

APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/03114
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Washmere Farm, Washmeres, Colerne, Chippenham, SN14 8DQ
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Conversion of an agricultural barn to a self-contained dwelling (use class C3)
RECOMMENDATION:	Refuse

Note: Amended plans were received during the life of the application to address comments from the Highways Officer and Rights of Way Officer. The following report is based on those revised plans.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing agricultural barn to a single self-build dwelling (Use Class C3). The application relates to a concrete portal-framed agricultural building located at Washmere Farm, Colerne. The building measures approximately 14m by 12m and comprises a simple rectangular structure with a shallow double-pitched roof and a lean-to on its southern elevation – see photographs taken on site visit 05.07.2026:

Below: southeast and southwest elevations

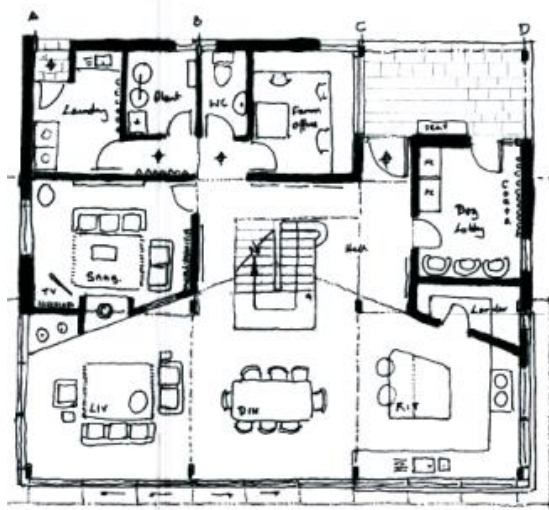


Below: Southwest and northwest elevation



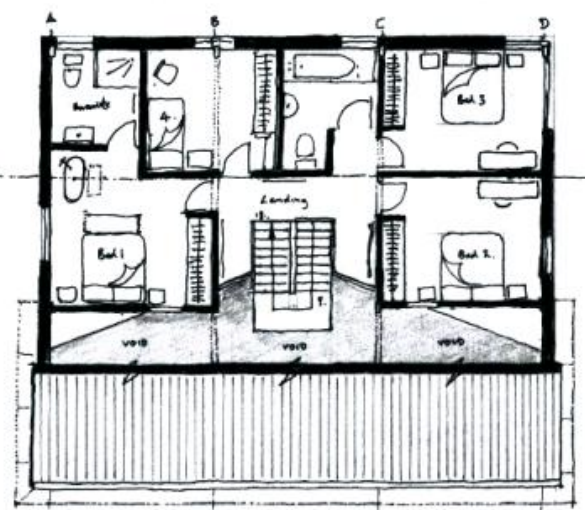
The proposal would retain the existing structural frame, footprint, form and overall proportions of the building. Works include the enclosure of currently open elevations through the installation of insulated timber-clad walling, glazing and external doors, replacement roof cladding, installation of rooflights, photovoltaic panels, formation of a ground floor slab and

insertion of a first-floor level to create residential accommodation. The resulting dwelling would provide four-bedroom accommodation with a total floorspace of approximately 235 square metres. See extract of submitted floor plans and elevations below:



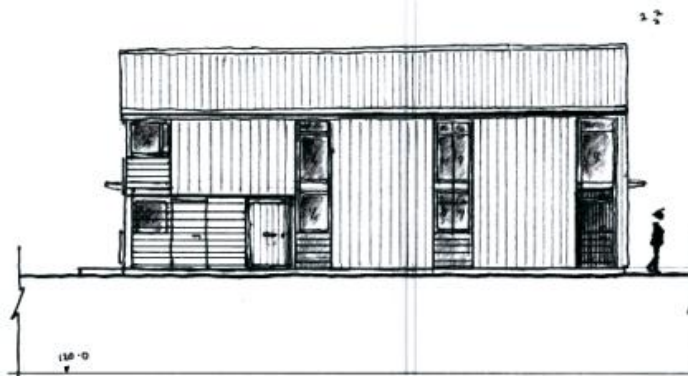
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

148m²

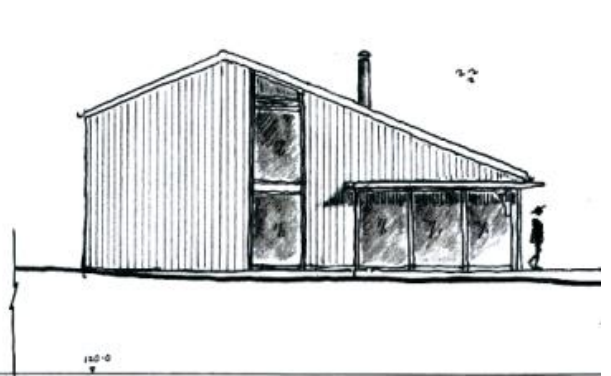


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

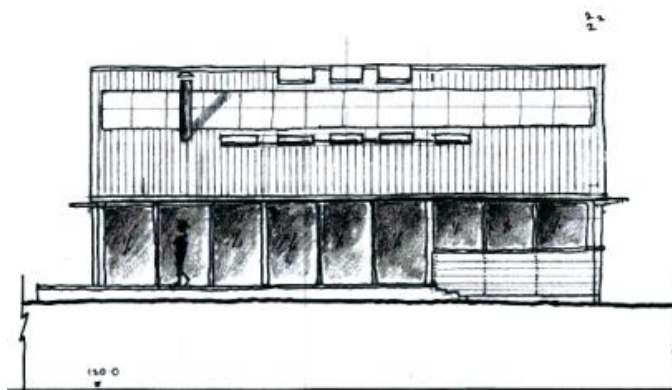
87m²



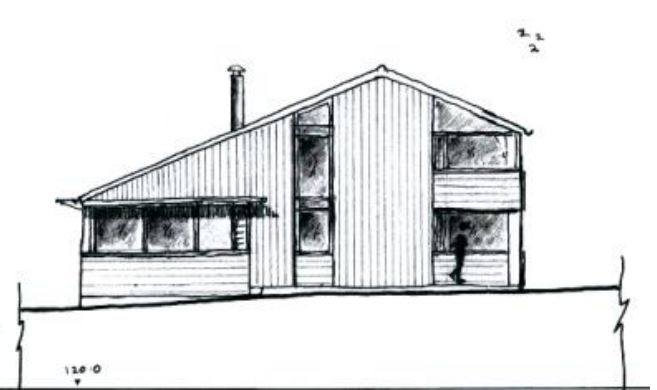
NORTH-WEST ELEVATION.



SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION.



SOUTH-EAST ELEVATION

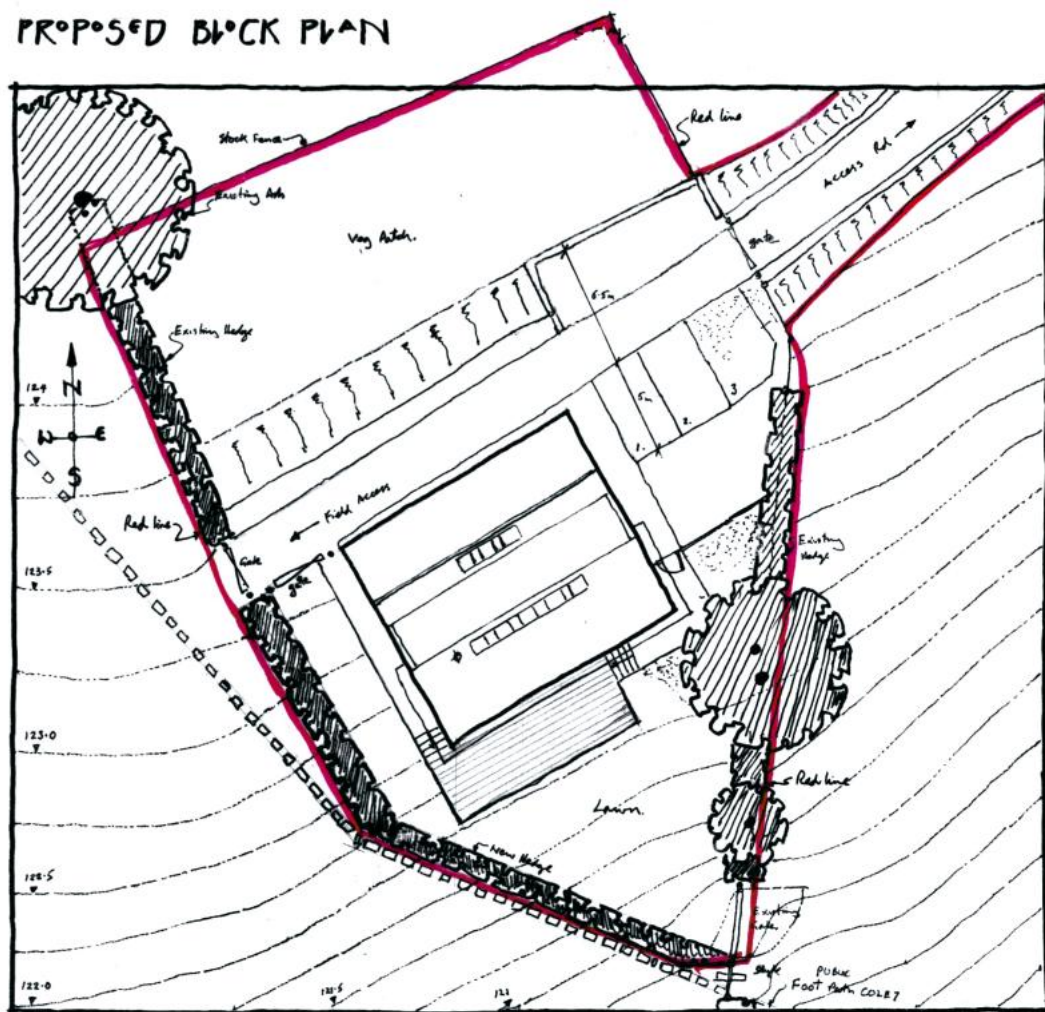


NORTH-EAST ELEVATION

Externally, the proposal includes the provision of an area for vehicle parking and turning, together with a residential curtilage. Boundary treatments would comprise native hedgerow planting and post-and-wire fencing. Access would be taken from the existing vehicular access and track serving the site from Tutton Hill. See photographs below of the access on Tutton Hill:



Three parking spaces are proposed as shown on the Proposed Block Plan, below:

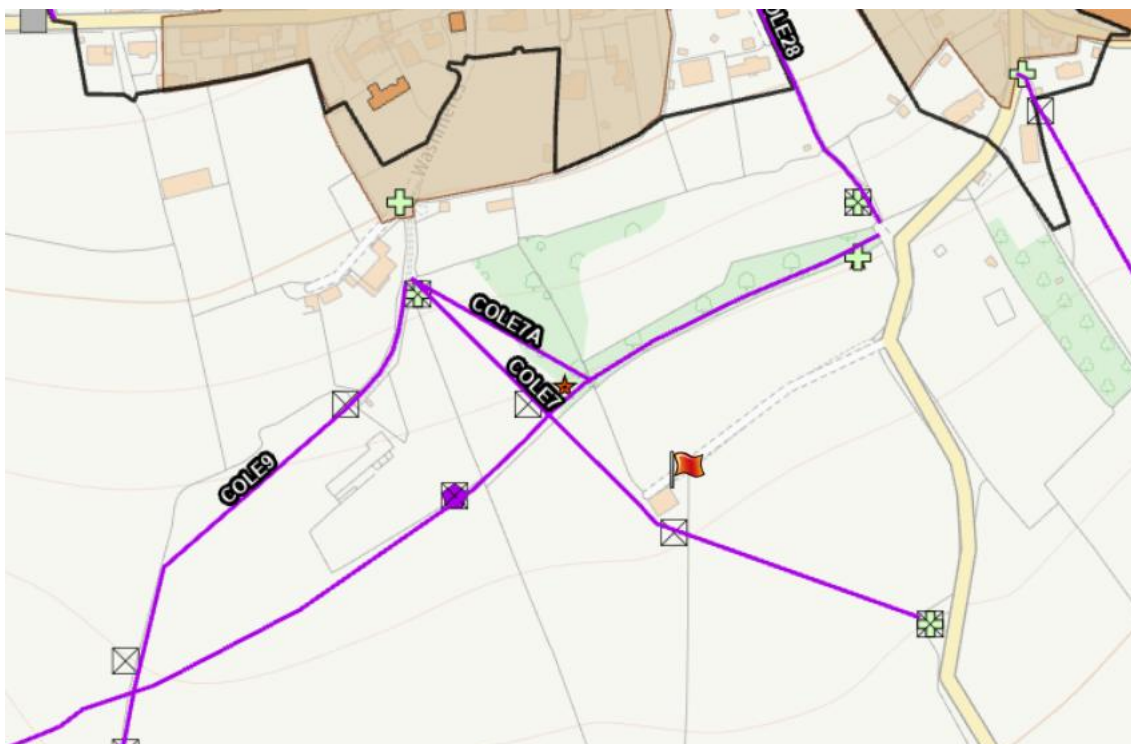


The application is presented as a self-build dwelling and is accompanied by a Structural Report which advises that the existing building is capable of conversion without significant reconstruction.

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site comprises an existing agricultural barn located at Washmere Farm, to the south of Colerne. The barn occupies an isolated hillside position within an agricultural holding and is accessed via an existing track from Tutton Hill. The surrounding land is predominantly agricultural in character, comprising a mix of grazing pasture, hedgerows and scattered trees. The application site lies approximately 185 metres south of the Colerne settlement boundary and is therefore located within the open countryside for the purposes of planning. Colerne is identified as a Large Village within the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

The site is identified with a red flag on the plan below. The heavy black line denotes the settlement boundary:



The site lies within the Bristol/Bath Green Belt and the Cotswolds National Landscape. The surrounding landscape is characterised by a strong rural character and forms part of the Enclosed Limestone Valley Landscape Character Type identified by the Cotswolds National Landscape. This landscape type is characterised by moderately broad but enclosed valleys, a strong sense of enclosure, a mosaic of pastoral and arable land uses, extensive hedgerow

boundaries and woodland cover, and a network of rural routes connecting settlements and isolated dwellings. The site occupies an elevated position on the valley side and benefits from extensive views across the surrounding countryside towards Box, Ditteridge, Bathford and the Avon Valley beyond.

A public right of way (COLE7) passes immediately to the west of the site, with a number of additional public rights of way located in the surrounding area (indicated by purple lines on the plan above). The site is therefore publicly visible within both short- and medium-range views from the surrounding countryside. The site is not located within a Conservation Area (light brown wash on the above plan) and there are no listed buildings within the immediate vicinity. (denoted by darker brown on the plan above). The site lies within Flood Zone 1, with a negligible risk of surface water flooding or groundwater emergence. The site has an agricultural land classification of 4.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history on this site.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

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 10 Spatial Strategy Chippenham Community Area
- Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport;
- Core Policy 61 Transport & Development;

Colerne Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036

- Policy BE1: Character and design
- Policy NE1: Landscape and Natural Environment

Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (2024)

Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30

- Policy CE1: Landscape
- Policy CE5: Tranquillity
- Policy CE6: Dark skies

ISSUES

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

- Whether the development is acceptable in principle (CP 1 and 2)
- Whether the scheme constitutes high quality design (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable impact upon the reasonable living conditions of the adjoining occupants (CP 57)
- Whether the scheme would preserve or enhance the historic environment (CP 58)
- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable landscape impact (CP 51)

- Whether the scheme would have an acceptable impact upon the Green Belt (NPPF Chapter 13)
- Whether the proposal would have a negative effect upon highway safety, including if there is sufficient parking for the proposed development (CP 61 and 64)
- Whether there would be any harmful impacts upon protected species or priority habitats (CP 50)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Colerne Parish Council: Not supported

“Cllrs discussed the application and agreed Not to Support it due to the following, it is in the Open Countryside, it does not qualify as a Rural Exception site and is not an Exception Site in the Neighbourhood Plan.”

WC Highways: No objection subject to conditions

The Highway Officer initially raised concerns regarding the sustainability of the site's location, noting that future occupants would be likely to rely upon private vehicle travel due to the site's position outside the settlement boundary and limited opportunities for walking and cycling. It was noted that the site is served by an existing access from Tutton Hill and that three parking spaces were proposed, which accord with the Council's parking standards.

The Highway Officer requested further information in relation to visibility splays at the site access, surfacing of the first section of the access track adjacent to the public highway, and provision of cycle parking. It was advised that, subject to these matters being satisfactorily resolved, a highway recommendation could be provided.

Following these comments, the applicant submitted amended plans showing visibility splays and covered cycle storage. The Highway Authority has reviewed the amended plans and confirms that, having regard to the geometry of the road and likely vehicle speeds, the submitted visibility splays are acceptable. The proposed access resurfacing has also been found acceptable, subject to appropriate conditions.

WC Rights of Way: No objection subject to informative

“Public footpath COLE7 runs immediately south of the site, alongside the proposed new hedge. The applicant should ensure that the hedge does not encroach on the route of the footpath. I note there is currently a stile in the field boundary adjacent to the site. I would also request that the stile be replaced with a gate, if it is required for stock control. If there is no stock in the field the stile should be removed.

Informative:

The applicant should note that no gates, fences or stiles should be erected across the public right of way without prior consultation and approval from the Countryside Access Officer (contact rightsofway@wiltshire.gov.uk). Unauthorised structures across a right of way are an obstruction and gates may only be authorised for the control of stock under section 147 of the Highways Act 1980.”

Further to receipt of amended plans, the Rights of Way Officer provided the following update:

“With regard to the revised plans submitted I note that a gate has been shown instead of a stile where the public footpath (COLE7) crosses the existing field boundary at the southern corner of the site. The applicant will need to apply for authorisation to install a gate as shown in the informative included in my previous comment.”

WC Public Protection: No comments received

WC Ecology: No objection subject to conditions

The Council Ecologist raises no objection subject to conditions and confirms that a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been completed. The Ecologist notes that the proposal relates to the conversion of an existing agricultural barn to a single dwelling within its existing footprint, with associated garden planting and new hedgerow planting. The building is described as being largely open-sided with corrugated metal cladding and roofing and is considered unlikely to support roosting bats.

The site lies within the consultation zone associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. Following a Test of Likely Significance undertaken by Wiltshire Council, it was concluded that the development would not result in the loss of a qualifying bat roost, would not involve the removal of core bat habitat and does not propose additional external lighting. The proposal was therefore screened out of Appropriate Assessment, with no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC identified.

The Ecologist further advises that mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain is not considered to apply in this instance as the proposal is presented as self-build development meeting the relevant exemption criteria. A condition is recommended requiring implementation of the proposed hedgerow planting shown on the submitted in the event of a positive recommendation.

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;
- An advertisement placed in the local press

Two letters of objection have been received, raising concerns summarised as follows:

- The site lies within the open countryside, outside the Colerne settlement boundary, within the Green Belt and Cotswolds National Landscape, and the proposal is considered contrary to the settlement strategy of the development plan.
- The existing barn is not considered to be a building of sufficient permanence or substantial construction to justify conversion and concerns are raised regarding the extent of works required to facilitate residential use.
- The proposal would introduce a dwelling into an undeveloped agricultural valley, resulting in harm to the rural character of the area, the openness of the Green Belt, the landscape character of the National Landscape and important public views across the valley.
- Concerns are raised regarding noise and disturbance associated with residential occupation, including activity within the proposed curtilage.
- Objections have been made in relation to highway matters, including the suitability of Tutton Hill to accommodate additional traffic, the impact of construction traffic, the adequacy of the access arrangements and the reliance on private vehicles.
- Concerns are raised regarding the introduction of domestic lighting within a currently dark rural landscape and its potential impact on landscape character and wildlife.

- The application is not supported by ecological surveys and concerns are raised regarding potential impacts on bats, barn owls, reptiles, birds and the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC.
- It is argued that the proposal would make only a limited contribution to housing supply and would not address local affordable housing needs.
- Concerns have also been raised regarding consultation procedures and the absence of controls to ensure the dwelling remains in self-build occupation rather than being sold or used for holiday accommodation.

One letter of support has been received, stating that the proposal would provide a beneficial re-use of an existing agricultural building and would provide housing for a young family whilst sitting comfortably within its surroundings.

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

Policy Context

Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy of the WCS establishes a hierarchy of settlements to guide where development should be focused. The policy prioritises growth in:

- Principal Settlements (e.g., Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge) – main focus for strategic growth.

- Market Towns – support local services and employment; suitable for sustainable development.
- Local Service Centres – smaller towns and villages with a range of services; limited development supported.
- Large and Small Villages – development should be limited and respond to local needs.
- Outside the defined settlements – development is strictly controlled and generally not supported unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy of the WCS sets out how development will be distributed and delivered across Wiltshire. The policy emphasises:

- Sustainable patterns of growth, reducing the need to travel and supporting local services.
- Development should be plan-led, aligning with the settlement strategy and supported by infrastructure.
- Windfall development (not allocated in plans) must still comply with the principles of sustainable development.
- Development outside settlement boundaries is generally not permitted, unless it meets specific policy exceptions (as set out in paragraph 4.25 of the WCS) and listed below:
 - Additional employment land (Core Policy 34)
 - Military establishments (Core Policy 37)
 - Development related to tourism (Core Policies 39 and 40)
 - Rural exception sites (Core Policy 44)
 - Specialist accommodation provision (Core Policies 46 and 47)
 - Supporting rural life (Core Policy 48)

Together, CP1 and CP2 ensure that new development is strategically located, sustainable, and supports the character and function of Wiltshire's communities.

Core Policy 48 - Supporting rural life allows the Conversion and re-use of rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses where they satisfy the following criteria:

- i. The building(s) is/are structurally sound and capable of conversion without major rebuilding, and with only necessary extension or modification which preserves the character of the original building.*
- ii. The use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or*

settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas.

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

iv. The site has reasonable access to local services.

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

Where there is clear evidence that the above uses are not practical propositions, residential development may be appropriate where it meets the above criteria. In isolated locations, the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for residential purposes may be permitted where justified by special circumstances, in line with national policy.

Assessment

The application site lies approximately 185 metres south of the defined settlement boundary of Colerne and therefore falls within the open countryside. As such, the principle of residential development is not supported by Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal falls within one of the policy exceptions identified for development outside settlement boundaries. In this case, the applicant relies upon Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, which supports the conversion and re-use of rural buildings, including for residential purposes where other uses are not practical proportions and where the relevant criteria are satisfied.

CP48 is a sequential policy, in that it supports the conversion and re-use of rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses, subject to compliance with the criteria of the policy and that residential development may be appropriate only where there is clear evidence that such alternative uses are not practical propositions. Whilst the applicant's Planning Statement sets out a case for the acceptability of a residential use, including discussion of the site's accessibility, sustainability credentials and relationship to surrounding development, it does not provide robust evidence to demonstrate that employment, tourism, cultural or community uses have been adequately explored and found to be impractical. In the absence of such evidence, the Local Planning Authority is unable to conclude that the sequential approach contained within Core Policy 48 has been satisfied. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with the requirements of Core Policy 48 and significant weight is afforded to this conflict

The proposal is supported by a structural report which concludes that the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for substantial reconstruction.

Whilst the submitted structural report draws this conclusion, the proposal would involve substantial new works, including the enclosure of largely open elevations, formation of a new concrete ground floor slab, insertion of a new first floor structure, construction of internal supporting elements and associated works to facilitate residential occupation. The existing building is currently largely open-sided and has an earth floor, and the submitted evidence does not clearly demonstrate how the proposed dwelling would be achieved without major rebuilding or substantial new structural intervention. Furthermore, whilst amended plans indicate that the eaves level itself would remain unchanged, the proposal includes regrading of land around the building, particularly to the rear, which would have the effect of increasing the exposed height of the building and creating the appearance of a raised eaves level when viewed from certain vantage points. In addition, the structural report appears to be based primarily upon a visual inspection of the building and calculations of the existing frame. Whilst reference is made to the foundations, the submitted information does not clearly demonstrate that these have been subject to detailed investigation or assessment, with the calculations relying on assumed foundation bearing capacities. As such, the Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the building has been demonstrated to be capable of conversion to residential use without substantial rebuilding or significant structural intervention.

Having regard to the judgment in *Hibbitt* and the approach taken in appeal decision APP/G2245/W/25/3373180, the point at which a proposal ceases to be a conversion or re-use and becomes, in substance, a fresh build is a matter of planning judgement. ([Reference: APP/G2245/W/25/3373180](#) this appeal decision determines that whilst the *Hibbitt* case related to the application of permitted development rights and not to an application for full planning application, it is accepted as a relevant yard stick for planning applications and a previous South Oxfordshire appeal decision successfully drew on the *Hibbitt* judgement, so it is evident that the Court had concluded the same principles for conversion should be applied to an application for planning permission.

In this case now being considered, the Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the submitted evidence demonstrates that the proposal would amount to the genuine conversion or re-use of the existing building, rather than a more substantial reconstruction relying heavily on new structural elements. There are several elements which can be seen through a simple comparison between the existing and proposed plans relating to the change in ground levels, and lack of information on the foundations of the building, which are just not explained within the submission or the accompanying structural report. The proposal therefore fails to satisfy criterion (i) of Core Policy 48.

The concerns raised by local residents regarding the extent of rebuilding required to facilitate the proposed residential use have also been taken into account – including the observation from one of the representations received that the building has recently been altered to fix new side enclosures. Whilst the Local Planning Authority's assessment has been reached independently on the basis of the submitted evidence and site inspection, those concerns by residents who will be aware of the building over a longer period of time, and its construction, do very much lend support to the conclusion that the proposal has not demonstrated compliance with criterion (i) of Core Policy 48.

In respect of criterion (ii), the site occupies a prominent rural location within the open countryside and the Cotswolds National Landscape. Whilst the proposal would utilise an existing building and would not materially increase its overall scale, the creation of a residential dwelling and associated curtilage would inevitably introduce domestic activity, parking, garden areas and associated residential features where none presently exist. These matters are considered in detail elsewhere within this report, however it is concluded that the proposed residential use would detract from the character and appearance of the landscape and therefore fails to satisfy criterion (ii) of Core Policy 48.

The proposal would utilise an existing access and is capable of being served by the necessary infrastructure. Subject to the recommended conditions and the absence of any objection from the Highway Authority, criteria (iii) and (iv) are considered to be satisfied.

Criterion (v) is not relevant in this instance as the building is not a designated or non-designated heritage asset.

Core Policy 48 further states that, in isolated locations, the re-use of redundant or disused buildings for residential purposes may be permitted where justified by special circumstances. Whilst the proposal is capable of satisfying criteria (iii) and (iv), limited evidence has been provided to demonstrate that residential re-use of this isolated rural building is justified by the special circumstances required by Core Policy 48.

Conclusion

However, having regard to the nature and extent of the works required to facilitate the proposed residential use, including the enclosure of largely open elevations, formation of a new ground floor slab, insertion of a first floor structure and associated structural interventions, the submitted evidence does not satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposal would constitute

the genuine conversion and re-use of the existing building without major rebuilding. The proposal therefore fails to satisfy criterion (i) of Core Policy 48.

Furthermore, for the reasons set out within the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report, the proposed residential use and associated curtilage would detract from the character and appearance of the landscape. The proposal therefore also fails to satisfy criterion (ii) of Core Policy 48.

The Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposal could be served by adequate access and infrastructure and that criteria (iii) and (iv) are capable of being satisfied. Criterion (v) is not relevant in this instance.

In addition, whilst Core Policy 48 allows for residential re-use in isolated locations where justified by special circumstances, limited evidence has been provided to demonstrate why residential conversion is necessary in this instance or why alternative rural uses would not represent a practical proposition. The policy establishes a sequential approach whereby employment, tourism, cultural and community uses are to be considered in the first instance, with residential use only supported where there is clear evidence that such alternatives are not practical. No such evidence has been provided in this case. The building remains capable of agricultural use and is not a heritage asset requiring safeguarding.

Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and significant weight must be given to that conflict in the overall planning balance. Whether that conflict is outweighed by other material considerations is assessed further below.

Green Belt

Policy Context

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. The NPPF is clear that, *“when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.”* Development within the Green Belt is generally considered inappropriate unless it falls within specific exceptions set out in the NPPF. Those exceptions are:

a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;

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

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;

d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;

e) limited infilling in villages;

f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

i. mineral extraction;

ii. engineering operations;

iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Any proposal that constitutes inappropriate development must demonstrate very special circumstances, which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm resulting from the proposal.

Assessment

The proposal seeks the residential conversion of an existing agricultural building within the Green Belt. The applicant contends that the proposal falls within the exceptions set out at paragraphs 154(c) and 154(h)(iv) of the NPPF, relating respectively to the alteration of an existing building and the re-use of buildings of permanent and substantial construction.

The submitted structural report confirms that *“the conversion of this building can...be carried out with the existing structural elements remaining in place and without the need for significant reconstruction of these elements”*. Whilst the existing elements can be retained, the proposal would also require the enclosure of largely open elevations, the formation of a new concrete ground floor slab, insertion of a new first floor structure, construction of internal supporting elements and associated works required to facilitate residential occupation. The submitted evidence does not clearly demonstrate that the resulting dwelling would be achieved through the genuine conversion and re-use of the existing building, rather than through more substantial reconstruction relying upon significant new structural elements.

Having regard to the judgment in *Hibbitt* and the reasoning applied in appeal decision APP/G2245/W/25/3373180, the distinction between the conversion or re-use of an existing building and a fresh build is ultimately a matter of planning judgement. In this instance, the Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposal would amount to the re-use of a building for the purposes of paragraph 154(h)(iv) of the NPPF. Nor is it satisfied that the extent of the proposed works can properly be characterised as a simple alteration of an existing building for the purposes of paragraph 154(c).

Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to fall within any of the exceptions set out within paragraph 154 of the NPPF and therefore constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

As inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt, substantial weight must be afforded to that harm. The proposal would also introduce a residential use and associated domestication into the countryside, although these impacts are considered principally within the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report.

Conclusion

The Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposal would amount to the genuine conversion or re-use of an existing building for the purposes of paragraphs 154(c) or 154(h)(iv) of the NPPF. The proposal is therefore considered to constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Substantial weight must be given to this harm in accordance with Chapter 13 of the NPPF.

In the absence of very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other identified harm, the proposal is considered contrary to Green Belt policy contained within the NPPF.

Landscape and visual impact

Policy Context

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 and locally valued landscapes.

The Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (2024) promotes a context-led approach, encouraging integration with natural features and settlement patterns while avoiding visual intrusion.

The NPPF emphasises the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes, particularly those with scenic, historic, or ecological significance. Planning decisions should:

- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- Safeguard key views, local distinctiveness, and landscape settings.
- Ensure development is well-integrated into its surroundings and avoids visual intrusion, especially in sensitive or designated areas.

Landscape impact must be considered alongside biodiversity, heritage, and green infrastructure objectives, with mitigation measures encouraged where harm cannot be

avoided. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.

Under Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, LPAs and other relevant authorities must now “seek to further” the statutory purposes of National Landscapes, replacing the previous duty to merely “have regard to” them. This is an active duty, requiring authorities to take reasonable and proportionate steps to support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, special qualities, and key characteristics of these designated areas when exercising any function that affects them.

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025–2030 provides further guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the National Landscape. Policy CE1 seeks to ensure that development is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of landscape character, scenic quality, views and visual amenity, having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment and associated landscape guidance.

Policy CE5 seeks to conserve and enhance tranquillity within the National Landscape by avoiding or minimising noise and visual disturbance, whilst Policy CE6 seeks to conserve and enhance dark skies through the avoidance and minimisation of artificial lighting and light pollution. These policies are material considerations in the determination of this application and are particularly relevant given the site's location within the Enclosed Limestone Valley Landscape Character Type, its visually prominent position within the wider valley landscape, and the potential for the introduction of domestic activity and lighting associated with the proposed residential use.

Assessment

The site lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape, where national policy requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty. The site also falls within the Enclosed Limestone Valley landscape character type, which is characterised by a strongly rural valley landscape, a mosaic of agricultural fields, hedgerows, woodland and enclosed valley sides. The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan seeks to ensure that proposals conserve and enhance landscape character, scenic quality, views and visual amenity, and also seeks to protect tranquillity and dark skies within the designated landscape.

The existing barn is located approximately halfway down the valley side and is visible from the surrounding public rights of way and from lower viewpoints within the valley. The building is currently experienced as an agricultural structure within an agricultural field setting. Whilst it is visible in the landscape, its existing character is functional and rural, and its relationship with the surrounding land remains agricultural.

The proposal would retain the existing footprint, height and broad form of the building, and in this respect the physical alteration of the barn itself would not introduce a materially larger built form into the landscape. This weighs in favour of the proposal. However, the landscape impact of the development would not be limited to the building alone. The proposal would introduce a permanent residential use, domestic curtilage, parking, access improvements (hard surfacing to what is currently a grassy agricultural track, for example), decking, lawned garden areas and a sizeable area shown as a vegetable garden into land that presently reads as part of the wider agricultural fieldscape.

Particular concern is raised in relation to the extent of the proposed residential curtilage and the way it extends beyond the area that currently reads as being associated with the barn. The existing agricultural access track forms a clear point beyond which the land reads as open agricultural field rather than the functional setting or curtilage of the barn. On site, land beyond this track reads as open field rather than as land naturally associated with the building.

Below: Photo taken from gated access on Tutton Hill. The submitted site plan suggests the curtilage of the dwelling would extend back to the large oak tree:



The proposed curtilage would extend beyond this apparent boundary, with the area identified as a vegetable garden extending approximately 17 metres beyond the access track and measuring approximately 30 metres in width. This would represent a notable encroachment of domestic curtilage into land which currently forms part of the open agricultural valley-side landscape.



Left: Rear (north west) elevation of the barn with access track to the left leading to Tutton Hill.

To the front of the building, the submitted plans indicate what appears to be a raised deck or external platform and a lawned area. These elements would further alter the character of the site from agricultural to domestic. Whilst relatively modest in physical scale, such features are not characteristic of the existing agricultural landscape and would be readily experienced from the adjacent public right of way, which passes close to the building. The proximity of the footpath is particularly important, as views of the site would not be limited to distant glimpses across the valley; the development would also be experienced at close quarters by users of the public right of way.

It is acknowledged that there is existing hedgerow and mature vegetation along parts of the site, and that additional hedgerow planting is proposed, including planting adjacent to the south-western elevation of the barn. The Council Ecologist has recommended that new hedgerow planting be secured by condition. However, whilst such planting would provide some mitigation and biodiversity benefit, it would not fully overcome the fundamental change in the character and function of this part of the site from agricultural land to residential curtilage. In landscape terms, hedgerow planting around a domestic plot can itself reinforce the

perception of a new residential enclosure within the fieldscape, rather than simply assimilating the proposal into the wider rural landscape.

The introduction of residential occupation would also give rise to an increased likelihood of domestic paraphernalia and activity within the curtilage, including parked vehicles, garden furniture, play equipment, washing lines, lighting and other domestic features. Whilst some such matters could be controlled through conditions and permitted development rights could be removed, the use of the land as a dwellinghouse would inherently bring with it a level of domestic activity and visual change which is materially different from the existing agricultural character of the site. These effects are especially relevant given the site's location within a designated National Landscape and its visibility from nearby public viewpoints.

The applicant proposes no external lighting as part of the application, and the Ecologist has recommended an informative in relation to artificial lighting and bats. However, the residential occupation of a dwelling in this isolated valley-side location would nevertheless create pressure for domestic lighting, security lighting, vehicle movements and illuminated internal spaces, all of which have potential to affect the perceived tranquillity and dark-sky qualities of the area. These matters are relevant to Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan Policies CE5 and CE6, which seek to avoid or minimise noise, visual disturbance and artificial lighting within the National Landscape.

The wider landscape context is noted. Views from the south and lower parts of the valley include glimpses of built development on the southern edge of Colerne, including the church tower, which is a prominent feature in the wider landscape. However, the presence of settlement features in wider views does not negate the agricultural and undeveloped character of the application site itself. The site remains visually and physically detached from the built form of Colerne and is experienced as part of the open rural valley-side landscape.

Overall, the proposal would materially change the character of the site through the creation of a residential plot within an agricultural valley. The proposed curtilage would extend beyond the area which presently reads as the functional setting of the barn and would introduce domestic features and activity into land which currently forms part of the wider fieldscape. This would erode the rural character of the site and would fail to conserve or enhance the scenic quality, tranquillity and special character of this part of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The Wiltshire Design Guide also expects development to respect the characteristic scale and pattern of the landscape, including landforms, slopes and field patterns, and to respect and

enhance the intrinsic local character and distinctiveness of an area. In this instance, the proposed residential curtilage would extend into land that currently forms part of the wider agricultural fieldscape, resulting in a change that conflicts with those objectives.

Conclusion

The proposal would result in material harm to the character and appearance of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The harm would arise principally from the domestication of the site, the extent of the proposed residential curtilage, the introduction of domestic garden areas and associated activity, and the erosion of the site's existing agricultural character.

Whilst the reuse of the existing building, provision of a new gate to one of the footpaths and the proposed hedgerow planting attract some positive weight, these benefits do not overcome the harm arising from the creation of a new residential plot in this sensitive valley-side location. The proposal is therefore considered to conflict with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Design Guide, the landscape objectives of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and the statutory duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape.

Design and appearance

Policy Context

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.

Building for a Healthy Life Framework promotes healthy, inclusive, and sustainable places. The document encourages:

- Walkability.
- Access to green space.
- Active design principles for well-being.

The Colerne Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the Development Plan. Policy BE1 seeks to ensure development responds positively to its surroundings, taking account of built form, materials, historic character and boundary treatments.

Policy NE1 seeks to protect the rural and agricultural character of the parish and requires development to maintain adequate open landscape space between settlements such that the landscape continues to provide the overall character and context of the parish. The policy also seeks to ensure development does not adversely affect the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC and associated functionally linked habitat.

Assessment

Taking the description of development at face value, the proposal seeks the conversion of an existing agricultural barn to a dwelling. The submitted plans indicate that the building would continue to read as a simple rural structure, with the use of timber cladding and agricultural-style materials helping to maintain aspects of its rural character.

The proposal has been designed around the existing building and the scale and appearance of resulting building is acceptable in and of itself. As such, the physical alterations to the barn itself are considered to be broadly compatible with the aims of Core Policy 57 and Policy BE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan, which seek development that responds positively to its surroundings and respects local character.

Notwithstanding this, the wider effects arising from the introduction of residential curtilage, decking, garden areas and associated domestic features are considered separately within the

Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report, where concerns are identified regarding the resulting domestication of the site and its relationship with the wider agricultural landscape.

Conclusion

Taking account of the scale of the proposed alterations and the retention of the existing building, the proposal is considered acceptable in design terms and broadly accords with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, Section 12 of the NPPF and Policy BE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan. However, this conclusion does not outweigh the landscape concerns identified elsewhere within this report.

Amenity

Policy Context

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.

Assessment

The application site is located in an isolated position within the open countryside. There are no neighbouring residential properties in close proximity to the site that would be affected by overlooking, loss of privacy, overbearing impacts or loss of light arising from the proposed development.

The proposed dwelling would provide an appropriate standard of accommodation for future occupants, including access to private outdoor amenity space. Given the site's rural location and separation from other residential properties, it is not considered that the development would result in unacceptable levels of noise, disturbance or other adverse amenity impacts.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to accord with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the relevant design and amenity objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

The proposal would not result in any unacceptable impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers and would provide an acceptable standard of amenity for future residents. The development is therefore considered acceptable in amenity terms.

Highways and parking

Policy Context

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.

Assessment

The site is located within the open countryside approximately 185 metres beyond the settlement boundary of Colerne. As acknowledged by the Highway Officer, the site is not located within a sustainable location and future occupiers would be likely to rely upon the private motor vehicle to access services and facilities. Whilst this attracts some conflict with the objectives of Core Policy 60 and national guidance aimed at reducing reliance on private car travel, this is a characteristic shared by many rural locations and must be considered in the context of the development as a whole.

Three parking spaces are proposed within the site, which accords with the Council's parking standards for a dwelling of the size proposed. The development would therefore provide satisfactory parking and manoeuvring facilities for future occupants. In respect of highway safety, the proposal would utilise the existing vehicular access from Tutton Hill. During the

course of the application, additional information was submitted to demonstrate visibility splays achievable at the site access and to address previous concerns regarding access arrangements. The Highway Authority has reviewed the amended plans and confirms that, having regard to the geometry of the road and likely vehicle speeds, the submitted visibility splays are acceptable. The proposed access resurfacing has also been found acceptable, subject to appropriate conditions.

Conclusion

Having regard to the scale of development, the use of an existing access, and the absence of any technical objection from the Highway Authority, it is concluded that the proposal would not result in a detrimental impact upon highway safety. Subject to conditions securing the approved visibility splays, cycle parking provision and electric vehicle charging, the proposal is considered to accord with Core Policy 61 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the transport-related provisions of the NPPF in terms of highway safety.

It is acknowledged that the site occupies an isolated countryside location and future occupiers would be heavily reliant on the private motor vehicle to access services and facilities. The applicant has highlighted the proximity of village services and facilities; however, notwithstanding this, the Highway Authority notes that future occupiers would remain heavily reliant on the private motor vehicle. This attracts some conflict with the sustainability objectives of Core Policy 60 and national policy seeking to reduce the need to travel, although this matter does not amount to a highway safety objection and is considered within the overall planning balance.

Ecology and biodiversity

Policy Context

The ecological impact of development is a key planning consideration, especially for larger schemes. Proposals must assess and address potential effects on:

- Protected species
- Priority habitats
- Ecological networks
- Green and blue infrastructure

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires development to:

- Avoid harm to ecological assets.
- Deliver measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), in line with the Environment Act 2021.
- Support habitat restoration and connectivity.
- Integrate biodiversity into site design.

The Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2022–2030) promotes nature recovery, ecosystem services, and habitat connectivity through development.

Assessment

The application seeks the conversion of an existing agricultural barn to a single dwelling within the building's existing footprint. The Council Ecologist has reviewed the proposal and raises no objection subject to conditions. The Ecologist advises that the building is largely open-sided with corrugated metal cladding and roofing and is considered unlikely to support roosting bats.

The site lies within the consultation zone associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). A Test of Likely Significance has been undertaken by Wiltshire Council, which concluded that the proposal would not result in the loss of a qualifying bat roost, would not involve the removal of core bat habitat and does not propose additional external lighting. Consequently, no likely significant effects on the SAC have been identified and the proposal has been screened out of Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations.

The proposal includes the retention and enhancement of vegetation within the site, including the provision of new native hedgerow planting. Given the limited ecological value of the existing intensively managed agricultural land surrounding the barn, the absence of any protected species constraints associated with the building itself, and the proposed habitat enhancements, the development is not considered likely to result in any unacceptable impact on biodiversity interests.

In respect of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the Council Ecologist advises that the mandatory BNG provisions are not considered to apply in this case as the development is proposed as self-build development and falls within the relevant exemption criteria, subject to the Local Planning Authority being satisfied that those criteria are met.

Conclusion

Subject to a condition securing the proposed hedgerow planting, together with an informative relating to external lighting and bats, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the objectives of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

5 Year Housing Land Supply

Wiltshire Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and can presently demonstrate a housing land supply of approximately 2.8 years. This represents a significant shortfall against the requirement to maintain a five-year supply and is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

Paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless either:

- i. the application of policies within the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development; or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole.*

In accordance with Paragraph 78 of the NPPF, the Council's housing land supply position means that the most important policies for determining applications for housing development should be considered out-of-date. Consequently, reduced weight is afforded to those policies where they restrict the delivery of housing, and the application must be assessed in the context of the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

However, the site lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape and Green Belt, both of which are identified within Footnote 9 to Paragraph 11 of the NPPF as areas of particular importance. Whilst the Council's housing land supply shortfall would ordinarily engage the tilted balance in favour of granting permission, the identified harm to the Green Belt and the Cotswolds National Landscape provides a strong reason for refusing the development for the purposes of Paragraph 11(d)(i) of the Framework. Consequently, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not indicate that permission should be granted, and the proposal falls to be

determined through a conventional planning balance, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

The proposed development seeks the conversion of an existing agricultural barn, located within open countryside, to a single dwellinghouse. Whilst the barn is considered acceptable in respect of residential amenity, highway safety and ecology, these benefits do not outweigh the principal concerns identified within this report.

The Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the proposal would constitute the genuine conversion and re-use of the existing building without major rebuilding. Whilst the main elements of the existing concrete frame are capable of retention, the proposed development would involve the enclosure of largely open elevations, the formation of a new ground floor slab, insertion of a first floor structure and other significant structural interventions required to facilitate residential occupation. The proposal therefore fails to satisfy criterion (i) of Core Policy 48 and is not considered to fall within the Green Belt exceptions relating to the alteration or re-use of existing buildings. As such, the proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt and substantial weight must be afforded to that harm.

The Local Planning Authority recognises that it is currently unable to demonstrate a deliverable five-year supply of housing land and that the provision of an additional dwelling carries weight as a material consideration. The proposal would provide a modest contribution towards housing supply through the provision of an additional dwelling. Positive weight is afforded to the retention of elements of the existing agricultural building and the avoidance of a wholly new dwelling in the countryside. Positive weight is also afforded to the applicant's agreement to improvements to the adjacent public right of way infrastructure, including replacement of the existing stile with a gate. These benefits attract modest weight in favour of the proposal.

However, the site lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape and Green Belt, both of which are identified within Footnote 9 to Paragraph 11 of the NPPF as areas of particular importance. Whilst the Council's housing land supply shortfall engages the tilted balance, the harm identified to these protected designations provides a clear reason for refusal under Paragraph 11(d)(i) of the Framework. In these circumstances, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is disengaged and the proposal must instead be assessed through a conventional planning balance, having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations.

As set out within the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report, whilst the proposal is to re-use an existing building, it would result in the creation of a new residential plot within a currently agricultural valley-side setting. The proposed domestic curtilage would extend beyond the area that presently reads as being associated with the barn and would introduce domestic garden areas, parking, decking, residential activity and associated domestication into land which currently forms part of the wider agricultural landscape. This would erode the rural character of the site and would fail to conserve and enhance, or seek to further, the special qualities, tranquillity and scenic beauty of this part of the Cotswolds National Landscape. The proposal therefore conflicts with Core Policy 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the objectives of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and the statutory duty relating to National Landscapes.

Furthermore, the proposal conflicts with Policy NE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan, which seeks to maintain open landscape space of a rural and agricultural character and ensure that the landscape continues to provide the character and context of the parish.

Whilst the benefits of the proposal, including the provision of a single additional dwelling, the retention of elements of the existing building, ecological enhancements and improvements to the adjacent public right of way infrastructure, are acknowledged, these benefits are limited in scale.

When assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole and having particular regard to the protected status of the Cotswolds National Landscape and the substantial weight which must be given to inappropriate development within the Green Belt, it is concluded that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Overall, there are no material considerations that indicate that a decision other than refusal should be made.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy supports the conversion and re-use of rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses, with residential development only supported where there is clear evidence that such alternative uses are not practical propositions. The applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to

demonstrate that employment, tourism, cultural or community uses have been properly explored and discounted, nor that residential use represents the only realistic or appropriate form of re-use. In the absence of such evidence, the Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the sequential approach set out within Core Policy 48 has been satisfied. The proposal therefore conflicts with Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

2. The Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that the submitted evidence demonstrates that the development would constitute the genuine conversion and re-use of the existing building without major rebuilding. The proposal therefore fails to satisfy criterion (i) of Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

Furthermore, having regard to the extent of the works required and the degree of reliance on new structural elements, the proposal is not considered to fall within the exceptions set out at paragraphs 154(c) or 154(h)(iv) of the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated that would clearly outweigh the harm arising from inappropriate development and any other identified harm. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Policy 48 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The proposed conversion of the agricultural barn to a dwelling, together with the associated residential curtilage, garden areas, decking, parking and domestic activity, would result in the domestication of a currently agricultural valley-side site within the Cotswolds National Landscape. In particular, the proposed residential curtilage would extend into land that presently forms part of the wider agricultural landscape, eroding its rural character and introducing domestic features and activity that would fail to conserve and enhance the scenic beauty, tranquillity and special qualities of this designated landscape.

The proposal would therefore conflict with Core Policies 48(ii) and 51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Wiltshire Design Guide 2024, Policy NE1 of the Colerne Neighbourhood Plan, the objectives of Policies CE1, CE5 and CE6 of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030, Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the statutory duty under Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 to seek to further the purposes of National Landscapes.

INFORMATIVE:

This decision is based on consideration of the following plans and documents:

- Visibility Splay 2001 L4 A received 6 July 2026
- Proposed Plans, elevations, section and roof plan 2001 L3 A received 26 Jun 2026
- Location Plan, proposed site plan, roof plan 2001 L1 A received 26 Jun 2026
- Existing Elevations and Floor Plans 2001-L2 received 14 May 2026
- Planning Statement received 14 May 2026
- Application Form received 14 May 2026
- Letter of notification to tenant & Letter of notification to owner received 14 May 2026
- Covering Letter received 14 May 2026
- Design and Access Statement received 14 May 2026
- Structural Report received 14 May 2026
- Topographical Site Survey 2001-S01 received 14 May 2026
- CIL Form 1 received 14 May 2026
- Applicant's letters (addressing objections) received 26 June 2026 and 6 July 2026