



PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Application:	Change of use of agricultural building to Heritage Micro Tannery.
Property:	Great Cotmarsh Farm, Cotmarsh, Broad Town, Wiltshire, SN4 7RA
Client:	Mr & Mrs J Allen
Date:	01/04/2026
Agent:	Chris Cary MRICS FAAV Associate Partner - Rural Surveyor & Planner Lorna de Pass FAAV



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Woolley & Wallis have been instructed by Mr & Mrs J Allen to submit an application for a the change of use of the agricultural building to a Heritage Micro Tannery.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to identify and detail on planning considerations in respect to the application above.
- 1.3 Accompanying Documentation:
 - a) Location Plan
 - b) Existing & Proposed Block Plan

2.0 BACKGROUND & RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 In 2023, the applicants purchased Great Cotmarsh Farm, an established agricultural holding situated in the small village of Cotmarsh. At the point of purchase, the property consisted of a farmhouse, a range of poorly maintained farm buildings and approximately 171 acres of surrounding land.
- 2.2 The applicants already had a strong agricultural background after owning and grazing rare breed livestock in the Cotswolds for the previous 10 years. Over this time, they started adding value to the meat and by-products produced by creating their own hand made, well-crafted garments from their wool and the making of sheepskins to be sold along with sustainable meat. This started the applicants' journey of 'farm to fibre' and exploring heritage techniques.
- 2.3 One of the applicants' first tasks when arriving at Great Cotmarsh Farm was working out how to utilise the existing buildings and ensure the site works for their sustainable enterprise, grazing rare breed cattle and sheep and ensuring the survival of heritage crafts.
- 2.4 In 2024, they successfully secured planning to rebuild an existing barn that had fallen into disrepair, under application PL/2024/09277. This allowed the applicants to further explore the farm to fibre journey and provide both agricultural storage and a suitable area to tan their own cattle hides.

For the avoidance of doubt, the use of the building for leather tanning of their own hides from the herd established on the farm is still considered agricultural. The use as a tannery is ancillary to their agricultural enterprise, much like a farm shop selling their own produce or farmer producing wine from his grapes on site as determined in the case *"Millington v Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions"*.

- 2.5 The tannery produces, sustainable, high quality, veg tanned cow leather that the applicant can trace back to exact animal reared on the land. The heritage practices used to tan the leather use natural and local products, including local small businesses and their own nursery.
- 2.6 Although, the livestock by-products produced on site provide a small income stream, the main goal of the diversification is to conserve and promote an endangered heritage practice through sharing and educating.
- 2.7 To achieve this, under application PL/2024/11154, the applicant converted a building upon the farm into an agricultural training classroom, which brings together students to understand how the production of natural fibres can help to benefit the environment and demonstrate the potential to design and make clothing within a regenerative system.
- 2.8 The food to fibre journey, including the building of the classroom and equipment for the tannery, has already been partly funded by government grants in the pursuit of sustaining heritage crafts in the UK.

3.0 PROPOSED SITE INFORMATION

- 3.1 The proposed site is enclosed within an existing farmstead as part of an agricultural holding.
- 3.2 According to gov.uk flood risk map, the site does not lie with a River or Sea flood Risk Area nor within a Surface Water Flood Risk Area.



Image 1 – Listed Building Locations

- 3.3 There are no Rights of Way crossing the proposed development site area. The closest Right of Way is bridleway WT/BTOW/22 which lies 80m away, towards the East of the property.
- 3.4 Great Cotmarsh Farmhouse is a listed building and is within the applicants' ownership. For the avoidance of doubt the farmyard and courtyard buildings are not covered by the listing.
- 3.5 The site does not sit with an AONB or SPA or SAC.
- 3.6 The nearest SSSI is Goldborough Farm Meadows (situated 288m to the East) and further afield Bincknoll Dip Woods (over 1,650m to the West) within the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- 3.7 The closest scheduled monument is Bincknoll Camp, near the Bincknoll Dip Woods and again, within the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- 3.8 The site is situated in a designated by Wiltshire Council of protected species and biodiversity net gain.
- 3.9 The closest priority habitat lies 289m to the North West of the building, it is designated as lowland meadows.

4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The applicant seeks planning permission to formally change of use of agricultural building to a Heritage Micro Tannery to be used on a small-scale, non-profit basis.
- 4.2 The tannery will be used and operated by the applicant with the only change being the ability to provide tanning services to local farmers wishing to produce traceable and sustainable leather.
- 4.3 This service will involve the delivery of hides to the farm on a monthly basis and allow the applicant to naturally tan the hides use vegetable and tree bark producing a sustainable product which can be given back to the farmer or used and sold by the applicant.

Leather Tanning

- 4.4 In order to fully appreciate the significance of the applicants' proposed project at Great Cotmarsh Farm, it is necessary to consider the long-standing heritage of leather tanning within the United Kingdom and the marked decline of this industry over the last century.
- 4.5 Historically, the UK was recognised as a world leader in leather production, with British tanneries supplying high-quality leather that underpinned the international reputation of British shoemaking, saddlery, and other specialist crafts. Tanneries were once a fundamental component of rural and industrial communities, contributing both to local economies and to the continuation of skilled, craft-based employment.
- 4.6 Leather tanning is a highly specialised, sequential process through which raw animal hides are transformed into durable, functional leather suitable for a wide range of uses. Traditional tanning methods, commonly referred to as vegetable tanning, rely on the careful use of natural materials, most notably extracts derived from tree bark and other organic substances. These materials preserve the hide while enhancing its strength, longevity, and character. The process is inherently time-intensive and requires a high level of technical skill and knowledge, much of which has historically been passed down through generations of tanners.
- 4.7 Over the course of the twentieth century, traditional tanning practices have been increasingly replaced by modern industrial techniques, particularly chrome tanning. This method utilises chemical agents, including hazardous substances such as hydrogen sulphide, to significantly accelerate the tanning process. While more commercially expedient, chrome tanning has raised substantial environmental and health concerns and has contributed to the widespread closure of traditional tanneries across the UK. As a consequence, an important element of the nation's rural and industrial heritage has been placed at risk, with the loss not only of historic practices but also of the skills and knowledge associated with them.
- 4.8 Against this background, the applicants' project at Great Cotmarsh Farm represents a meaningful opportunity to safeguard and revitalise a traditional craft that is now increasingly rare evidenced by the fact that Oak barn tanning is on the critically endangered list and vegetable tanning on the endangered list (The Red List of Endangered Crafts 2025 Edition).
- 4.9 By re-establishing natural tanning methods rooted in historical practice, the proposal seeks to conserve an endangered heritage asset, support sustainable land-based activity, and reinforce the cultural and historical significance of rural working landscapes. The project therefore makes a positive contribution to the preservation of

traditional skills while aligning with broader objectives for environmental responsibility and heritage conservation.

Scale

- 4.10 A small tannery of similar scale to the proposed could be processing 500 hides per week whereas the proposed micro-tannery at Great Cotmarsh only has the capacity to process up to 240 hides per year or 4.6 hides per week, being a very low number.
- 4.11 The proposed change of use, does not create a tannery, it simply allows the existing tannery to tan 3rd party hides. The capacity of the tannery, being 240 hides is not changing.

Drainage

- 4.12 No additional drainage works are proposed and the building will continue to use its existing drainage.

5 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 5.2 At the current time the statutory development plan in respect of this application consists of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) (Adopted January 2015); the 'saved' policies of the North Wiltshire Local Plan (NWLP) 2011 (adopted June 2006) & the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP) (adopted February 2020). The WCS Strategy is relevant in this case.
- 5.3 Wiltshire Council are currently undertaking their Local Plan Review - Pre Submission Draft 2023- 2028. Yet to be adopted therefore little weight given.
- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 as amended in Feb 2025 is the current national level policy document. This has been considered. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF requires proposals that accord with the Development Plan to be approved without delay.

6 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 Wiltshire is silent on the protection and conservation of heritage crafts specifically but the following policies support heritage assets and supporting of rural diversification on an appropriate scale.
- 6.2 Core Policy 48, Supporting Rural Life, sets out that development within rural areas should support employment generating uses and community facilities where appropriate in scale and location. The proposed micro-tannery represents a small-scale employment use, providing opportunity for local economic activity while also delivering a community function through education, training, and the sharing of traditional skills. In this respect, the proposal aligns with the overarching principle of sustainable development in rural areas.

Specifically, the CP48 states “*Proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses will be supported where they satisfy the following criteria:*”

i. The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion

The building is structurally capable of conversion.

ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape.

The change of use will not impact the external appearance of the building or surrounding landscape.

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

The existing building, part of an existing agricultural holding, will continue to use the existing access.

iv. The site has reasonable access to local services.

As above, the site is part of existing holding and therefore utilises the same existing services.

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

As discussed in this application, the proposed change of use is allow for 3rd party hides to be able to be tanned within the existing tannery in order to allow the heritage crafting project to become viable and sustainable going forward. Therefore “safeguarding” of this heritage asset.

- 6.3 Core Policy 58 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy “Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment” states that development “should protect, conserve and where possible protect the historic environment” and that “heritage assets and their settings will be conserved”. Although the policy specifically relates to building and structures, the practice of traditional British bark tanning, which currently is on the critically endangered Heritage Craft red list, is an asset worth protecting. This development of a small scale non-profit micro-tannery allows for the continuation of the once strong British craft, to continue and furthermore allows the knowledge of this expertise to continue and grow.
- 6.4 Furthermore, Core Policy 34: Supporting Rural Life/Rural Economy encourages the promotion of appropriate diversification of the rural economy, and development that helps to maintain rural vitality. This development is a small-scale diversification projects specifically use to tan cow hides. The necessity to provide the opportunity to other farms rather than just ancillary to Great Cotmarsh Farm justifies the capital expenses on equipment and running the tannery to make it a viable diversification.
- 6.5 Core Policy 49, Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities, seeks to retain and enhance local services that contribute to community wellbeing. Whilst not a traditional facility, the proposed tannery provides a valuable community function through skills retention, education, and access to a specialist rural service that would otherwise be unavailable locally. As such, it contributes positively to the provision of rural services.
- 6.6 The NPPF, para 189 states local planning authorities should “set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment”. This positive strategy

should include the continuation of traditional activities such as traditional tanning. This is further promoted in in para 190 discussing the significance of heritage assets derived from “its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest” highlighting traditional uses, craftsmanship and historic skills associated with assets.

7 IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING AMENITY

- 7.1 The proposed development is situated within an existing farmstead which is very much established and excepted within the village. For the avoidance of doubt, the development will not change the appearance of the building. This application will not change the physical use of the building; it only changes the allowance for the tannery to process third party hides.

8 IMPACT ON HIGHWAYS

- 8.1 The building is serviced by an existing access. This will continue to be used with no changes.
- 8.2 The proposed development will present a minor intensification of existing traffic movements at the yard. A delivery of hides in a single transit van will come monthly at most. The existing yard provides more than sufficient room for turning and manoeuvring as well as sufficient parking.

9 IMPACT ON ECOLOGY

- 9.1 The development will have no impact on ecology given the current use of the building.

10 IMPACT ON LANDSCAPE

- 10.1 The development will not increase any built form and therefore will have no impact on the already accepted property. Furthermore, the development is within an existing farmstead and therefore already accepted.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The proposed development seeks permission for applicants to use the existing building for a non-profit micro tannery using traditional tree bark tanning techniques.
- 11.2 The proposal is of a commensurate scale to the existing enterprise and will continue to be managed and operated by the applicant. The requirement to outsource some of the hides from local farms ensures the micro tannery can continue to be viable to the applicant.
- 11.3 The purpose of the development is to retain the knowledge of heritage craftsmanship, educate on regenerative agriculture and promote the sustainable movement of farm to fibre.
- 11.4 The proposal accords with the Wiltshire Core Strategy, in particular Core Policies 48, 58 and 34 and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024, as amended 2025), which together support sustainable rural development and the conservation of heritage assets.
- 11.5 In summary, the development represents sustainable and policy compliant proposal that will support the long-term viability of Great Cotmarsh Farm and the wider rural economy.