

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

23rd April 2026

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Application No: **PL/2026/01794 (LBC) & PL/2026/01506 (PP)**
Demolition of redundant stone barns; internal and external alterations to farmhouse including erection of replacement conservatory, new car port and associated boundary treatment.
Southview Farm, Drynham Road, Trowbridge

Please find following comments in respect of the above application(s).

Recommendations:

☐	No comment
☐	Support in principle subject to amendments to the scheme (as set out below)
☒	Support subject to conditions (as set out below)
☐	Object (for reasons set out below)
☐	No objections

Scope of comments: the following comments relate to the built historic environment.

Policy: From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 (LBC) and 66 (PP) require that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Section 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. Paragraphs 207-9 of the NPPF require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved. Paragraph 203 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. Proposals are required to "demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire.

The Council's Core Strategy Policy CP58 'Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment' requires that "designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance."

Historic England Advice Note 2 – Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for PP and LBC.

Site and assets considered: Southview Farm is a C19th farmhouse located to the south of Trowbridge. It remained at the edge of the town with open fields around, curtailed only by the railway line to the east, until the end of the C19 but speculative housing development has gradually spread outwards from the core of the town to the point where it is now largely surrounded by housing. The remaining setting of the farmhouse, which contributes to the understanding of the building as a former farmhouse, includes the range of curtilage listed former farm buildings to the north and the open land around and to the south of the building. We have previously advised that we consider that the range of outbuildings should be treated as part of the curtilage unless specific evidence is provided (for example in the form of ownership details) to suggest otherwise. So far as I am aware no evidence has been provided.

Proposal: the current application follows previous approvals for the demolition of the single storey range of buildings to the north and their replacement with a convenience retail store and for the conversion of the farmhouse and erection of an additional building for office use as a co-working hub and children's nursery with a residential unit above. On this occasion the proposals for the farmhouse itself are scaled back and propose its retention as a single dwelling with a single storey extension. The outbuildings will be demolished as previously and are to be replaced by a children's nursery which is now a standalone facility.

Relevant planning history: as noted above, the applications follow previous consents granted in 2024 which remain extant. Outline consent has been granted (19/11459/OUT) for residential development on adjacent land which previously formed the agricultural holding related to the farm. Regrettably, whilst the initial indicative masterplan left a small landscaped plot immediately to the south of the farmhouse and adjacent to the access road to the development, it is understood that more recent, approved, iterations indicate that housing will extend close to the east of the building, in conflict with Conservation advice and the earlier efforts of the current Case Officer. It is therefore established that the remaining agricultural setting of the farmhouse is due to be lost to suburban development.

Issues: impact on the character, appearance and setting of the listed building and its curtilage outbuildings.

Assessment: Paragraph 207 requires that applicants describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This should include sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and its setting and the potential impact of any proposals on that significance. In this case, whilst the applications are accompanied by a "Heritage Statement" which provides an overview of the site, the document provides only a cursory description of the farmhouse itself, partly in view of the poor condition of the building at the time that it was written. However, paragraph 208 also provides for the local planning authority to make its own assessment of impact and the following heritage recommendations are offered on this basis with the assistance of previous site visits and records.

The NPPF defines significance as the "value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be **archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic**. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting." Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place. In this case the significance of the building lies largely with its historic fabric and architecture - its form, layout, design and materials which comprise a good example of a typical mid-C19 farmhouse in the area and from the contribution it makes with its remaining farmstead, to the understanding and experience of the historic agricultural landscape which surrounded and served the growing town of Trowbridge in the C19.

I last viewed the building in detail some years ago (internally in 2018 from when I have some record photographs) when it was already in a poor state of repair. By 2024 its condition had significantly worsened and I have no doubt that this decline has continued. At that time it was clear that the owners had done little to attempt to protect the building, repair it following thefts and vandalism or to prevent further deterioration.

The remaining outbuildings were also in a very poor state of repair and, previously, I remain unsurprised that the conclusion have been reached that their repair and re-use is likely to effectively involve their reconstruction rather than a conservative repair. It is clear that the farmhouse urgently needs to be brought back into use to secure its repair and safeguard its remaining special interest. In considering the current proposals, paragraph 209 of the NPPF should be borne in mind which advises that "Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision".

Principle of use: previous proposals for a change of use for the house, facilitated by fairly significant extensions, have been replaced by retention in single residential use. When a designated heritage asset becomes redundant it is important that a new use be found quickly to ensure that the asset continues to be maintained and secured for the future and, in the majority of cases it is acknowledged that continuation in a similar use will usually offer the best chances of sustaining the asset whilst limiting any further harm which might result. The proposals have now been amended so that this is the case and the proposals have the potential to retain much of the significance of the building.

Demolition of the outbuildings – despite what the Heritage Statement suggests, the current condition of the outbuildings is the responsibility of the owners and loss of the curtilage listed former farm buildings which (albeit now in extremely poor and largely unsalvageable condition) did contribute to the setting and understanding of the farmhouse, will cause some harm to the setting of the farmhouse. This element of the development has already been permitted in recognition of the deteriorated state of the buildings and I note that proposals to salvage and re-use as much of the stone as possible have been repeated – these provide some small mitigation for the loss and should be conditioned to ensure that they are carried through.

Conversion of the Farmhouse – we have maintained the view that any conversion or re-use would need to be low-key, retaining architectural features internally and externally and minimising the impact from subdivision and the requirements for the provision of services and fire escape etc. in accordance with section 16 of the Act. The current proposals largely maintain the building in its historic state, barring the removal of the rear extension, which was of limited interest and, in any case, previously approved.

However, very limited detail is provided in respect of the nature of the repairs that are required. Taking into account the Section 16 requirement to preserve the listed building and its features, we should be expecting the restoration to be comprehensive and carried out in traditional materials and to a high quality to restore the remaining significance of the building which has largely been lost as a result of the recent neglect. Ideally an outline repair schedule indicating a good standard of conservation repair would have been submitted at this stage and followed by a more detail repair schedule – in the absence of this upfront, it should be conditioned as previously to allow us to assess and control the details.

Rear garage/dining room extension – the proposed extension reduces the scale and impact of the previous proposals and the relatively low-key contemporary approach is appropriately subservient and acceptable in this domestic location. I note that the timber cladding is annotated as being "Dark Green" and this suggests some kind of finish which will hopefully impart a domestic rather than an agricultural character and which would be appropriate. Final details will, however, be required to provide certainty and should be conditioned.

Nursery – the proposed children's nursery has now been relocated to the new buildings to be constructed in the place of the former agricultural buildings. Original advice on the site noted that a bespoke recreation of the outbuildings (at that point to serve as a convenience store) could maintain the layout and essence of the group of buildings and continue to contribute to understanding of the site "provided that the form and scale of the buildings and the landscaping is as indicated in the pre-app using similar proportions, scale and materiality to the traditional outbuildings and maintaining solid gables to the road". Whilst the design has been amended, this has largely been carried through and the double gable approach is reasonably successful in maintaining something of the proportions of such buildings. As previously, final details of materials and architectural detailing etc. would need to be carefully controlled to avoid later erosion of the quality of the scheme.

As previously the building is pushed back into the site and the need for frontage parking remains regrettable. However, the roadside boundary is maintained from the previous scheme and assists in providing some enclosure of the parking area at least. The revised scheme also allows for a less intensive use to the rear of the site and the replacement of the service yard with gardens/amenity space to serve the nursery and farmhouse is very welcome. The need for high timber fences around the play areas etc. to meet safeguarding requirements, is regrettable – these will have a hard-edged, modern suburban character which, in my view, will be inappropriate in this context and fail to positively enhance the setting of the listed building. Ideally a more bespoke solution would be sought which could echo the contemporary character of the extension to the farmhouse and new build nursery. However, I note that these are largely to the rear of the site and that the proposed landscaping will mitigate their impact to an extent.

Summary & conclusion: The NPPF confirms that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It makes clear that any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification. In this case it is acknowledged that the buildings have reached a critical stage. The revision of proposals for the farmhouse to use as a single dwelling represent a significant improvement which will limit the impact on the principal building. Proposals for the wider site overall appear to have potential to provide an appropriate use whilst limiting the adverse impact on the listed farmhouse and its setting such that the overall impacts could be considered as broadly neutral with any minor harm from the siting of a large new non-agricultural building (and associated car parking, access and fencing etc.) adjacent to the farmhouse, being offset by the benefits of good design and the introduction of a viable use for the site as a whole.

As a result, the requirements of current conservation legislation, policy or guidance are considered to be met and I have no objection to the approval of the applications. However, the final detail of the scheme remains essential to its success and I would therefore suggest that these should be clearly conditioned and carefully controlled.

Conditions: should include the following

LBC

- A repair schedule should be required to be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of any works for the repair or alteration of the listed building;
- Details of all proposed new materials, including their finishes, are required;
- Joinery details for all new windows and external doors to the listed building and extensions are required;
- All new/replacement rainwater goods to the listed building should be painted cast metal.

Planning permission:

- Details of all proposed new materials, including those for hard surfacing, are required;
- A sample panel should be constructed to allow the detailed appearance of the proposed new/replacement stone walling to be controlled.