

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/03553
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Smithwick Farm, The Common, Rowde, Devizes, SN10 1TA
DESCRIPTION:	Change of use of a building from ancillary staff accommodation to short-term holiday let
RECOMMENDATION:	APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

PROPOSAL

Amendments to the red line plan and description of development were made 1 July 2026; the application was republicized thereafter. The application seeks planning permission for the material change of use of an already-converted farm building from ancillary staff accommodation to use as a short-term holiday let. No operational development would be involved in the development.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a converted farm building at Smithwick Farm, a 'curtilage listed building' where the principal listed building is the Grade II Smithwick Farmhouse [NHLE: 1272892]. It has walls of Flemish bond brickwork and render under a gabled tile roof and uPVC and timber windows. It is accessed via the farm drive from the north, joining onto Cock Road. Its setting is characterised by the varied collection of farm buildings within the farmstead and the rural surroundings in which it sits. It is in open countryside of Rowde Parish. Relevant designations and constraints include the Grade II listed building, non-designated heritage features recorded on the Swindon and Wilts HER¹, and the Rowdeford School LHS 2km Core Roost Buffer.

PLANNING HISTORY

K/52046/F - Conversion of single storey detached farm building to ancillary staff accommodation (APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS 06/06/2005).

K/52089/LBC - Conversion of single storey detached building to staff accommodation (APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS 06/06/2005).

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS):

¹ Including FARMSTEAD: Smithwick Farm (MWI69066).

- Core Policy 1: Settlement Strategy (CP1)
- Core Policy 2: Delivery Strategy (CP2)
- Core Policy 12: Spatial Strategy for the Devizes Community Area (CP12)
- Core Policy 39: Tourist Development (CP39)
- Core Policy 40: Hotels, bed and breakfasts, guest houses and conference facilities (CP40)
- Core Policy 48: Supporting Rural Life (CP48)
- Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity (CP50)
- Core Policy 51: Landscape (CP51)
- Core Policy 57: Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping (CP57)
- Core Policy 58: Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment (CP58)
- Core Policy 60: Sustainable Transport (CP60)
- Core Policy 61: Transport & Development (CP61)
- Core Policy 62: Development Impacts on the Transport Network (CP62)
- Core Policy 63: Transport Strategies (CP63)
- Core Policy 64: Demand Management (CP64)

Saved policies of the Kennet Local Plan 2011 (KLP)

- Saved Policy TR2: Facilities for boat users on the Kennet & Avon Canal

Wiltshire Design Guide SPD (WDG):

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Design Guide (NDG)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The following consultees were invited to comment on the application:

Rowde Parish Council – No objection, commenting that they were supportive of the application (09/07/2026).

Wiltshire Council's Highways Team – No objection, advising that they will be guided by the case officer in terms of the sustainability of the location and need to reduce reliance on use of private cars, that there are no concerns regarding the use where vehicle movements tend to be leaving the site once a day and returning later in the day as vehicle access is adequate to serve the proposed use (26/06/2026).

Wiltshire Council's Conservation Team – No objection, comments including that the impact of the proposals on heritage assets will be neutral and that the works will assist in securing the future use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation (25/06/2026).

REPRESENTATIONS

Immediate neighbouring dwellings were notified of the application, and a site notice was displayed on 1 July 2026. No letters of representation were made by members of the public.

ASSESSMENT

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that the determination of planning applications be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principle of Development

The application site is a building within the farmstead at Smithwick Farm, its current use being staff accommodation associated with the farming operations. It is located in Rowde Parish and, therefore, Core Policies 1, 2 and 12 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) are relevant for setting out the spatial strategy for this area.

CP1 sets out a hierarchical spatial strategy for sustainable development across Wiltshire, focusing on principal settlements, then market towns, then local service centres, then large villages and, finally, small villages. The first four of these settlement categories have defined settlement boundaries. The lowest end of the hierarchy, small villages, do not benefit from having designated settlement boundaries.

CP2 sets out a delivery strategy and states that, unless permitted by other policies within the WCS, as set out in paragraph 4.25, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development defined by the settlement boundaries.

CP12 identifies the settlements which comprise the Devizes Community Area, where Rowde is designated as a large village for the purposes of CP1 and CP2 which confers it a settlement boundary.

Smithwick Farm lies approx. 850m outside the settlement boundary of Rowde. Consequently, it is in open countryside where development will not be permitted unless in circumstance prescribed by other policies within the WCS.

The development would involve the change of use of an existing building, already converted to residential use, to use as a short-term holiday let. A change in ownership of the farm has resulted in the operations shifting to a small-scale, family-run operation that no longer employs staff, hence the use of the accommodation is no longer required.

CP39 supports tourist development located in existing buildings *“in or close to”* large villages but that *“any proposal needs to carefully consider the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites with the objective of providing adequate facilities, enhancing enjoyment and improving the financial viability of the attraction”*.

The policy does not define what distance should be considered 'close to' a large village, and the site is approximately 1km from Rowde. Nonetheless, development would still be supported away from a large village where:

- (i) *There is evidence that the facilities are in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction;*
- (ii) *No suitable alternative existing buildings or sites exist which are available for reuse;*
- (iii) *The scale, design and use of the proposal is compatible with its wider landscape setting and would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape or settlement and would not be detrimental to the amenities of residential areas;*
- (iv) *The building is served by adequate access and infrastructure; and*
- (v) *The site has reasonable access to local services and a local employment base.*

The applicant has suggested few tourist attractions that could be used by occupants of the accommodation, the nearest being Caen Hill Locks and the associated Avon and Kennett Canal approximately 0.5km south.

There are no public footpaths which provide a convenient or direct route to the canal and locks. The applicant has illustrated that access could be permitted over the farm's fields and suggested a driving route for less mobile visitors. However, this is not convincing evidence the accommodation is '*in conjunction*' with this countryside attraction as required by criterion (i).

The existing building is already converted for a residential use and, albeit no longer required for its intended use, its reuse as tourism accommodation would be effective and appropriate. Although effects on the amenities of the area are assessed elsewhere in this report, there is no reason the proposal would be fundamentally incompatible with the surrounding area and adjoining uses. There would be no material conflict with criterion (ii) or (iii).

Wiltshire Council's Highways Team are satisfied that the development is served by adequate access and infrastructure for the use. Whereas staff living on the farm would have no need to commute in the existing scenario, they have reliance on private vehicles for access to local services and facilities in Rowde, which has public houses and a village shop.

The nature of tourist accommodation is such that a similar and not excessive level of trip generation could be expected. The distance and nature of the route into Rowde make it unlikely that the most sustainable modes provide a genuine choice for accessing those services, and tourist occupants would therefore be reliant on the use of private vehicles for access.

The NPPF (110) advises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. Private vehicle use for visitors to tourist accommodation and from there to a range of countryside attractions would not be unusual.

The development would have reasonable access to local services, albeit primarily by private car. However, while it does little to reduce reliance on private vehicles, the nature of the use

mean it is not material worse than the existing situation. Therefore, it would not undermine the aims of CP57 (xiv), CP60 or CP61 of the WCS and nor would it conflict with criterion (iv) or (v) of CP39.

The applicant has drawn attention to CP48, which supports the conversion and reuse of rural buildings for tourism use, subject to meeting strict criteria. However, as the development does not involve conversion and reuse of a building, it does not receive support from this policy.

For the reasons given, the development would create a limited conflict with CP39 in so far as it seeks to ensure new tourist accommodation is in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction (criterion i). By extension, this creates some tension with the settlement strategy embodied in CP1, CP2 and CP12, the conflict is limited and relates to only one aspect of the policy framework supporting tourist accommodation in the countryside.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF provides broad support for enabling diversification of agricultural businesses and sustainable rural tourism developments that respect the character of the countryside. The NPPF is an important material consideration, which is returned to in the 'planning balance and conclusion'.

As a short-term holiday let would fall within a use class C3 dwellinghouse, if the LPA are minded to grant planning permission, having regard to the spatial strategy of the development plan, a condition would be necessary to ensure the accommodation is not occupied as a permanent place of residence. This matter is similarly returned to.

Design and Character and Appearance, including regard to the setting of the listed building
CP51, CP57 and CP58 of the WCS together seek to ensure all new development, including changes of use of existing buildings, meet a high standard of design that contributes to the character of Wiltshire by, amongst other things, responding positively to the features of the site itself, its landscape or townscape setting, and the value of the historic environment by being sympathetic to and conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

The application site is part of Smithwick Farm within which Smithwick Farmhouse [NHLE: 1272892] is a Grade II listed building. Its significance and special interest primarily comprises its architectural and historic interest as a late 17th century farmhouse with later alterations.

S66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes it a duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest that it possesses.

The building, subject of this application, is a converted farm outbuilding. It appears on the 1840s Tithe map² and Wiltshire Council's Conservation Officer (CO) advises that it is a 'curtilage listed building'. The farmstead is recorded on the Swindon and Wilts HER as a "*[p]artially extant 17th century farmstead of regular courtyard plan*".

² Know Your Place (<https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/kyp/?edition=wilts>).

Although now more domestic in appearance, through its simple vernacular form and materials, and layout, the building contributes to the character and legibility of the listed building's farmstead setting which reinforces its significance.

As there would be no operational development, the appearance of the building and surrounding area would be unaffected. Furthermore, the existing and proposed use are similar in nature and, therefore, the character of the building and surrounding area would not be materially altered.

As the accommodation is no longer needed for housing staff, the building is redundant. Ensuring it remains in a beneficial use would support the long-term conservation of the heritage asset as a whole.

The Conservation Officer raises no objection and, for the reasons given, it is concluded that the development would preserve the listed building and its setting and the features of special interest that it possesses thereby causing no harm to its significance as a designated heritage asset.

Furthermore, for similar reasons, the development would be of no detriment to the character or appearance of the surrounding area and wider landscape. Accordingly, it would not conflict with CP51, CP57 and CP58 of the WCS. An informative has been prepared based on the advice given by the Conservation Officer.

Residential amenity

Core Policy 57 (vii) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to ensure that the design of new development has regard to the compatibility of adjoining buildings and uses, the impact on the amenities of existing occupants and that appropriate levels of amenity are achievable within the development itself.

Smithwick Farmhouse is the main dwellinghouse and there are no other dwellinghouses nearby to the proposed development.

The proposed holiday accommodation would be accessed from the west side, where vehicles would also be parked. The east elevation of the accommodation has windows overlooking a garden/yard area in front of the main farmhouse. The relationship is such that there is a degree of mutual overlooking.

The difference between the existing and proposed use is nuanced; occupants of the tourist accommodation are more likely to be strangers to occupants of the main dwellinghouse however the amenity afforded to occupants of the accommodation and main dwellinghouse would be similar as under the existing use.

The accommodation is proposed to be operated in conjunction with the farmhouse and as part of the wider farm enterprise. Therefore, the effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupants of the main dwellinghouse would be acceptable, and they would retain control over amenity-based matters (like noise). It is recommended that a condition be imposed to ensure it remains part of the wider farm site and planning unit for these reasons.

Subject to recommended conditions, the development would not harm the living conditions of potential occupants of the accommodation or of the main dwellinghouse. It would therefore accord with the requirements of CP57 (vii) of the WCS.

Highways matters

In the first part of the assessment, it was concluded that the development would be served by adequate access and infrastructure and that it would have reasonable access to local services.

Notwithstanding that occupants of the accommodation would be reliant on use of the private car for access to services, it would not be significantly different from the situation under the existing use.

Wiltshire Council's Highways Team raise no objection in relation to highway matters, and the applicant has provided a plan confirming that adopted parking standards would be met.

For these reasons, the development would not conflict with CP57 (xiv), CP60, CP61, CP62 or CP64 of the WCS.

Ecological matters, including Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The site is within the Rowdeford School LHS 2km Core Roost Buffer, however, the Local Planning Authority can be reasonably certain that protected species, and habitat or features that they may use, would not be adversely impacted by the proposed material change of use.

The development would not conflict with CP50 of the WCS, which seeks to ensure no net loss in biodiversity. It also qualifies for an exemption from the requirement to deliver 10% BNG, introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021), and the decision notice shall include the relevant informative note.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

For the reasons set out in the assessment, the development would have a limited conflict with CP39 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, in so far as it seeks to ensure tourist developments in open countryside are in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction. Although this creates some tension with the settlement strategy set out in CP1, CP2 and CP12.

The identified policy conflict is relatively limited in nature, being confined to criterion (i) of CP39 rather than the principle of tourism accommodation generally. The proposal involves no operational development, no landscape harm, no heritage harm, no highway harm, no residential amenity harm or ecological harm. The building already exists, is already converted and is no longer required for its original ancillary purpose. Consequently, the degree of conflict carries only moderate weight against the proposal.

Weighing in favour of the development, the development would protect the countryside from encroachment by reusing an existing disused building, thereby ensuring it remains in a beneficial use in support of the conservation of the heritage asset; and it would secure economic benefits through diversifying and supporting the existing farm business without new built form.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF provides broad support for sustainable tourist development, while paragraph 85 advises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

The material considerations are considered to attract sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan in this instance. Accordingly, the statutory requirements have been fulfilled, and the application should be supported subject to recommended conditions.

A short-term holiday let is, at present, a use class C3 dwellinghouse. Having regard to the development plan, the site is located in an area where a new independent dwellinghouse would not be supported.

Therefore, it will be necessary to ensure by condition that the development is occupied as holiday accommodation only and not as a sole or primary place of residence, with appropriate limitations of the length of any occupation together with means of ensuring that the Local Planning Authority can reasonably monitor and enforce such requirements.

It will also be necessary to ensure that the holiday accommodation remains integral to the operation of the existing farm business to secure the farm diversification benefits which weigh in favour of the grant of permission.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
Location Plan. Received 25 June 2026.
Site Plan. Received 2 July 2026.

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

3. The accommodation hereby permitted shall be used to provide holiday accommodation only and shall not be occupied as a sole or main place of residence or by any persons exceeding a period of 28 days, and it shall not be reoccupied by the same person/s within 28 days following the end of that period.

An up-to-date register shall be kept at the holiday accommodation hereby permitted and be made available for inspection by the Local Planning Authority upon request. The register shall contain details of the names of all of the occupiers of the accommodation, their main home addresses and their date of arrival and departure from the accommodation.

The holiday accommodation shall be operated in conjunction with the farm house, known as Smithwick Farmhouse, Smithwick Farm, The Common, Rowde, Devizes, SN10 1TA, and the wider farm unit, and shall not be separated from that unit.

REASON: The accommodation is in a location where the Local Planning Authority, having regard to the reasonable standards of residential amenity, access, and planning policies pertaining to the area, would not permit a wholly separate dwelling.

Informatives to Applicant:

1. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless:

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Wiltshire Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements 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>

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements is considered to apply.

2. The applicant is reminded to note that, on the basis of the information available to the Local Planning Authority, the building to which this decision notice relates forms part of the listed building for the purposes of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Any works of extension, alteration or demolition to a listed building may require an application for Listed Building Consent under Section 7 of the Act. Further advice is available from the Local Planning Authority (<https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/article/15292/Listed-building-consent-for-works-repairs-or-alterations>).