

NICHOLAS MORLEY ARCHITECTS

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

BLACKSMITHS COTTAGE, BOX, CORSHAM, SN13 8EB

Conversion of Existing Building into Dwelling (C3)

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HERITAGE and PLANNING STATEMENT (August 2026)

1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a revised application for the conversion of the former Blacksmiths Cottage at Pye Corner, Box, to a single residential dwelling.

The application follows the refusal of a previous scheme and has been prepared in response to the specific concerns identified by Wiltshire Council in the decision notice. Since that decision, the applicant has undertaken a comprehensive review of the proposal and commissioned additional technical work to ensure that the application is supported by robust and objective evidence.

The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate that the revised proposal responds positively to the Council's previous concerns and accords with both the Development Plan (Core Policy 57) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The refusal reasons were:

1 The proposed dwelling would provide restricted outlook and limited private amenity space. The constrained nature of the plot, combined with limited daylight and lack of adequate external space, results in substandard living conditions for future occupants. This conflicts with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Section 12 of the NPPF, which require new development to provide good-quality internal and external living environments.

2 *The creation of a separate dwelling and subdivision of an existing garden results in a form of development that is incongruous with the established pattern and character of the area.*

While the existing building is traditional and the lane informal, the introduction of a second independent household on the plot, with separate domestic activity and limited private amenity space, produces a contrived form of backland development.

This arrangement is not consistent with the historic pattern or intended function of the plot, and is harmful to the visual and functional character of development along this lane. The proposal therefore conflicts with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core.

Core Policy 57 states:

enhancing local distinctiveness by responding to the value of the natural and historic environment, relating positively to its landscape setting and the existing pattern of development and responding to local topography by ensuring that important views into, within and out of the site are to be retained and enhanced

the retention and enhancement of existing important landscaping and natural features, (e.g. trees, hedges, banks and watercourses), in order to take opportunities to enhance biodiversity, create wildlife and recreational corridors, effectively integrate the development into its setting and to justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development

being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and historic landscapes

making efficient use of land whilst taking account of the characteristics of the site and the local context to deliver an appropriate development which relates effectively to the immediate setting and to the wider character of the area.

These two reasons will be reviewed within this statement and evidence provided to show that these issues have been fully resolved and address any concerns of the council.

2.0 - Existing Site

The site consists of two-storey former blacksmiths with a single storey extension, known as Blacksmiths Cottage, located to the rear of a terrace of houses at Pye Corner. There is a small, paved access lane between the blacksmiths and the terrace houses of Pye Corner that provides access to the rear gardens of No's 1 – 3 Pye Corner and Blacksmiths Cottage. The site is accessed from the byway, that is accessed from Devizes Road. On the opposite side of the byway there are detached dwellings and the garden to No.1 Pye Corner, and the garden for the Blacksmiths Cottage.

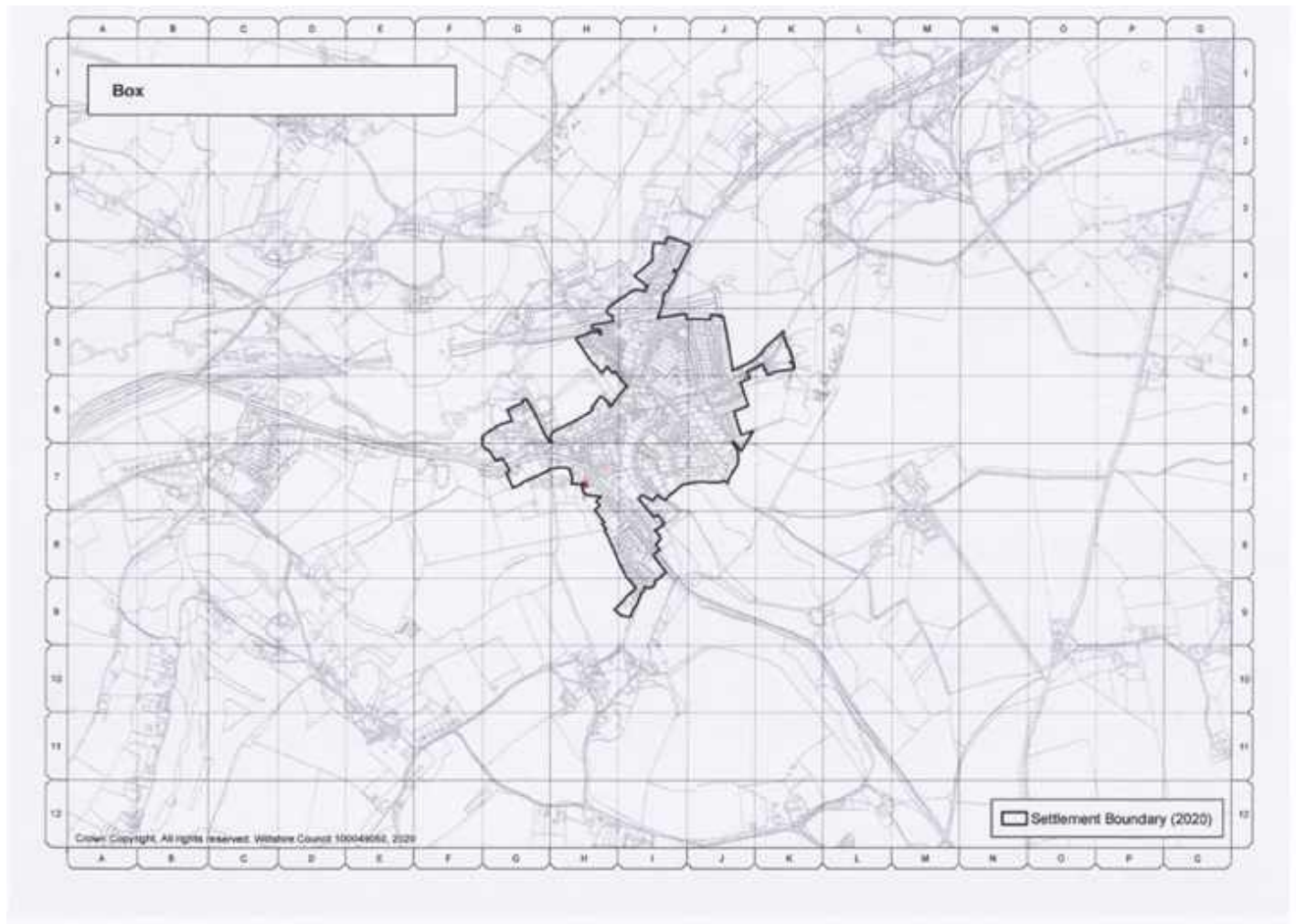
The terrace houses of Pye Corner are faced in a mixture of ashlar and rubble stone and modern faced render. The properties have pitched tile roofs and traditionally proportioned windows, some of which have been replaced with modern pvc frames. These external materials are characteristic of the area given that ashlar was quarried close by in Box.

The existing building is constructed from coursed rubble stone under a tiled pitched roof with stone parapets to the gable ends. There is a timber door to access the building with a long timber window adjacent to the door, above that is another timber window at first floor level. There are two smaller windows, one in each gable end. The interior has a solid ground floor and a part first floor currently accessed via a ladder. The roof timbers are exposed and the walls are rubble stone. The lean-to extension is faced in reconstructed bath stone blockwork under a mono-pitch roof. There is a timber door to accessed from the small lane at the rear. The windows are pvc and there is vertical timber cladding to part of the side elevation facing the byway.

It is worthy of note and the existing building sits at ground level. The only area where the building is below the ground level is on the South Elevation where the adjoining land is built up by 1m. This has no effect on the building outlook whatsoever as there are no windows to this elevation at ground floor.

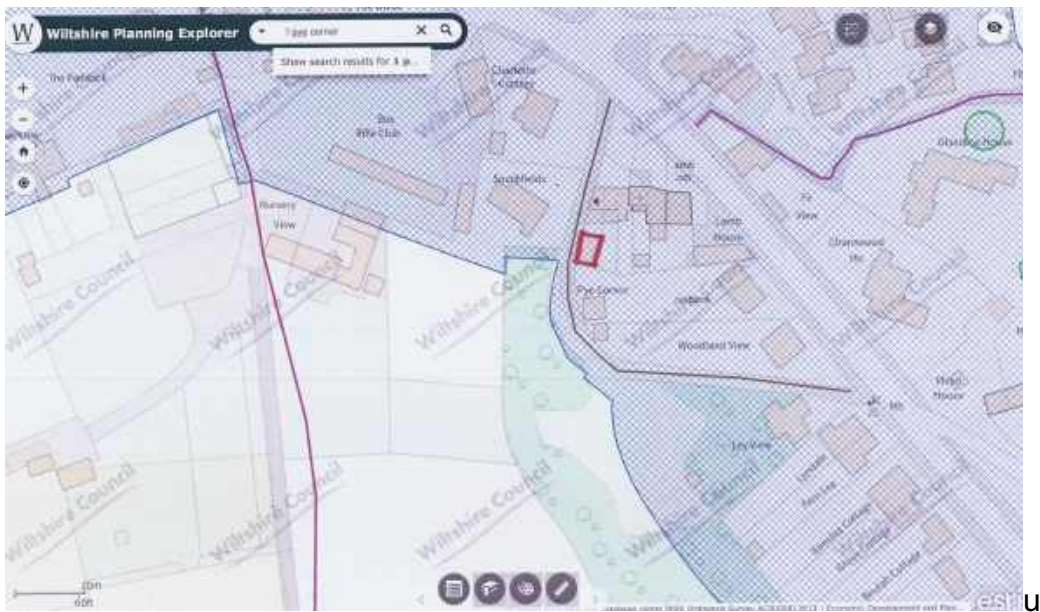
The building forms part of the established settlement of Box and its historic location reflects its previous use as a smithy.

Blacksmiths Cottage is within the development boundary of Box and is also located with the Box Conservation Area. The site is also located in the greenbelt and Cotswold ANOB.



The site location is indicated by a red dot

The map under indicates the location of Blacksmiths Cottage within the established village boundary. Please note that Pye Corner forms part of an established parcel of residential land that follows both Devizes Road and the Byway in no way is this backland development.



To be clear on the matter of gardens. The garden area to 1 Pye Corner covers a large area that abuts the byway. This area already forms a divorced (detached) garden that was almost certainly used by previously by the blacksmith ie: it has an established use for this purpose.



The above map indicates the location of Blacksmiths Cottage (7) and shows that there are properties arranged around the byway which again is as a result of the history of this part of Box.

Photographs of the site taken in July 2026 are located on the next pages.



View towards Devizes Road with Blacksmiths Cottage on the right



View of Blacksmiths Cottage from garden



View of Blacksmiths Cottage from byway



Garden To Blacksmiths Cottage. (Note the garden to 1 Pye Corner is also a “divorced garden”)

3.0 Historic Context

An understanding of the historical development of Blacksmiths Cottage is fundamental to assessing both its contribution to the character of Pye Corner and the appropriateness of its continued use.

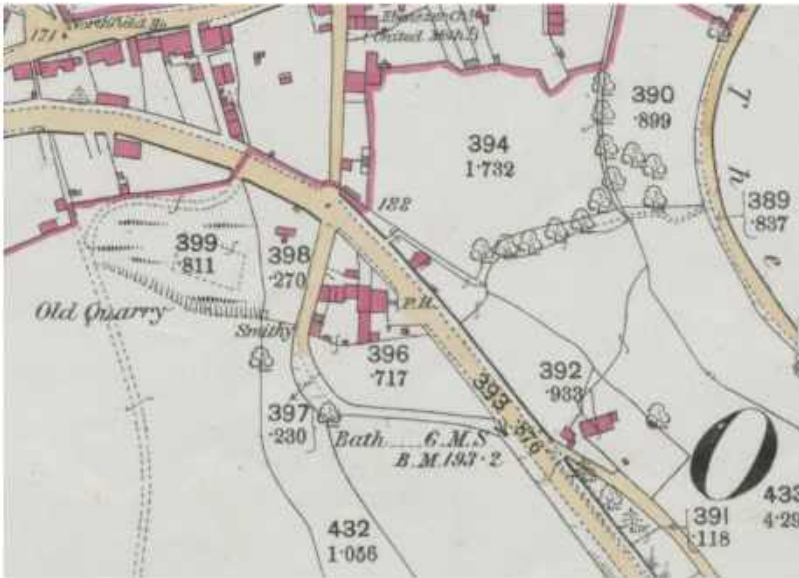
The previous planning application considered the proposal principally in terms of its physical relationship with the surrounding settlement. Whilst that assessment is an important aspect of the planning balance, it is equally important to understand how the building has evolved alongside the village over time which has now been considered further.

The evidence now assembled demonstrates that the former Smithy is not an isolated or incidental building. Rather, it has formed part of the historic fabric of Pye Corner for well over one hundred and seventy years and represents an enduring component of the village's historic working landscape.

Pye Corner occupies an historically significant position on the western approach to the village of Box. Unlike later planned residential development, the settlement evolved gradually in response to local industry, agriculture and the historic highway network. Buildings were added incrementally over many generations, creating an informal pattern of cottages, workshops, ancillary structures and detached gardens that remains evident today.

The character of Pye Corner is therefore defined less by regularity or formal layout than by the cumulative evolution of individual buildings responding to changing economic and social needs. This organic pattern is one of the defining characteristics of the locality and forms an important part of its significance within the wider Conservation Area.

Historical mapping confirms that the building was already established during the nineteenth century and was identified as the "Smithy" on historic Ordnance Survey mapping. See map on next page date 1884. You can observe that whole of Pye Corner was in existence at time and that the Lamb Inn was also present. You can also clearly see the established byway that forms a loop around Pye Corner as it still does today.



The identification of the building as the village Smithy is significant. Blacksmiths occupied an essential role within rural communities throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, providing services not only for agriculture but also for transport, quarrying and the maintenance of tools and equipment. The location of the building is entirely consistent with this historic function.

Situated adjacent to the historic byway and close to routes serving both the village and the nearby quarry, the Smithy occupied a practical position from which it could serve local residents and passing traffic alike. Its location therefore reflects function rather than coincidence.

Research undertaken as part of this application has identified a number of historical sources relating to the occupation of the Smithy and the families associated with Pye Corner.

Local historical records indicate that the building served successive generations of village blacksmiths and remained closely associated with the economic life of Box throughout the nineteenth century.

Research published by Box People & Places records the activities of members of the Worthy Phelps family and the Cannings family, whose connections with the Smithy help illustrate the long-standing importance of the building within the local community.

Whilst these historical accounts are not, in themselves, determinative of the planning balance, they provide valuable context regarding the origins and continued significance of the building within the historic settlement.

One of the most striking aspects of the available historical evidence is the remarkable continuity of the building's presence within Pye Corner.

Comparison of nineteenth-century mapping, twentieth-century aerial photography and current mapping demonstrates that the Smithy has retained its established relationship with the surrounding settlement throughout successive periods of change. These changes over the last hundred years have further linked the building to the village which has developed around it.

Whilst neighbouring land uses have inevitably evolved, the former Smithy has remained a recognisable component of the village as has the terrace of houses at Pye Corner.

The proposal therefore represents the continued occupation and maintenance of a long-established building rather than the introduction of a new form of development into previously undeveloped land. This distinction is an important consideration when assessing the proposal against policies concerned with settlement character.

Although its original use has ceased, the former Smithy continues to make a positive contribution to the character of Pye Corner. Its modest scale, traditional construction and relationship with the historic byway remain legible within the streetscape.

Like many former agricultural and industrial buildings throughout Wiltshire, its continued preservation is now dependent upon identifying a viable long-term use.

Residential conversion offers an opportunity to secure the building's future whilst preserving the external characteristics that contribute to the historic identity of the area.

Without such a use, there is a risk that the building will continue to deteriorate, ultimately resulting in the gradual erosion of a locally significant element of the village's historic environment.

The historical evidence assembled for this application demonstrates that Blacksmiths Cottage has formed part of the established settlement of Pye Corner since at least the mid-nineteenth century and, in all likelihood, predates the earliest mapping currently available.

Its historic role as the village Smithy explains both its location and its relationship with the surrounding highway network. The proposal should therefore be viewed as the continued evolution of an established historic building rather than the introduction of an incongruous or unfamiliar form of development. ie: it is not a new development.

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages the sustainable reuse of existing buildings where this can be achieved in a manner that respects local character and conserves the significance of the historic environment. This is key given that Wiltshire Council does not have a 5 year housing supply and therefore any application for a dwelling or conversion has significant weight in this planning context. ie: Wiltshire Councils Policies are out of date.

In this instance, the proposal provides an opportunity to secure the long-term future of a building that has contributed to the character and identity of Pye Corner for many generations.

Accordingly, the historical development of the site weighs positively in favour of the proposal and provides important context for the assessment of both settlement character and the overall planning balance.

4.0 Character Appraisal of Locality

Box as a village developed in a broadly linear fashion along the A4 (High Street) and Devizes Road. Between these two roads is located the Market Place that has very dense housing to each side of a narrow road. Devizes Road is reached from the High Street via a series of sloping narrow roads which also have properties to both sides. The church is also accessed via a

narrow road from the High Street. There is a quite a variety of architectural styles with a significant number facing directly onto the public highway with limited gardens and close proximity to other dwellings. Interspersed, with the old properties are some modern interventions. This is not an untypical way that a village would have developed overtime ie: spreading out from an older core. The arrival of the great western railway served by Box Hill Station (until 1965) encouraged further development with the Box Hill tunnel being built between 1838-1841 being a key part of the mainline from Bristol to London.

The random juxtaposition of properties can be found at Pye Corner which is repeated throughout the village. Blacksmith Cottage is part of the wider established landscape and is not in any way occupied a backland position.

The following photographs are an assessment of properties in Box for both outlook, character and gardens as far as is possible from the public realm.



Corner of Burtons Lane across from Pye Corner



Burtens Lane (observe narrowness and window juxtaposition)



Pye Corner from Chapel Lane (note similarity to Burtens Lane in width and also note openness of bye way with Blacksmiths Cottage at rear which forms part of the established character of Box)



Chapel Lane (note house directly on footpath)



Chapel Lane (modern dwellings)



Chapel Lane (house abutting footpath which also overlooks neighbour)



View along Chapel Lane to Devizes Road



House accessed directly off High Street (A4)



Divorced Gardens of Fairview Terrace



Lane that separates gardens from Fairview Terrace



View of High Street with Fairview Terrace on right



Market Place (note window onto road)



Market Place



Market Place (note outlook)



Market Place (note outlook)



Market Place (note outlook and narrow lane)



Church Lane



High Street (A4)



High Street (A4)



Lane between High Street and Devizes Road (Note Building Conversion on left)



Lane between High Street (A4) and Devizes Road (A363)



High Street (A4)



Lane between High Street (A4) and Devizes Road (A363)



Lane between High Street (A4) and Devizes Road (A363)



Example of Outlook



Houses in distance on Junction of High Street (A4) and Devizes Road (A363)



Former Lamb Inn Public House converted to dwelling at Pye Corner



Former Lamb Inn Public House converted to dwelling at Pye Corner (note converted outbuilding beyond (residential)).



Former Lamb Inn Public House converted to dwelling at Pye Corner (note converted outbuilding beyond (residential)) to left.

These photographs are only a small example of the character of Box where development is dense and overlooking is accepted. The development has happened over time and has resulted in the cohesion of the village of which both Pye Corner and Blacksmiths Cottage are an integral part.

One of the most striking conclusions arising from the site survey is that Pye Corner derives its character from diversity rather than consistency. No two plots are identical, building orientation varies, boundary treatments differ, access arrangements are informal, detached gardens are commonplace, former working buildings exist alongside traditional cottages.

Individually, these characteristics might appear unusual, but collectively, they define the distinctive identity of the settlement. This diversity is not evidence of poor planning, rather, it is the natural consequence of centuries of gradual development responding to changing social and economic circumstances.

The proposal reflects this established pattern of incremental change and should be understood as part of the continuing evolution of the settlement rather than as an isolated departure from it.

An important conclusion arising from both the historical research and the site appraisal is that adaptation is itself a defining characteristic of Pye Corner.

Historic settlements endure because buildings evolve, agricultural buildings become homes, workshops become studios, chapels become community buildings, former schools become dwellings.

National and local planning policy encourage the effective reuse of existing buildings where their character can be preserved. The proposal exemplifies this principle by retaining an established historic building whilst allowing it to adapt to contemporary needs.

When considered within its proper historical and physical context, the proposal preserves the essential characteristics of Pye Corner and supports the continued conservation of one of its long-established buildings.

5.0 - Proposed Development

It is proposed to carry out alterations both internally and externally to the property. The ground floor will consist of the living room and entrance accessed off the byway and a new staircase to the new first floor. The extension will become a kitchen, with new window that will overlook the by-way and a new WC accessed from the living room with a bin store behind.

At first floor will be two bedrooms and a bathroom. The second bedroom will require a new window which will overlook the byway. Conservation Velux rooflights will be installed in both the extension and main roof. All existing external doors and windows will be replaced with new timber doors and windows. The windows for the living room and first bedroom will also be enlarged within existing openings. A bat box is proposed on the South Gable end.

The daylight study confirms that all rooms have a good level of daylight.

The garden to the property will be across the byway, adjacent to the neighbouring gardens of 1 Pye Corner and Southfields.

Materials

The main property will be retained as existing aside from two new windows and the replacement of all other doors and windows with new timber. The external materials will be repaired if needed and conservation Velux rooflights will be installed in the roof. The extension will be clad in horizontal timber cladding incorporating the new timber window overlooking the byway. The remaining windows and door will be replaced (and in some cases widened). Two conservation Velux rooflights will be installed in the mono-pitch roof.

6.0 – Transport and Access

The site is located off the A365 Devizes Road and is accessed via an established lane from Devizes Road. It is not intended to provide parking for the proposal. Only pedestrian access will be provided via the byway (BOX97) as currently exists. The byway also provides access to 1-4 Pye Corner, Southfields and Charlotte's Cottage.

It is considered that as this proposal is of a small scale that parking for this can be accommodated on Devizes Road which has unrestricted parking close to the entrance to the byway.

The site is located close to public transport and the local facilities in Box which reduces the need to use a car. The Highways Officer has previously agreed that no parking for the proposal is acceptable.

Bus – There is a pair of bus stops located on Devizes Road within about 50m of the site. The predominant route is the D3 which provides a service to Melksham and Bath.

There is a pair of bus stops located on the High Street within about 350m of the site. The predominant route is the X31 which provides a service to Chippenham and Bath.

There is good opportunity for walking and cycling to the shops and local school in Box

The pedestrian access to the property will remain unchanged and it is proposed to provide a cycle shed within the garden.

Bin collection will be as the existing properties on Devizes Road which requires the residents to wheel their bins to a collection point at the bottom of the lane.

7.0 Work Undertaken in response to refusal

The following activities were undertaken:

Commissioning an independent daylight and sunlight assessment.

Undertaking further historical research into the development of the former Smithy and Pye Corner.

Examining historic mapping and aerial photography illustrating the long-established presence of the building within the settlement.

Carrying out a detailed appraisal of the character of Pye Corner and the wider village;
Considering comparable properties within Box, including examples of detached gardens, ancillary buildings and informal historic plot arrangements.

Updating site photography following the clearance of vegetation that previously affected the outlook from the building.

The revised submission is now supported by:

Daylight & Sunlight Assessment	Independent assessment of internal living conditions
Historic Context & Character Appraisal	Assessment of settlement evolution and village character
Updated Site Photography	Demonstrates current outlook following vegetation clearance
Comparative Village Survey	Illustrates established character and pattern of development

Historic Mapping	Demonstrates the long-established presence of the Smithy
Historic Aerial Photography	Confirms continuity of the building within the settlement

Each document has been prepared with the specific intention of assisting the Council in reconsidering the proposal.

8.0 Reasons for Refusal

The reasons for refusal have been addressed by the submission of additional information which show that all these previous concerns have been resolved.

The reasons were:

1 The proposed dwelling would provide restricted outlook and limited private amenity space. The constrained nature of the plot, combined with limited daylight and lack of adequate external space, results in substandard living conditions for future occupants. This conflicts with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Section 12 of the NPPF, which require new development to provide good-quality internal and external living environments.

2 The creation of a separate dwelling and subdivision of an existing garden results in a form of development that is incongruous with the established pattern and character of the area. While the existing building is traditional and the lane informal, the introduction of a second independent household on the plot, with separate domestic activity and limited private amenity space, produces a contrived form of backland development. This arrangement is not consistent with the historic pattern or intended function of the plot, and is harmful to the visual and functional character of development along this lane. The proposal therefore conflicts with Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core.

In respect of reason for refusal 1:

The previous decision concluded that the proposed dwelling would provide an unacceptable living environment due to concerns regarding daylight, outlook and the quality of the external amenity space.

Following the previous refusal, an independent specialist consultant was commissioned to undertake a detailed daylight and sunlight assessment of the proposed dwelling. The assessment has been prepared using recognised industry methodology and provides an objective evaluation of the quality of the proposed accommodation.

The findings demonstrate that the principal habitable rooms achieve appropriate levels of natural daylight and sunlight and are capable of providing satisfactory living accommodation.

Rather than relying upon subjective judgement, the application is therefore supported by independent technical evidence prepared by a suitably qualified specialist.

The report accompanies this application.

Substantial vegetation management has been undertaken within the site. The removal of unmanaged trees and vegetation has materially altered the outlook from the building.

The updated photographs submitted with this application accurately record the current relationship between the dwelling and its surroundings.

The current application should therefore be assessed using contemporary site conditions.

These photographs provide a more representative basis upon which to consider outlook than historic photographs taken prior to the completion of the clearance works. The council can also revisit the site at any time to assess this if required.

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The external amenity space should also be considered within the context of the established character of Pye Corner, where detached and varied garden arrangements are a recurring characteristic of the settlement.

Consequently, the quality of the proposed external space should not be judged solely against suburban expectations but against the established characteristics of the locality. This is key when considered against the village as a whole as opposed to the site in isolation.

The revised application is supported by independent technical evidence. When considered alongside the updated site conditions, it is concluded that the proposal is capable of providing a satisfactory standard of residential accommodation. Accordingly, the previous concerns regarding living conditions have now been comprehensively addressed.

In respect of reason for refusal 2:

The second refusal reason concluded that the proposal would fail to respect the established character and pattern of development within Pye Corner. In response, the applicant has undertaken a detailed appraisal of the settlement together with further historical research into the evolution of the former Smithy.

The historical evidence demonstrates that the building has formed part of the village since at least the nineteenth century and almost certainly predates the earliest available mapping. The proposal therefore concerns the continued evolution of an established historic building rather than the introduction of a new element into the settlement.

This distinction is important when considering the proposal against policies relating to local character.

The Character Appraisal identifies several defining characteristics of Pye Corner:

Organic settlement growth.

Detached gardens.

Historic byways.

Small-scale workshops.

Informal plot arrangements.

Diversity of building orientation.

Collectively these characteristics illustrate that the settlement has evolved gradually over many generations. The proposed conversion reflects this established pattern of adaptation.

The agent has undertaken a photographic survey of comparable properties within the immediate locality. These examples demonstrate that the characteristics previously identified as unusual are, in fact, recurring features of Pye Corner. The proposal should therefore be assessed within its proper local context.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion arising from the additional work undertaken is that the proposal has not fundamentally changed. The historical research explains why the building occupies its present position. The character appraisal explains why the surrounding settlement appears as it does.

The daylight assessment objectively demonstrates the quality of the proposed accommodation.

The updated site photographs accurately record the current relationship between the building and its surroundings.

8.0 The National Planning Policy Framework (2024) ('the Framework') and Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG')

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

39. Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

72. Strategic policy-making authorities should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites,

taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of:

- a) specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption³⁴; and
- b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan period.

78. Strategic policies should include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period, and all plans should consider whether it is appropriate to set out the anticipated rate of development for specific sites. Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies³⁸, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old³⁹. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:

- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or
- b) 20% where there has been significant under delivery⁴⁰ of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply; or
- c) From 1 July 2026, for the purposes of decision-making only, 20% where a local planning authority has a housing requirement adopted in the last five years examined against a previous version of this Framework⁴¹, and whose annual average housing requirement⁴² is 80% or less of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance.

125 Planning policies and decisions should:

- a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;
- b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;

c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;

d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)⁵⁰; and

e) support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes. In particular, they should allow upward extensions – including mansard roofs – where the development would be consistent with the prevailing form of neighbouring properties and the overall street scene, is well-designed (including complying with any local design policies and standards), and can maintain safe access and egress for occupiers. A condition of simultaneous development should not be imposed on an application for multiple upward extensions unless there is an exceptional justification.

12. Achieving well-designed places

131. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

132. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local

planning authorities and developers.

133. To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design preferences. Design guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Their geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety.

134. Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale, and to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents. Landowners and developers may contribute to these exercises, but may also choose to prepare design codes in support of a planning application for sites they wish to develop. Whoever prepares them, all guides and codes should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations for the development of their area, taking into account the guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. These national documents should be used to guide decisions on applications in the absence of locally produced design guides or design codes.

135. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate

amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users;

and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

139. Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design⁵, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or

b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

142. Green Belt serves five purposes:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

c) to assist in safe guarding the countryside from encroachment;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

154. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

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.

219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

220. 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 under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

221. Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disadvantages of departing from those policies.

9.0 Five Year Housing Supply

The council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing supply. The last data issued within Wiltshire's Housing Land Supply Statement (Briefing Note No.25-04 dated 18th June 2025 states the current position is **2.8 years**. This is the figure that should be used to inform decision-taking of planning applications and appeals. The application should be determined in accordance with the principles of sustainable development through the application of "tilted balance".

10.0 The Proposal in Response to Planning Policies

The proposal is to convert an existing building within the development boundary of Box.

Box is defined as a large village within Core Policy 11 - Spatial Strategy for the Corsham Community Area.

The proposal reuses the building with fairly minimal external changes so will have limited effect on the conservation area, the greenbelt and the Cotswold ANOB. Also, the building form and footprint will not be any larger than currently exists.

The building is already part of the built fabric of Box and can be classed as an infill plot albeit it is an extant property. This is a key planning consideration.

The proposal has sufficient daylight and outlook.

The proposal has sufficient outdoor amenity space.

11.0 Conclusion

The former Smithy occupies an important place within the historic development of Pye Corner. Its significance lies not simply in its age, but in the role it has played within the gradual evolution of the village over many generations. The proposal recognises that significance.

It does not seek to erase the building's history or alter its relationship with the surrounding settlement. Instead, it seeks to ensure that a building whose original function has long since disappeared can continue to make a positive contribution to the village through an appropriate new use.

The proposal delivers a number of planning benefits which include reuse of an existing building and providing an additional dwelling towards the shortfall in the 5 year housing supply

For these reasons, it is respectfully concluded that the proposal accords with the objectives of the Development Plan when read as a whole and with the National Planning Policy Framework.

For over a century and a half the former Smithy has adapted to the changing needs of Pye Corner. The present proposal does not seek to alter that relationship; it seeks to ensure that it can continue.

Planning permission is therefore respectfully sought.