

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/00597
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	The Estate Office, The Square, Ramsbury, Marlborough, SN8 2PE
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Retrospective change of use from office to a dwelling house. (Class E to residential). No changes externally - minor revisions internally.
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site is a two storey, brick built building fronting directly onto The Square, in Ramsbury. Its current authorized use is as an Office (Class E), but has recently been vacated by the tenants, who have relocated to Marlborough.

The site is located within the heart of the village and within the designated Conservation Area. Within the immediate vicinity of the site are various Listed Buildings. The site is bounded on all sides by existing building form comprising of a mix of various commercial and residential uses

The site is also located within the North Wessex Down National Landscape.

PROPOSAL

This proposal is a full planning application proposing a change of use from business Use Class E to that of Use Class C3, residential. No external changes are proposed with only the removal of the former, wall mounted signboard of the previous occupants having already been undertaken. Minor internal changes are proposed in terms of partition walls and internal installations of residential kitchen and bathroom facilities.

PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
17/02325/FUL - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 7/6/2017 – Proposed single storey extension to the rear of the property to provide additional office space. Approved with Conditions
Adjacent Property at No 7 The Square. Ramsbury, SN8 2PE PL/2024/08967 - Change of use from Class E to a single residential dwelling with the insertion of rooflights to the front elevation and a dormer window to the rear. Approved with Conditions

There is extensive planning history on the site and the adjoining and adjacent properties. However, the most recent and relevant to this particular building and application are referenced above.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Legislation:

National Planning Policy:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Design Guide

Development Plan:

The development plan for Wiltshire comprises the *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)* (adopted January 2015) and any made neighbourhood plans, which remains the principal statutory planning document guiding development across the county. In line with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Though the development plan is considered as a whole, those parts deemed to be particularly relevant to this application are listed below:

The adopted *Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS)*, with particular regard to:

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy;
- Core Policy 3 Infrastructure Requirements;
- Core Policy 14 Spatial Strategy: Marlborough Community Area
- Core Policy 35 Existing Employment Land
- Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life
- Core Policy 49 Protection of Rural Services and Facilities
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport;
- Core Policy 62 Development Impacts on the Transport Network;

Draft Wiltshire Local Plan Policies

The examination of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan has been paused and the weight to be afforded to any part of the emerging plan can be no more than very limited. A decision on how to proceed will be made by the Council in May 2026.

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, adopted 2015 - including the Car Parking Strategy and Cycling Strategy, adopted 2015

- North Wessex down AONB Management Plan (2019-2024)

ISSUES

The main issues that need to be addressed in this case include:

- The Principle of Development
- Heritage Impacts, Character, Appearance and Design
- Neighbouring Amenity
- Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology
- Access, Parking and Highway Safety

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council: No Objection

WCC Highways: No objection subject to conditions

WCC Conservation: No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), the application was publicised by way of:

- Neighbour notification letters sent to adjoining and nearby properties;
- A site notice displayed near the site;

These methods were used to inform interested parties and provide a period of 21 days for comments to be submitted.

As a result on the above referenced publicity, no letters of representation or comments were received.

ASSESSMENT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

In accordance with this statutory requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and, where applicable, any made Neighbourhood Plans. Consideration has also been given to the

policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as a material consideration in the assessment.

Principle of Development

The site is located within the defined settlement boundary of the larger village of Ramsbury, which is part of the Marlborough Community Area. WCS policies 1 and 14 set out a settlement and spatial strategy for the principle of development in large villages, which is considered acceptable but is limited to that needed to help meet the housing needs of the settlement.

Class MA of the amended General Permitted Development Order allows for development consisting of the change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E (commercial, business and service) of Schedule 2 to the Use Classes Order, to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of Schedule 1 to that Order, subject to a number of limitations and exclusions.

In this instance, the due to the location of the building within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, class MA does not apply, and as such a full application has been submitted.

Core Policy 49, pertains to loss of rural services and community facilities, however, the glossary contained within the WCS defines a community facility as 'local services and facilities that benefit the community such as shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.' The use class order has changed since the WCS was written and the former use of the building was as an Office under previous Use Class B1. That use class was not protected by CP49. It is worth noting that the unit is currently vacant with the internal changes already undertaken and there is an argument that it is better to have an active use within the centre of a village than an empty one, particularly as it is within the conservation area where maintenance of building frontages is key to the appearance of the area.

It is also noted that within the immediate vicinity of the site, is No 7 The Square, which is the adjoining property to the east. That property was recently granted permission (PL/2024/08967, 13 March 2025) for change of use to residential under similar circumstances and is therefore a material consideration in the determination of this current proposal.

5 Year Housing Land Supply

The Wiltshire Housing Land Supply Statement (June 2025) provides the latest position on the Council's ability to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, which is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in December 2024. This has reintroduced the requirement to meet five years' worth of deliverable sites and a buffer to be applied to the five-year housing requirement in all circumstances, and has revised the Local Housing Need calculation to establish the five-year housing requirement. These factors have resulted in a substantial increase in the five-year housing requirement to be met from the previous calculation. When this is assessed against the housing land supply which can be delivered within five years, the recalculation shows a significant reduction in the number of years supply. The resulting position shows that the Council can currently demonstrate a 2.42

years housing land supply of housing at a unitary authority level. This is considered to be a substantial shortfall.

The absence of a five-year housing land supply is a material consideration in the determination of this application. In accordance with Paragraphs 78 and 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), for applications involving the provision of housing, where there is a shortfall in the supply of deliverable housing sites, the most important policies for determining the application should be considered out of date. The current housing land supply shortfall is a factor that must be considered in the planning balance and in this case, as a five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated, the weight that can be applied to the most important policies for determining this application should be assessed and altered in the light of the shortage in housing land supply. The proposal must be assessed against the national policy context of the need to boost housing supply and the benefits of delivering new homes whilst having particular regard to the key policies set out in paragraph 11(d)(ii) and Footnote 9 of the NPPF.

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

Core Policy 57 of the WCS requires high-quality design that:

- Enhances local character.
- Responds to the natural, historic, and built environment.
- Retains important features (e.g., trees, hedges).
- Supports sustainable construction and compatibility with surrounding uses.
- Creates safe, legible, and accessible spaces.

Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises design that is:

- Visually attractive.
- Functionally effective.
- Contributes to the quality of the built environment.

The Wiltshire Design Guide encourages sensitivity to local character, materials, and architectural styles and supports modern living standards while maintaining aesthetic and functional quality.

In this particular instance, there would be no discernible changes to the building and its presentation within the streetscene. The building has no large windows, typical of shops or offices and the current door and small, more domestic windows facing onto The Square would be retained.

No Objections have been received from the Ramsbury and Axford Parish Council and subject to conditions to ensure that the development is undertaken and retained in accordance with the submitted plans, the proposal is considered to accord with the overarching principles set out in Core Policy 57 of the WCS, the Wiltshire Design Guide and the guidance and provision of the Framework.

Impact on Heritage Assets

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.

Section 72(1) of the Act requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas. The NPPF outlines government policy for planning. Chapter 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. In particular:

Paragraph 208 requires LPAs should “avoid or minimise any conflict” between the heritage asset’s conservation (which includes achieving its optimum viable use) and any aspect of a proposal.

Paragraph 210 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable new uses and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraphs 212 requires “great weight” to be given to an asset’s conservation “irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

Paragraph 213 advises that harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require “clear and convincing justification”.

Paragraphs 213-215(214-216) require a balanced approach with any harm which would be caused being weighed against the potential public benefits which might be achieved.

Paragraph 220 advises that 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 or less than substantial harm as appropriate.

The Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

The Council’s Core Strategy Policy CP58 ‘Ensuring the conservation of the historic environment’ requires that designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved, and where appropriate enhanced, in a manner appropriate to their significance and encourages proposals which improve the condition of heritage assets at risk.

The Council’s Core Strategy CP57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. The policy requires applicants to “demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through (amongst other things) responding to the value of the natural and historic environment and being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and landscapes. Development is required to respond positively to the existing in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

As previously reported, there would be no discernible external changes to the building, which site firmly within the heritage asset of the Ramsbury Conservation Area.

The Council's Conservation Officer, states that the loss of commercial space is unfortunate and can have an impact on the character and vitality of an area. However, it is also noted that the village is predominantly residential and that other retail spaces have become dwellings in recent years. The consultation response also acknowledges that neighbouring properties have also become residential units recently and therefore there is no objection from that service.

The proposal is therefore deemed to have a neutral impact upon the designated heritage assets.

Amenity

Core Policy 57 (Point vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to respect the amenity of existing occupants and ensure appropriate amenity levels for future residents.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly Paragraph 135, reinforces the need for development to provide a high standard of amenity for both existing and future users.

There is an established interrelationship between the dwellings and buildings in this location, and it is considered that the proposals would not result in a significant increase in noise or disturbance to adjacent occupiers over that which can currently take place within the building. Any existing levels of overlooking from first floor windows would not be increased, and the rear amenity space already has a degree of segregation from adjacent occupiers and their private amenity spaces.

Highways Impacts and Parking

Transport implications are a key factor in assessing planning applications, especially for larger developments. Proposals must demonstrate:

- Safe and suitable access for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and those with mobility impairments.
- No severe residual impacts on the surrounding highway network.
- Promotion of sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- Adequate parking and cycle provision, in line with adopted standards.
- Protection and enhancement of public rights of way and active travel routes.

Relevant policies include Core Policies 60–64 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, supported by the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan, Car Parking Strategy, and Cycling Strategy. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and LTN 1/20 (DfT) provide further design guidance for active travel infrastructure.

The Council's Highway Engineers have not raised any concerns in relation to the change of use. It is noted that there are no parking restrictions on the public highway adjacent to the site. Furthermore, it is stated that a two bedroom dwelling would ordinarily require a minimum parking provision of two spaces. However, the existing use would require a higher level of vehicle parking which has been accommodated within the surrounding highway network. As such it is not considered of detriment to have 2 vehicle displaced within the existing and available on-street parking provision.

Whilst no cycle parking has been specified or indicated, there are possible storage areas internal to the property or within the private rear garden.

There is therefore no objection in terms of highway access, safety and parking in this instance.

Biodiversity Net Gain and Ecology

Biodiversity net gain is a mandatory requirement under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to a pre-commencement condition that the development delivers at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

There are statutory exemptions which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. For further information on exempt developments please refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>

In line with NPPF and with CP50, applications that do not fall into the category where BNG is required, must still ensure that no net loss of functional habitat for the benefit of wildlife in the local area will occur as a result of the proposed development. In addition, it is expected that gains for biodiversity, relevant to local habitats and wildlife populations will form part of the proposed development.

In this instance, the application is considered to fall within the “de minimus” exception to Biodiversity Net Gain but the onus is on the applicants/developers to confirm their compliance with this new legislation outside of planning as the legislation is deemed, regardless of any permissions granted. The site is also considered to comply with CP50 of the WCS as the very limited development of the site is not considered to remove any ecological features resulting in no net loss.

Landscape and Visual Impact

Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Protect, conserve, and enhance landscape character and quality.
- Respect local distinctiveness, key views, and visual receptors.
- Give particular weight to impacts on National Landscapes (formerly AONB's) and locally valued landscapes.

The village of Ramsbury is washed over by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. However, the site is set firmly within the built form of the village with very limited views from that asset. Furthermore, no external changes are proposed and the change of use is not considered to significantly impact upon the wider landscape.

Conclusion

It is, therefore, concluded that the proposed change of use from the commercial to residential use of the site, as per the plans submitted, would be of an acceptable scale, mass and design

to maintain the character of the street scene and would result in a neutral impact on the designated Ramsbury conservation area.

The proposal would therefore accord with the aims and objectives of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and other Government guidance and is recommended that planning permission be granted for the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions

1. WM13

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans, all received on 30 January 2026

Application Form
Location Plan.
Existing Elevations
Existing Floor Plans
Proposed Elevations
Proposed Floor Plans

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.