapes making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area

The outlook from the property is acceptable and there are adequate levels of daylight. The juxtaposition of properties in villages is not the same as a modern development. Villages have developed over time and there are many cases in Box where outlook and daylight are the same as the proposal. Furthermore, works have been carried out to the byway to remove damaged trees (agreed with Wiltshire Council) that further opens the views from the property.

The development is certainly not incongruous in the locality and is surrounded by buildings and dwellings and is not at a “back land” plot. A simple review of the village grain clearly shows this.

Reasons 3 and 4 of the refusal are incorrect and sufficient information was provided to the planning officer. The council Ecologist is also fully aware of the proposal and that it has no effect on habitat.

The revised proposal considers reasons for refusal 1 and 2 and further thought has been given to the elevational treatment whilst retaining the history of the property.

The proposal certainly complies to Core Policy 57 where relevant.

3.0 - Existing Site

The site consists of two-storey former blacksmiths with a single storey extension, known as Blacksmiths Cottage, located to the rear of a terrace of houses at Pye Corner. There is a small, paved access lane between the blacksmiths and the terrace houses of Pye Corner that provides access to the rear gardens of No's 1 – 3 Pye Corner and the blacksmiths. The site is accessed from the byway, that is accessed from Devizes Road. On the opposite side of the byway there are detached dwellings and the garden to No.1 Pye Corner, and the garden for the blacksmiths.

The terrace houses of Pye Corner are faced in a mixture of ashlar and rubble stone and modern faced render. The properties have pitched tile roofs and traditionally proportioned windows, some of which have been replaced with modern pvc frames.

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The building is constructed from coursed rubble stone under a tiled pitched roof with stone parapets to the gable ends. There is a timber door to access the building with a long timber window adjacent to the door, above that is another timber window at first floor level. There are two smaller windows, one in each gable end. The interior has a solid ground floor and a part first floor currently accessed via a ladder. The roof timbers are exposed and the walls are rubble stone. The lean-to extension is faced in reconstructed bath stone blockwork under a mono-pitch roof. There is a timber door to accessed from the small lane at the rear. The windows are pvc and there is vertical timber cladding to part of the side elevation facing the byway.

To be clear the building is not subterranean. The only area where the building is below the ground level is on the South Elevation where the adjoining land is built up by 1m. This has no effect on the building outlook whatsoever as there are no windows to this elevation at ground floor.

Site photographs are on the next page.



Building viewed from byway.



Building viewed from garden



Side Elevation of Building



Internal Photograph of Building



Internal Photograph of Building



Gable End with Extension



View of Garden of Blacksmiths Cottage

4.0 - Proposed Development

It is proposed to carry out alterations both internally and externally to the property. The ground floor will consist of the living room and entrance accessed off the byway and a new staircase to the new first floor. The extension will become a kitchen, with new window that will overlook the by-way and a new WC accessed from the living room with a bin store behind.

At first floor will be two bedrooms and a bathroom. The second bedroom will require a new window which will overlook the byway. Conservation Velux rooflights will be installed in both the extension and main roof. All existing external doors and windows will be replaced with new timber doors and windows. The windows for the living room and first bedroom will also be enlarged within existing openings. A bat box is proposed on the South Gable end.

The garden to the property will be across the byway, adjacent to the neighbouring gardens of 1 Pye Corner and Southfields.

Materials

The main property will be retained as existing aside from two new windows and the replacement of all other doors and windows with new timber. The external materials will be repaired if needed and conservation Velux rooflights will be installed in the roof. The extension will be clad in horizontal timber cladding incorporating the new timber window overlooking the byway. The remaining windows and door will be replaced (and in some cases widened). Two conservation Velux rooflights will be installed in the mono-pitch roof.

5.0 – Transport and Access

The site is located off the A365 Devizes Road and is accessed via an established lane from Devizes Road. It is not intended to provide parking for the proposal. Only pedestrian access will be provided via the byway (BOX97) as currently exists. The byway also provides access to 1-4 Pye Corner, Southfields and Charlotte's Cottage.

It is considered that as this proposal is of a small scale that parking for this can be accommodated on Devizes Road which has unrestricted parking close to the entrance to the byway.

The site is located close to public transport and the local facilities in Box which reduces the need to use a car. The Highways Officer has previously agreed that no parking for the proposal is acceptable.

Bus – There is a pair of bus stops located on Devizes Road within about 50m of the site. The predominant route is the D3 which provides a service to Melksham and Bath.

There is a pair of bus stops located on the High Street within about 350m of the site. The predominant route is the X31 which provides a service to Chippenham and Bath.

There is good opportunity for walking and cycling to the shops and local school in Box

The pedestrian access to the property will remain unchanged and it is proposed to provide a cycle shed within the garden.

Bin collection will be as the existing properties on Devizes Road which requires the residents to wheel their bins to a collection point at the bottom of the lane.

6.0 Development Policy

Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted 2015 ('the core strategy') – the core strategy establishes the strategic development framework for Wiltshire. In this regard Core Policy 1 maintains a hierarchical approach to the location of development, with new development focused at principal settlements, followed by market towns and local service centres, and finally large and small villages.

With respect to housing delivery, Core Policy 2 sets an overall housing requirement of 42,000 dwellings to be delivered during the plan period and distributed across the various housing market areas ('HMAs') identified within Wiltshire. Box is located within the North and West Wiltshire HMA and has been apportioned 24,740 dwellings. The North and West Wiltshire HMA is subject to a more detailed breakdown of 'community areas', which are locations in which the 24,740 dwellings should be distributed. To this end, Box forms part of the Corsham Community Area under the provisions of Core Policy 11 in which it is classified as a 'Large Village'. The Corsham Community Area is expected to deliver 1,395 dwellings during the plan period, with circa 1,220 to be provided at Corsham. The balance of housing is to be provided at the large and small villages which also comprise the community area.

Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan adopted 2020 ('the allocations plan') – in accordance with the core strategy's settlement hierarchy, and in order to satisfy its strategic development requirements, the allocations plan allocates various sites for development.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) ('the Framework') and Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG')

8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

39. Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

72. Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites,

taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of:

- a) specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption³⁴; and
- b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan period.

78. Strategic policies should include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period, and all plans should consider whether it is appropriate to set out the anticipated rate of development for specific sites. Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies³⁸, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old³⁹. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:

- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or
- b) 20% where there has been significant under delivery⁴⁰ of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply; or
- c) From 1 July 2026, for the purposes of decision-making only, 20% where a local planning authority has a housing requirement adopted in the last five years examined against a previous version of this Framework⁴¹, and whose annual average housing requirement⁴² is 80% or less of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance.

125 Planning policies and decisions should:

- a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;
- b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;

c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;

d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)⁵⁰; and

e) support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes. In particular, they should allow upward extensions – including mansard roofs – where the development would be consistent with the prevailing form of neighbouring properties and the overall street scene, is well-designed (including complying with any local design policies and standards), and can maintain safe access and egress for occupiers. A condition of simultaneous development should not be imposed on an application for multiple upward extensions unless there is an exceptional justification.

142.Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safe guarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

154.Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:
 - i. mineral extraction;
 - ii. engineering operations;
 - iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
 - iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
 - v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
 - vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

220. Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to

the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

221. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disadvantages of departing from those policies.

7.0 Five Year Housing Supply

The council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing supply. The last data issued within Wiltshire's Housing Land Supply Statement (Briefing Note No.25-04 dated 18th June 2025 states the current position is **2.42 years**. This is the figure that should be used to inform decision-taking of planning applications and appeals. The application should be determined in accordance with the principles of sustainable development through the application of "tilted balance".

8.0 Wiltshire Council Planning Policies

The following policies are relevant to the planning application but must also be reviewed given that the council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing supply.

- Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy; and
- Core Policy 11: Spatial Strategy for the Corsham Community Area;
- Core Policy 45: Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs;
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping
- Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment;
- Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport;

Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy - the adopted settlement strategy seeks to facilitate sustainable development by confining it to a hierarchy of settlements. This is achieved through the use of development limits, the extent of which are defined on the adopted proposals map. Given that a principal objective of the Framework is 'significantly boosting the supply of housing', combined with the fact that the council is unable to demonstrate a five-year-housing supply, the concept of stymying housing delivery at sustainable locations through the use of development limits does not accord with the objectives of the Framework. Therefore, whilst the underlying sentiment of this policy is sound, given that it restricts the supply of housing at a time when the council urgently needs to increase it, the policy must be considered out-of-date.

Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy – this policy provides additional information on the implementation of Core Policy 1. In this regard it sets a housing requirement, and general distribution of this figure across the settlement hierarchy. The policy also provides additional guidance on development within, and outside of defined development limits. This policy must also be considered out of date.

Core Policy 11: Spatial Strategy for the Corsham Community Area – whilst Core Policy 11 provides a more detailed distribution of the development required for the Corsham Community Area, its overriding requirement is for development to accord with the requirements of Core Policy 1. Given that Core Policy 1 is out-of-date, then Core Policy 11 is also out-of-date.

Core Policy 45: Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs- This is a general policy which covers housing need.

Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping. This policy which was mentioned in the reason for refusal concerns mainly new development. However, the proposal complies with the clauses in the policy.

Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment – This is a policy which seeks to protect, conserve where possible enhance the historic environment.

Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport – This policy is considered to be up-to date.

In addition to the Wiltshire Core Strategy reference has been made **to North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011**. Although some of these policies have been superseded or replaced

NE1 WESTERN WILTSHIRE GREEN BELT (No longer required as superseded by PPG2 archived 19th September 2012)

The re-use of buildings will be approved providing:

- (a) it will not have a materially greater impact than the present use upon the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within that designation;
- (b) strict control is exercised over the extension of re-used buildings, and over any associated uses of land surrounding the building which might conflict with the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within that designation; and
- (c) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

Approval will not be given for development, which would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, nor would conflict with the purpose of including land within that designation.

NE4 AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP51)

In Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape. The environmental effects of all development will be a major consideration. Development will be restricted to:

- i) The change of use of existing buildings; and/or
- ii) That which is appropriate to the economic and social well-being of the area;
- iii) That which is desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of its amenities;

And provided the proposal:

- a) Conserves or enhances, the natural beauty of the landscape, including its open rural character, and any riverside or water features, wildlife sites, trees or woodland;
- b) Is sited and designed so as to minimise its impact on the natural beauty of the area and, where possible, is located close to and in association with existing buildings; and
- c) Uses appropriate building materials and landscaping.

9.0 The Proposal in Response to Planning Policies

The proposal is to convert an existing building within the development boundary of Box.

Box is defined as a large village within Core Policy 11 - Spatial Strategy for the Corsham Community Area.

The proposal reuses the building with fairly minimal external changes so will have limited effect on the conservation area, the greenbelt and the Cotswold ANOB. Also, the building form and footprint will not be any larger than currently exists.

The building is already part of the built fabric of Box and can be classed as an infill plot albeit it is an extant property. This is a key planning consideration.

10.0 Conclusion

The proposal brings back an historic building into a new use within the boundary of the village. The proposal will provide an additional dwelling within an established settlement whilst also respectful to its greenbelt location and the Cotswold ANOB. There is no materially greater impact on the greenbelt. Furthermore, the revised proposal addresses all the concerns of the planning officer.