

Benchmark

Benchmark Development Planning Ltd
Chartered Town Planners & Development Advisers

PLEASE READ FIRST

Planning, design and access statement v.2 (20/04/26)

Barns at Oysters Farm, Gutch Common, Semley, Wiltshire SP7 9BE

1. Introduction and purpose of the statement

This Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) supports a full planning application to Wiltshire Council for:

“SELF BUILD conversion of agricultural barn (non-designated heritage asset) to C3 residential, demolition of modern dilapidated timber barn, minor alterations to retained barns, hard and soft landscaping, nutrient neutrality, Pre-Packaged Treatment Works (PPTW) and hard and soft landscaping.”

The site lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape and comprises a traditional L-plan range of agricultural buildings at Oysters Farm, identified in the submitted Heritage Statement as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA) of local interest.

The project is explicitly heritage-led and seeks to secure the long-term conservation of a building group that is currently in deteriorating condition and qualifies as a “building at risk”.

This Statement:

- **Explains the site and its context**, including the National Landscape setting.
 - **Summarises the heritage significance and condition** of the barns and the heritage-led design response.
 - **Sets out the proposed development and design rationale** (use, amount, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping).
 - **Addresses access, drainage and nutrient neutrality**, including the proposed PPTW and phosphorous credit purchase.
 - **Covers ecology and biodiversity**, recognising the self-build exemption from mandatory BNG while still providing proportionate enhancements and mitigation.
 - **Assesses the proposal against the NPPF and the development plan**, including heritage and landscape policies.
-

2. Site, surroundings and planning context

2.1 The site and buildings

Oysters Farm lies in a rural location at Gutch Common, Semley, approximately 75 m north of the lane that passes to the south-east of the farmstead. The application site comprises:

- **An L-shaped range of traditional farm buildings**, including:
 - A small three-bay stone barn, probably 18th century in origin, constructed in coursed roughly dressed greensand with brick infill to the former threshing bay.
 - A late 19th-century brick cow house/stable range forming the main L-plan.
 - A shorter return wing to the south, also late 19th century, now in poor structural condition.
- **Later, largely utilitarian sheds**, including a mid-20th-century part open-sided shed attached to the east of the L-plan range and a separate corrugated metal shed to the north-east.

The Heritage Statement notes that:

"The farm building range at Oysters Farm is a L-shaped range of three distinct builds... At the west end is a stone-built three-bay barn... Attached to the north gable of the barn... is a late 19th century cow shed constructed in red brick which returns to the east at its northern end."

The buildings are unlisted and the site is not within a conservation area, but the range is recognised as a NDHA that contributes to local farmstead character and the historic landscape pattern of dispersed farmsteads.

2.2 Landscape and visual context

The site lies within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. The farmstead is visually contained:

- From the lane to the south-east, **mature trees and hedgerows heavily filter views**, with only minor glimpses of roofs and gables.
- A public footpath (SESE36 – see BEN 0002 rev A) runs across fields to the west and north-west, from which the **north elevation of the L-plan range and the stone barn are clearly visible**, with the modern house largely screened.

The Heritage Statement records:

"Looking back to the south-east, the north elevation of the buildings is clearly visible, the stone barn being clearly distinct from the red brick cow house range."

The proposal therefore needs to respect both the local farmstead character and the wider National Landscape, while acknowledging that the principal public views are from the footpath to the west and north-west. The landscape setting photographs included in the heritage report and the drone photographs (BEN 0003), all illustrate this point.

2.3 Planning policy context (most relevant – not exhaustive)

Key policy considerations include:

- **NPPF (2024):**
 - Paragraph 84(c) of the NPPF provides explicit support for development that involves “the **re-use of redundant and disused buildings**” where this would “**enhance their immediate setting.**”
 - Paragraph 208: identification and assessment of heritage significance and avoidance/minimisation of conflict.
 - Paragraph 216: balanced judgement for NDHAs having regard to the scale of harm and the asset's significance.
- **Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS):**
 - Core Policy 48 supports a thriving rural area by enabling appropriate forms of development outside settlement boundaries, including the **conversion and re-use of rural buildings**. For such proposals, the policy sets clear criteria. Buildings must be **structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding**, with only those extensions or modifications necessary to preserve their character. The resulting use must not detract from the **character or appearance of the landscape**, nor harm residential amenity. Adequate access and infrastructure must be achievable, and the site should have reasonable access to local services unless the proposal involves the **viable long-term safeguarding of a heritage asset**.
 - Core Policy 57 requires all development—including alterations and changes of use—to achieve a **high standard of design** that creates a strong sense of place by drawing on local context and reinforcing local distinctiveness. Proposals must respond positively to the **natural and historic environment**, relate well to their landscape setting, and retain or enhance important views. Existing landscape features such as trees, hedgerows and banks should be protected and strengthened to support biodiversity and integrate development into its surroundings.
 - The policy expects new development to reflect the **characteristics of the site and wider area**, including building form, scale, massing, materials and rooflines, ensuring that proposals sit comfortably within the townscape or landscape. It also requires development to be **sympathetic to and conserve historic buildings and historic landscapes**, and to make efficient use of land while respecting local character. Amenity, safety, adaptability, and high-quality materials and finishes are also central considerations.
 - Core Policy 58 requires development to **protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance** Wiltshire's historic environment. It applies to both designated and non-designated heritage assets, recognising their contribution to local character, identity and sense of place. While the policy gives particular emphasis to nationally significant assets—such as listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and historic

landscapes—it also explicitly safeguards **distinctive non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)** where they contribute to the historic environment.

- CP58 also encourages the sensitive re-use of heritage assets where this can deliver **social, cultural, economic or environmental benefits**, provided the approach is appropriate to the asset's significance and accords with Core Policy 57 on high-quality design. Importantly, the policy places a strong emphasis on **heritage assets at risk**, stating that such assets will be monitored and that development proposals which improve their condition will be supported. Engagement with statutory and local heritage consultees is expected.
 - **Draft Wiltshire Local Plan Review** (submitted October 2024):
 - Policy 99: Ensuring the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, including NDHAs, and supporting sensitive re-use of historic buildings.
 - **Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership Plan 2025–2030:**
 - This is the statutory Management Plan required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The **2025–2030 Management Plan has been formally adopted** by the relevant local authorities, including Wiltshire Council and Hampshire County Council.
 - The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (NL) Management Plan 2025–2030 is a statutory document that sets out the vision, policies and priorities for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, heritage, landscape character and special qualities of the National Landscape.
 - As Oysters Farm lies within the NL, the Management Plan is a material consideration and provides an important framework for assessing the suitability of the proposed heritage-led barn conversion.
 - A central theme of the Management Plan is the **protection and enhancement of historic landscape character, including the conservation of traditional farmsteads, rural vernacular buildings** and the dispersed settlement pattern that defines much of the Chase.
 - The Plan emphasises that the NL's cultural heritage is integral to its natural beauty, and that the **re-use of traditional rural buildings**—where undertaken sensitively and with a clear understanding of significance—can deliver substantial public benefits.
 - **Great weight** is to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. The NL places strong emphasis on **tranquillity, dark skies, biodiversity and the integration of development into the wider landscape**.
 - **Habitats Regulations (Regulation 63)** and nutrient neutrality requirements for the River Avon SAC.
-

3. Heritage significance, condition and heritage-led approach

3.1 Significance as a non-designated heritage asset

The Heritage Statement assesses the barns against Historic England's heritage values and the DCMS listing principles. In summary:

- **Archaeological interest:**
 - The stone barn is probably 18th century but has lost its original roof structure and retains few datable features; it has **minimal archaeological interest** in terms of fabric.
 - The late 19th-century cow house is a standard type with no notable archaeological interest.
 - Modern sheds have none.
- **Architectural interest:**
 - The L-plan range represents **modest traditional farm buildings** of several phases, reflecting a small mixed farm with limited arable and significant stock.
 - The range "contributes to the local farmstead character and so has a moderate level of architectural interest in a local context."
 - The barn is clearly vernacular but, due to loss of the historic roof, does not merit statutory listing; the late 19th-century cow shed also falls below listing thresholds.
- **Historic interest:**
 - The buildings illustrate the historic pattern of **dispersed farmsteads and small settlement foci** within Semley parish.
 - Their form, size and materials "reflect the agricultural history of the area and so have a relatively high degree of historic interest and contribute to the character of the landscape."

The range is therefore a NDHA of **moderate architectural and relatively high historic interest in a local context**, but not of national significance.

3.2 Condition and "building at risk"

The Heritage Statement records significant structural issues:

- A **substantial vertical crack** from eaves to ground at the north-west corner of the barn, with missing stone and a large brick buttress on the north elevation indicating historic movement.
- **Partial collapse of the roof** to the shorter arm of the L-plan and outward lean of the east wall.
- General deterioration of fabric and roofs.

It concludes:

“Overall, it is evident that the farm building range would qualify as being regarded as a Building at Risk.”

Without intervention and a viable new use, there is a real risk of progressive loss of this NDHA and its contribution to the landscape.

NB. The submitted Structural **Engineer’s Report** (AWA) reaches a complementary conclusion: the barns are **capable of conversion without major rebuilding**, provided that identified repairs—roof reinstatement, helibar stitching, repointing, stabilisation of the NW corner, and removal of invasive vegetation—are undertaken. The engineer confirms that the buildings remain fundamentally sound: “**the barns are capable of conversion without major re-building,**” and that a heritage-led scheme is “**very appropriate.**”

3.3 Heritage-led design principles

The scheme has been consciously shaped around the findings of the Heritage Statement and Historic England Advice Note 12:

- **Retain and repair the key historic elements**—the three-bay stone barn and the principal late 19th-century cow house range—rather than replace them.
- **Minimise intervention in significant fabric**, especially externally on the yard-facing elevations.
- **Use the historic plan form to structure the new dwelling**, avoiding over-subdivision and respecting the legibility of the barn and cow house.
- **Locate additional accommodation in the footprint of the modern shed**, thereby taking pressure off the historic fabric.
- **Use materials and details that reinforce the agricultural character**, including reinstatement of barn threshing openings and replacement of inappropriate roofing.

The Heritage Statement concludes that the proposals represent a “**conservation led approach**” that conserves the fabric and significance of the NDHA and accords with CP48, 57 and 58 and Policy 99.

4. The proposed development and design rationale

4.1 Description of development

The proposal comprises:

- **Conversion of the existing L-plan range to a single C3 dwelling** (self-build).
- **Demolition of the modern, dilapidated timber/metal shed** attached to the east of the range (see proposed demolition and alteration plan).
- **Construction of a replacement structure on the shed footprint**, providing covered parking and a modest bedroom suite, designed in a simple, agricultural idiom.
- **Internal re-ordering** of the barn and cow house to create living, kitchen/dining/family, bedroom and ancillary spaces.
- **External works and landscaping**, including a carefully designed garden, native hedging, wildflower meadow and permeable surfacing.
- **Installation of a Pre-Packaged Treatment Works (PPTW)** (Graf One2Clean) and associated drainage, designed to meet nutrient neutrality requirements.

4.2 Use and amount

- **Use:** Single C3 dwelling, self-build, re-using an existing rural building in accordance with national and local policy support for such conversions.
- **Amount:** The scheme works almost entirely within the existing built envelope, with the only “new” volume being the replacement of the modern shed with a more coherent, lower-impact structure. There is no material intensification of built form in the landscape.

4.3 Layout and internal arrangement

The internal layout follows the historic structure:

- **Stone barn:** Retained as a single, double-height (or visually generous) living space, with later blockwork partitions removed to restore the original three-bay volume. This is the principal living area and the heart of the dwelling.
- **Stable bay adjacent to the barn:** Used as a study with a circulation route along the south side; new openings in the barn gable and the partition wall provide connection while respecting existing fabric.
- **Main cow shed range (north):** Forms the kitchen, dining and family space, largely open-plan to preserve the sense of a single volume, with the eastern end subdivided for a boot room and larder off an entrance hall (following removal of a modern blockwork wall).
- **Return wing (south):** Subdivided to provide a bedroom with ensuite and a corridor leading to the later southern bay, which becomes a second bedroom.
- **Replacement shed structure:** Provides an additional bedroom suite and covered parking, thereby avoiding over-subdivision of the historic barns.

This arrangement maintains the legibility of the original agricultural functions while delivering a practical, modern dwelling.

4.4 Scale and appearance

Barn and cow house range

- **Barn:**
 - Unblocking of the former threshing bays and insertion of high-quality glazing in a manner typical of sensitive barn conversions.
 - Replacement of the existing concrete fibre sheeting with **plain clay tiles**, significantly improving the building's appearance and better reflecting local vernacular.
- **Cow house range:**
 - **Yard-side elevations are left largely unchanged**, preserving the existing fenestration and character.
 - On the **north (rear) elevation**, new openings are introduced to provide natural light and views, using metal-framed windows of simple, non-domestic character. One larger glazed area serves the eastern part of the building. Given the historic presence of a feeding passage along this wall, such openings are not inherently uncharacteristic.

Replacement structure

- The replacement for the modern shed is designed as a **simple, subservient building**, using materials and proportions that read as a contemporary but respectful agricultural structure, visually lighter and more coherent than the existing dilapidated shed.

Overall, the external changes are **modest, legible and sympathetic**, enhancing the appearance of the NDHA and its contribution to the National Landscape.

4.5 Landscaping

The submitted landscape plan provides a carefully considered scheme that:

- Retains existing hedgerows and key trees.
- Introduces **native hedging and new native trees** (e.g. *Fagus sylvatica*, *Carpinus betulus*, *Acer campestre*) to reinforce screening and local character.
- Provides **diverse wildflower meadow** areas to “seamlessly blend the garden with the countryside”.
- Uses rustic **permeable surfaces** in place of extensive concrete, reducing visual impact and supporting SuDS principles.
- Incorporates structured planting beds with shrubs, perennials and grasses to soften built edges and integrate the dwelling into its setting.

The landscape strategy is explicitly rural, low-key and ecological in tone, aligning with the National Landscape's emphasis on landscape character and biodiversity.

5. Access

5.1 Vehicular access and parking

- Vehicular access is via the existing concrete farm track from the lane to the south-east; no new access onto the highway is required.
- Parking and turning are accommodated within the yard and the replacement shed structure, avoiding visual clutter and maintaining the farmstead character.
- Surfacing is rationalised and, where appropriate, replaced with permeable gravel to reduce run-off and soften the appearance.

5.2 Pedestrian access and inclusivity

- The dwelling is accessed from the yard, with level or gently graded approaches designed to provide reasonable access for all users, subject to the constraints of the historic fabric.
- Internal layouts are arranged to provide, where possible, **step-free circulation at ground floor**, with key living spaces and at least one bedroom and bathroom at this level, consistent with inclusive design principles in a converted rural building.

6. Drainage, PPTW and nutrient neutrality

6.1 Foul drainage and PPTW

The development will be served by a **Graf One2Clean** pre-packaged treatment plant (PPTW), selected as the "standard" option considering Wiltshire Council's practice and the need for enhanced nutrient removal.

Key characteristics (from the manufacturer's documentation) include:

- A **5/6-person plant**, correctly and slightly oversized for the proposed dwelling.
- Fully biological SBR technology with no mechanical or electrical components in the wastewater.
- Certified performance achieving **1.6 mg TP/litre without chemical additives**, and very high removal rates for BOD, COD and suspended solids.

The Drainage and PPTW Summary Note confirms that:

- The PPTW is appropriately sized.
- Its performance demonstrates **enhanced nutrient removal**.

Treated effluent will be discharged to ground via an appropriate infiltration system, designed in accordance with Building Regulations and relevant standards.

6.2 Nutrient neutrality and River Avon SAC

The site lies within the Hampshire Avon catchment, where the River Avon SAC is in unfavourable condition due to excess phosphorous. Under Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations, Wiltshire Council must ensure that new residential development is nutrient neutral.

The Nutrient Statement uses the latest Natural England Phosphorous Calculator and the following key assumptions:

- **1 new dwelling**, average occupancy 2.4 persons.
- **Wastewater generation**: 120 litres/person/day.
- **Wastewater treatment**: Graf One2Clean PPTW, achieving 1.6 mg TP/litre.
- **Land use**: Residential urban land within the existing curtilage; **no change in land use** (0.18 ha before and after development).

The calculator outputs:

- **Annual wastewater TP load** from the new dwelling: 0.17 kg TP/year.
- **Net land use TP change**: 0.00 kg TP/year (no change in land use).
- **Total TP budget with 20% buffer**: 0.20 kg TP/year.

The Nutrient Statement concludes:

"The barn conversion will result in a net increase of 0.2 kg TP per year once occupied, including the 20% precautionary buffer... To offset the calculated increase, 0.2 phosphorous credits will be purchased from WC. These will be secured by planning condition."

Wiltshire Council operates a phosphorous credit scheme for planned development, and officers have confirmed its availability for this project. With the purchase of 0.2 credits secured by condition or legal agreement, the development will **not adversely affect the integrity of the River Avon SAC**, alone or in combination, and a positive appropriate assessment can be reached.

7. Ecology and biodiversity

7.1 Baseline and Survey Findings

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal / Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal and Barn Owl Survey has been carried out by KP Ecology in support of the application. The survey assessed the buildings and site for bats, barn owls, nesting birds and other protected species, together with the ecological context of the site.

The ecology report concludes that the application site does **not** contain protected species or protected habitats within the development boundary. In particular:

- the buildings have **negligible bat roost potential** and no bats or evidence of bats were observed;

- there were **no signs of barn owls** or of nesting birds using the buildings at the time of survey;
- there was **no evidence of badgers** and no suitable habitat on site;
- the area affected by the works does **not offer suitable habitat for great crested newts, other amphibians or reptiles**; and
- there are no protected or notable habitats within the application site.

The report also records that the site lies within a wider ecologically sensitive landscape, including Gutch Common SSSI / Local Wildlife Site within about 400m and a number of other designated sites and protected species records within 1km. However, the proposed development is confined to the existing farmstead and its immediate setting, and the ecologist concludes that the proposal will not adversely affect those interests.

7.2 Site context and likely effects of the development

The ecological report describes the site as an existing hardstanding farmyard with the retained barns and adjoining improved grassland. Boundary trees lie to the north-east but are **outside** the development boundary. The hornbeam hedge along the access track is also **outside** the development boundary and will not be removed or directly affected by the proposal. The improved grassland to the north and west of Barn 1 is not proposed for removal.

The proposed development is a heritage-led conversion of the existing barn range with demolition of the modern dilapidated timber barn, together with hard and soft landscaping. On the basis of the ecology survey, the likely ecological effects are limited and can be appropriately managed through modest mitigation and enhancement. The proposal does not involve the loss of any important habitat within the red line, nor does it affect the nearby boundary trees or other off-site vegetation which provide wider ecological function.

7.3 Mitigation and precautionary measures

The ecology report identifies only limited mitigation requirements.

First, the hedge along the access track is to be **protected during works by Heras fencing**. Secondly, although no bats, barn owls or nesting birds were found during survey, the ecologist advises that the barns should be **checked prior to commencement of works** to ensure that nesting birds or other protected species have not taken up residence since the survey.

The report confirms that **no further survey work is required**, provided that work commences within **two years of the report**.

7.4 Biodiversity enhancements

Although the proposal is for a **self-build dwelling** and is therefore treated in the ecology report as **exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain**, the scheme nevertheless includes proportionate biodiversity enhancements. These include:

- **two external woodcrete bat boxes**;
- **a sparrow terrace / bird box provision**; and

- a broader landscape scheme including approximately **100m of native hedge planting**, a **wildflower meadow**, and additional native trees and pollinator-friendly planting.

The Ecology Report also notes that, following ecological advice, additional woodcrete bat and bird boxes are proposed in adjacent trees / woodland as part of the wider landscaping proposals. These measures provide a sensible enhancement package in the context of a conversion scheme of this kind.

7.5 Overall ecology conclusion

The submitted ecology evidence demonstrates that the application site itself does not support protected species or protected habitats that would be harmed by the proposal. The barns have negligible bat roost potential; no bats, barn owls or nesting birds were found in the buildings at the time of survey; and no further surveys are required, subject to timely implementation and pre-commencement checks. With the protection of the off-site hedge during works and the proposed bat, bird and landscaping enhancements, the scheme is ecologically acceptable and accords with the biodiversity objectives of the NPPF and development plan policy.

8. Self-build and Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposal is a **self-build dwelling**, falling within the category of development currently exempt from mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain under national regulations. There is therefore **no requirement for a formal BNG metric or off-site compensation**.

However, the applicant has chosen to go beyond the minimum by:

- Adopting a **fabric-first, re-use-first approach**, avoiding the embodied carbon and land take of a new-build dwelling.
- Delivering the **landscape and ecological enhancements** described above.

This aligns with the spirit of BNG and demonstrates a responsible, long-term stewardship approach to the site.

9. Planning policy assessment and overall planning balance

9.1 Heritage and historic environment

- The barns are a NDHA of local significance.
- The proposal **secures their repair and long-term viable use**, addressing their “building at risk” status.
- External alterations are modest and sympathetic; the most significant space—the stone barn—is retained as a single volume.
- The scheme is explicitly **heritage-led** and accords with NPPF paragraphs 208 and 216, WCS CP58 and Draft Policy 99, which support the sensitive re-use of historic buildings and the conservation of NDHAs.
- National Guidance supports this proposal:

Paragraph 84(c) of the NPPF provides explicit support for development that involves “the **re-use of redundant and disused buildings**” where this would “**enhance their immediate setting**.” This policy is directly engaged in the present case.

The barns at Oysters Farm are no longer required for agricultural purposes, are in deteriorating condition, and—as the Heritage Statement confirms—qualify as a **building at risk**. Their sensitive conversion to a single dwelling represents precisely the form of positive, conservation-minded re-use envisaged by paragraph 84(c).

This support sits alongside the NPPF’s wider heritage objectives, which encourage the **viable re-use of heritage assets** as a means of securing their long-term conservation.

Although the barns are non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 216 requires decision-makers to apply a balanced judgement having regard to their significance and the scale of any harm. Here, the proposals deliver clear heritage benefits: repair of failing fabric, reinstatement of lost features, removal of intrusive modern structures, and a design approach that enhances the farmstead’s contribution to the Cranborne Chase National Landscape.

Taken together, NPPF paragraphs 84(c), 208 and 216 strongly support the principle of this heritage-led re-use as a sustainable and landscape-enhancing form of rural development.

- County-wide policies also support this proposal:

Core Policy 48 supports a thriving rural area by enabling appropriate forms of development outside settlement boundaries, including the **conversion and re-use of rural buildings**. For such proposals, the policy sets clear criteria. Buildings must be **structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding**, with only those extensions or modifications necessary to preserve their character. The resulting use must not detract from the **character or appearance of the landscape**, nor harm residential amenity. Adequate access and infrastructure must be achievable, and the site should have reasonable access to local services unless the proposal involves the **viable long-term safeguarding of a heritage asset**.

Where employment, tourism, cultural or community uses are not practical, **residential conversion may be appropriate**, particularly in isolated locations where national policy supports the re-use of redundant or disused buildings.

The barns at Oysters Farm meet the core requirements of CP48. The Heritage and Structural Statements confirm they are **structurally sound but at risk**, and capable of conversion without major rebuilding.

This heritage-led scheme preserves their character, removes intrusive modern structures, and enhances the landscape setting.

The proposal therefore accords with CP48's explicit support for the **re-use of rural and heritage assets**, securing their long-term conservation through a viable residential use.

- We also accord with the County-wide Heritage Policy CP58:

Core Policy 58 requires development to **protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance** Wiltshire's historic environment. It applies to both designated and non-designated heritage assets, recognising their contribution to local character, identity and sense of place. While the policy gives particular emphasis to nationally significant assets—such as listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and historic landscapes—it also explicitly safeguards **distinctive non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)** where they contribute to the historic environment.

CP58 encourages the sensitive re-use of heritage assets where this can deliver **social, cultural, economic or environmental benefits**, provided the approach is appropriate to the asset's significance and accords with Core Policy 57 on high-quality design.

Importantly, the policy places a strong emphasis on **heritage assets at risk**, stating that such assets will be monitored and that development proposals which improve their condition will be supported. Engagement with statutory and local heritage consultees is expected.

The barns at Oysters Farm fall squarely within this policy framework.

They are a NDHA of local historic interest, structurally sound but clearly **at risk**, and the heritage-led scheme secures their repair, reinstates lost features, removes intrusive modern structures and enhances their setting.

The proposal therefore accords fully with CP58's objective of ensuring the **long-term conservation and enhancement** of Wiltshire's historic environment.

- The proposal is also a ringing endorsement of design policy CP 57:

Core Policy 57 requires all development—including alterations and changes of use—to achieve a **high standard of design** that creates a strong sense of place by drawing on local context and reinforcing local distinctiveness. Proposals must respond positively to the **natural and historic environment**, relate well to their landscape setting, and retain or enhance important views.

Existing landscape features such as trees, hedgerows and banks should be protected and strengthened to support biodiversity and integrate development into its surroundings.

The policy expects new development to reflect the **characteristics of the site and wider area**, including building form, scale, massing, materials and rooflines, ensuring that proposals sit comfortably within the townscape or landscape. It also requires development to be **sympathetic to and conserve historic buildings and historic landscapes**, and to make efficient use of land while respecting local character. Amenity, safety, adaptability, and high-quality materials and finishes are also central considerations.

The heritage-led conversion at Oysters Farm accords closely with CP57.

The design responds directly to the **rustic agricultural character** of the NDHA, conserves its historic fabric, reinstates lost features, and removes intrusive modern structures.

The landscape strategy strengthens hedgerows, introduces native planting and enhances the site's relationship with the **Cranborne Chase National Landscape**, delivering a sensitive and contextually grounded regeneration.

9.2 Landscape and National Landscape

- The proposal works within the existing built envelope, replacing a **visually poor modern shed** with a more coherent, agricultural-style structure.
- Views from the public footpath are improved by the sensitive repair (not domestication) of the barns and the removal of dilapidated structures.
- The landscape scheme strengthens hedgerows, introduces native trees and wildflower meadow, and reduces hard surfacing.

The development therefore **conserves and enhances the character and appearance of the Cranborne Chase National Landscape**, to which great weight must be given.

More specifically, The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (NL) Management Plan 2025–2030 is a statutory document that sets out the vision, policies and priorities for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, heritage, landscape character and special qualities of the National Landscape.

As Oysters Farm lies within the NL, the Management Plan is a material consideration and provides an important framework for assessing the suitability of the proposed heritage-led barn conversion.

A central theme of the Management Plan is the **protection and enhancement of historic landscape character**, including the conservation of traditional farmsteads, rural vernacular buildings and the dispersed settlement pattern that defines much of the Chase.

The Plan emphasises that the NL's cultural heritage is integral to its natural beauty, and that the **re-use of traditional rural buildings**—where undertaken sensitively and with a clear understanding of significance—can deliver substantial public benefits.

This aligns directly with the Heritage Statement's conclusion that the barns at Oysters Farm are a **non-designated heritage asset of local historic interest**, currently in deteriorating condition and qualifying as a “building at risk”.

The Management Plan also highlights the importance of **landscape-appropriate design**, the use of traditional materials, and the avoidance of suburbanising influences.

The proposed scheme responds precisely to these principles: it retains the historic plan form, reinstates lost features such as the barn's threshing openings, replaces inappropriate modern materials with plain clay tiles, and removes intrusive 20th-century sheds. The new structure on the footprint of the dilapidated shed is deliberately modest and agricultural in character, ensuring the farmstead continues to read as a coherent rural group.

The NL places strong emphasis on **tranquillity, dark skies, biodiversity and the integration of development into the wider landscape**. The landscape strategy—native hedging, wildflower meadow, permeable gravel, and the retention of existing trees—supports these aims and softens the visual impact of the yard.

The proposal does not introduce external lighting, additional traffic or activity that would erode tranquillity or dark skies.

Crucially, the Management Plan encourages development that **secures the long-term conservation of heritage assets**, particularly where they are at risk.

The proposal achieves exactly that: it repairs failing fabric, reinstates vernacular character, and provides a viable long-term use that prevents further decay.

Taken together, the scheme accords strongly with the Management Plan's objectives. It conserves and enhances the NL's historic environment, strengthens landscape character, and delivers a sensitive, context-appropriate re-use of a rural heritage asset.

9.3 Housing, rural re-use and self-build

- The scheme delivers a **single self-build dwelling** through the re-use of existing rural buildings, consistent with national and local policy support for such conversions.
- It makes a small but positive contribution to housing supply and self-build opportunities in Wiltshire, without new encroachment into open countryside.

9.4 Ecology and Habitats Regulations

- The submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal confirms that the application site does not contain protected species or protected habitats that would be harmed by the proposal. The buildings have negligible bat roost potential; no bats, barn owls or nesting birds were found in the buildings at the time of survey; and no evidence was found of badgers, reptiles, great crested newts or other amphibians on the site. No further survey work is required, provided works commence within two years of the report, subject to pre-commencement checks for nesting birds and any protected species that may subsequently take up residence.
 - The ecology report also confirms that the proposal will not affect the boundary trees or other vegetation outside the development boundary, and that the hedge along the access track will be protected during works. The scheme includes biodiversity enhancements, including bat boxes, bird boxes / sparrow terrace, native hedge planting, wildflower meadow and pollinator-friendly landscaping.
 - With the Graf One2Clean PPTW and the purchase of 0.2 phosphorous credits, the development is nutrient neutral in relation to the River Avon SAC and can pass an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations.
-

10. Conclusion

This application presents a **carefully considered, heritage-led conversion** of a non-designated heritage asset within the Cranborne Chase National Landscape. It:

- **Repairs and secures a building at risk**, conserving its architectural and historic interest and its contribution to the local farmed landscape.
- **Respects and enhances the National Landscape**, replacing poor-quality modern structures with a modest, sympathetic replacement and a sensitive landscape scheme.
- **Delivers a self-build dwelling** through the re-use of existing buildings, in line with national and local policy.
- **Achieves nutrient neutrality** for the River Avon SAC through a high-performance PPTW and the purchase of phosphorous credits.
- Is supported by a Preliminary **Ecological** Appraisal confirming negligible bat roost potential, no evidence of protected species or protected habitats within the development site, and no need for further survey work subject to timely commencement and pre-commencement checks; and provides proportionate biodiversity enhancements notwithstanding the self-build exemption from mandatory BNG.

In overall terms, the proposal accords with the NPPF, the Wiltshire Core Strategy and emerging local policy. The submitted heritage, ecology, drainage and nutrient neutrality material demonstrates that the development secures the long-term conservation of a non-designated heritage asset at risk, preserves the character and appearance of the National Landscape, is ecologically acceptable, and can proceed without adverse effect on the integrity of the River Avon SAC. The identified public benefits clearly outweigh any limited heritage or landscape harm.

Planning permission is therefore respectfully sought.

Richard Greenwood BA Hons BPI MRTPI

Director

END