

HERITAGE STATEMENT

In respect of:

**PROPOSED CONVERSION OF FORMER SMITHY TO A SINGLE DWELLING
AND ASSOCIATED WORKS**

At:

THE OLD FORGE, UPPER WOODFORD, SP4 6NU

On behalf of:

Mr G Chitty

Date:

July 2025



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement accompanies an application for planning permission for the proposed conversion of the former smithy to a single dwelling at The Old Forge in Upper Woodford.
- 1.2 Upper Woodford is the largest of three villages, with Lower Woodford and Middle Woodford, on the west bank of the river Avon, approximately 4 miles north of Salisbury. The Old Forge is a disused smithy located adjacent to the riverbank, south of Woodford Bridge. The property occupies a linear parcel of land on the riverbank.



Fig.1 Location plan

- 1.3 The report describes the heritage significance of the property and provides an assessment of the impact of the proposals in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (the NPPF, revised December 2024) and to meet the council's local validation checklist for applications affecting heritage assets.

- 1.4 The report was commissioned by the applicant, Mr G Chitty, and has been prepared by Elaine Milton BSc (Hons) MSc DipArchCons MRTPI IHBC, an individual with ‘appropriate expertise’ as advised by paragraph 207 of the NPPF. A site visit was undertaken on 21 May 2024.
- 1.5 The significance of the site was identified using the guidance contained within the Historic England documents *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008), *Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12* (October 2019) and *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (December 2017).
- 1.6 Information on the history of the site has been drawn from several sources, a list of which is presented on **p21**.
- 1.7 A pre-application enquiry was made in respect of the conversion of the building to a single dwelling, with indicative plans presented as part of the submission. The response from the Conservation Officer (within the pre-application response letter dated 1 October 2024) was in summary:
- The building is of historic value and is considered a ‘non-designated heritage asset’
 - It is in poor repair and detracts from the village
 - The proposal for residential use would offer the opportunity to give the building a long-term future
 - The associated conservation and enhancement of the building would improve its appearance and in turn enhance the wider area
 - The condition of the building and degree of repair would need to be explained to ensure significant rebuilding is not required
 - Enclosure of the space to the north of the building would be harmful to the open setting of the building, affecting appreciation of its former use
 - A single car parking space could possibly be achieved to the south of the building without causing harm to heritage significance.

2.0 Heritage Designations

- 2.1 The Old Forge is an unlisted building and is not located within a designated conservation area.
- 2.2 The building was regarded during the pre-application process to be of sufficient heritage value to be deemed a 'non-designated heritage asset' (NDHA) under the terms of the NPPF, i.e. it is a building recognised by the local planning authority as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.¹
- 2.3 The property falls within the setting of two Grade II listed buildings – 48 Upper Woodford on the opposite side of the road to the north-west and Woodford Bridge to the north.

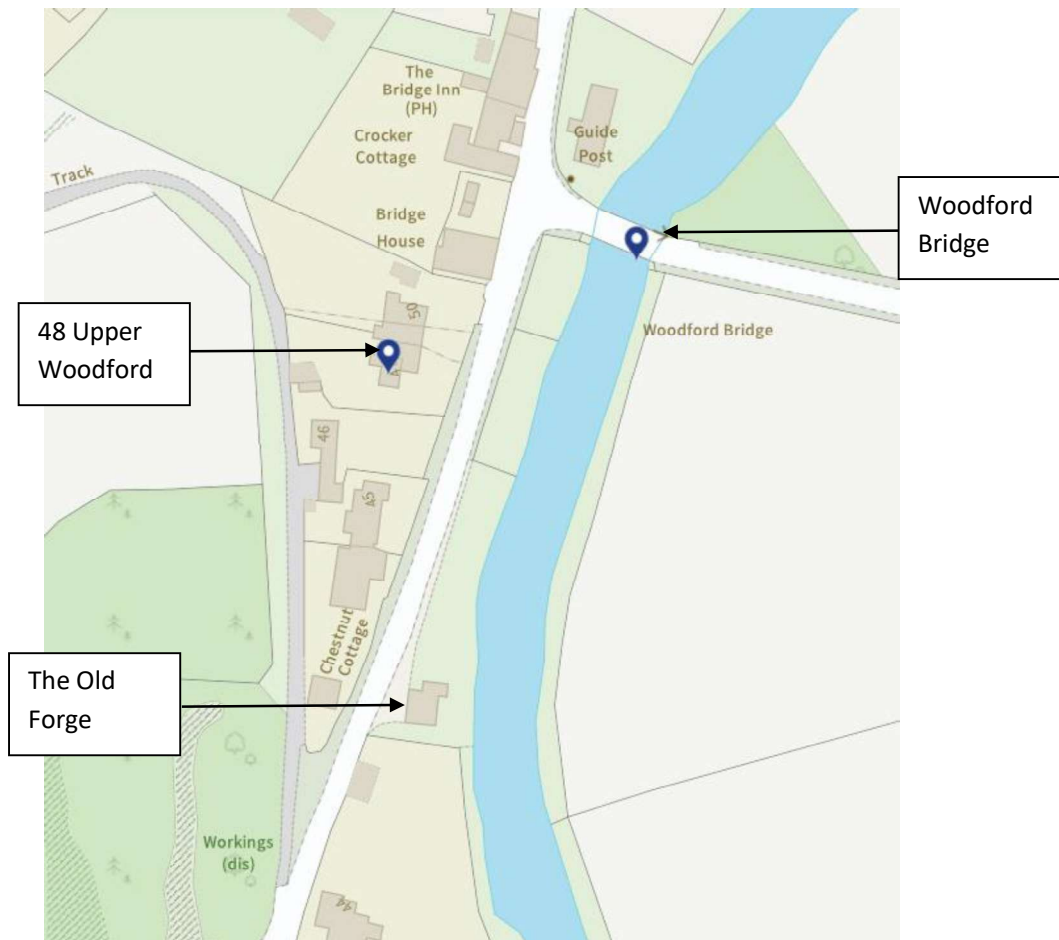


Fig.2 Plan showing listed buildings within the vicinity of The Old Forge

¹ Paragraph 039 of the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

3.0 Description of the Building

- 3.1 The Old Forge is a small, single-storey structure on the east side of the road through Upper Woodford. The building is constructed in cob (rendered) on a flint base with some brickwork on the frontage, around the openings and for the chimney stack (southern end). It has a gabled roof with the ridge set parallel to the road, covered in double Roman clay tiles and having low eaves.



Fig.3 View of The Old Forge from the north

- 3.2 There is a pair of timber doors and a window on the front facing the road. There are further modestly sized windows to the sides and rear, all a mix of casements and some multi-paned. Attached to the northern end of the building is a small gabled flint and brick shed with a pitched tiled roof. There is a corrugated roofed lean-to attached to the northern end of the rear wall. The building is showing signs of significant deterioration with damage to roof tiles and with areas of loose and missing wall render. The back of the building is largely concealed by vegetation.



Fig.4 View from the south



Fig.5 Shed structure on the northern end of the building



Fig.6 Lean-to on the rear of the building



Fig.7 View along the back of the building

- 3.3 Internally, the building is a single space that is open to the underside of the roof. The two-bay roof has a mid-span king-post truss with a single row of tenoned purlins and slender rafters, with infill plaster below the truss struts and with the roof felted on its underside. The floor within the building is concrete and the internal faces of the walls are exposed cob.



Fig.8 Interior of the building – concrete floor, cob walls and king-post truss



Fig.9 King-post truss with plaster infill below the struts

- 3.4 The building is bounded to the south by 44 Upper Woodford, the access drive of which is adjacent to the site. The river Avon flanks the site to the east. The northern part of the site is a linear strip of land between the road and the riverbank, which is very overgrown and contains a mix of trees, shrubs and grass.



Fig.10 View looking south towards the entrance of the adjacent No.44



Fig.11 View looking north along the village street

4.0 History

- 4.1 According to the Wiltshire Community History website, it is thought that in the 11th century Woodford Manor belonged to the bishop of Salisbury and so was not mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086. The Woodfords remained with the bishops until 1869 when they were taken over by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. They were sold in 1920 to the Hon Louis Greville of Heale House (formerly the residence of the Hyde family).
- 4.2 The Old Forge was not present on the 1839 Tithe map but is in existence by the 1879 Ordnance Survey map, where it is labelled 'Smithy' and was located by a section of watercourse that was altered around the gardens of Heale House. The maps show it was originally smaller but took its present form by 1900.

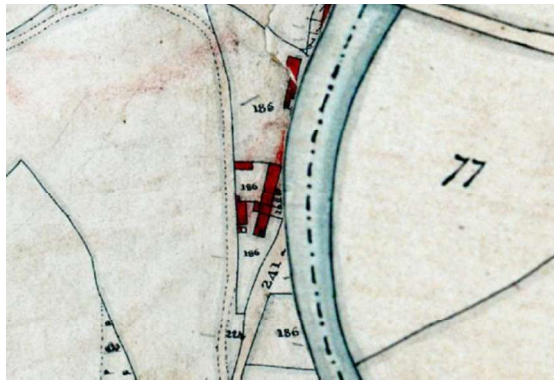


Fig.12 Woodford tithe map of 1839 – building not present



Fig.13 OS map of 1879 – small building present

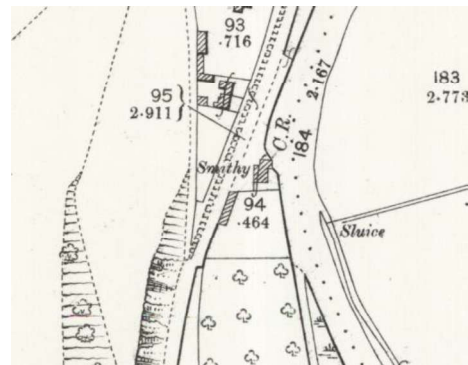


Fig.14 OS map of 1900- building enlarged

- 4.3 The smithy was run by the Merchant family, with John Merchant, Blacksmith recorded as the occupier in the Kelly's Directory of 1867. It is understood the building was last used as a blacksmith's up until c1964 after which it was a garage/workshop, although has been vacant for the last 10 years or so and has fallen into dereliction. The building was recently sold by the Heale House estate.

5.0 Assessment of Significance

Non-Designated Heritage Asset

5.1 The Old Forge is a mid-19th century building of historic interest for its original function as the village blacksmith's forge, and it forms part of the historic fabric of the settlement. It also has a degree of architectural value as a non-domestic vernacular village structure built in cob walling. While the building is unlisted and is unlikely to meet the criteria for listing due to its lack of intact interior, it is of sufficient heritage significance to merit being considered a 'non-designated heritage asset' under the terms of the NPPF.

5.2 The interest of the building primarily derives from:

- The evidence it provides of its historic function by virtue of it being a modest, single-storey detached structure having small windows, a large set of doors and a chimney and having a basic, full-height space internally
- Its materials and methods of construction that reflect the building's age, status and vernacular building
- Its strategic position in a prominent position within the heart of the settlement and its contribution to the village street scene.

Setting of Listed Buildings

5.3 The Old Forge falls within the setting of 48 Upper Woodford and Woodford Bridge, both Grade II listed buildings. The verdant, rural setting and the presence of the river contribute to the significance of the listed buildings. The strip of land and riverbank to the north of The Old Forge form part of the setting.

6.0 Proposals

6.1 The proposals are for the conversion of the building to a single dwelling. The works to convert the building are described and illustrated in the accompanying Design Statement and drawings produced by Affinity Architects. In essence, the scheme would involve preserving as much of the existing building fabric as possible while making minor repairs and alterations for the new use.

6.2 The proposed works can be summarised as follows:

- Partial rebuilding of the damaged rear (east) cob wall above plinth level in timber-frame with horizontal timber cladding; stabilisation, repair and possible underpinning of the remaining cob walls and their finishing in lime plaster/render
- Insulation of the roof and re-covering using salvaged double Roman clay tiles; replacement of the rainwater goods in matching grey plastic
- Internal floor lowered and the installation of a Limecrete floor system
- The late 19th century northern addition would be used as the main entrance and lobby; it would have new timber bi-fold outer doors and an inner solid door with sidelights; a new window opening would be formed within the north gable of the lobby
- Replacement of the lean-to on the rear of the northern addition with a lean-to on the same footprint, to accommodate a bathroom
- Formation of a timber deck to the rear of the main block
- Reuse of the existing window and door openings and insertion of new traditional timber casements; reuse of the large door opening for a new window with vertical boarding below
- Formation of a new window opening and widening of the existing door opening in the rear (east) elevation
- Formation of two new door openings within the cob walls, from the lobby to the lean-to and main block
- Subdivision of the ground floor with a stud partition midway under the king-post truss to create a separate kitchen and living space
- Insertion of an independent first floor structure occupying half the space and a straight-flight staircase to form a sleeping gallery; glazed panels over the plaster infill that exists below the raking struts of the truss
- Insertion of a Velux 'balcony' rooflight on the rear roof slope to light the sleeping gallery and provide views
- Reuse of the chimney for a woodburning stove
- Formation of 2 new parking spaces end-to-end within a layby created to the north of the building.

7.0 Policy Context

Primary Legislation

- 7.1 A statutory duty exists under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') for the local planning authority in considering whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

National Planning Policy

- 7.2 National planning policy relating to the historic environment is provided within section 16 of the NPPF (revised December 2024). It advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 7.3 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Any harm or loss to a heritage asset's significance should require clear and convincing justification and needs to be weighed against identifiable public benefits. Substantial harm or loss of a Grade II listed building should be exceptional.
- 7.4 Paragraph 214 of the NPPF advises where proposals would lead to substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the proposals should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of four listed criteria therein apply.
- 7.5 Paragraph 215 advises that where proposals would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 7.6 Paragraph 216 says that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage assets should be taken into account in determining the

application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

- 7.7 Paragraph 219 of the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas or the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance.

Development Plan Policy

- 7.8 The statutory duty is reflected in the *Wiltshire Core Strategy* (WCS), which was adopted by Wiltshire Council on 20 January 2015. Core Policy 58 of the WCS seeks to promote the conservation and, where possible, enhancement of the county's historic environment.

Best Practice Guidance

- 7.9 It is advisable that proposals for repair, restoration and alteration of heritage assets follow the guidance within the *Historic England Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets* (HEAN2, February 2016). The document acknowledges (paragraph 3) that the best way to conserve a building is to keep it in use, and that a '*reasonable and proportionate approach to owners' needs is therefore essential*'.
- 7.10 As a general principle for adaptation, HEAN2 advises as much of the historic fabric and plan form that contributes to the significance of a heritage asset should be retained as possible, with new work ideally being reversible. Harm to significance may be justified on grounds of overriding public benefit that may accrue including maintaining the building in its optimum viable use.
- 7.11 HEAN2 also advises that some of the issues to consider in respect of new additions are proportion, height, massing, bulk, materials and setting, and that new work should not dominate the existing in terms of scale, material or siting. The guidance advises that an assessment of the asset's significance will usually suggest an appropriate form of any extension.
- 7.12 HEAN2 provides guidance on restoration of lost or damaged features. It advises that restoration is likely to be acceptable if *inter alia* the significance of the elements that would be restored 'decisively outweighs' the significance of those that would be lost,

and the work proposed is justified by ‘compelling evidence’ of the evolution of the heritage asset and is *‘executed in accordance with that evidence’*.

8.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

Proposed Reuse

- 8.1 The Old Forge has lain vacant for the last 10 years or so and is in a state of dereliction. While the original use of a building is generally the best use, there is no reasonable prospect of the building returning to its use as a blacksmith's.
- 8.2 The proposal for residential use would be an appropriate use as it would see the building repaired and repurposed, giving the heritage asset a new lease of life and helping to secure its long-term conservation in accordance with the objectives of HEAN2.
- 8.3 The repair and reuse of the building would enhance the street scene and the settings of the two nearby listed buildings.

Walls

- 8.4 The architect's plans indicate that most of the cob walls are structurally sound and are not in need of rebuilding thus preserving the fabric and character of the original cob building.
- 8.5 The partial reconstruction of the damaged rear (east) cob wall with timber frame and weatherboard cladding would result in a minor and honest repair to the inconspicuous elevation. The timber cladding for the east wall and replacement lean-to would have a traditional appearance.
- 8.6 The existing lean-to is not of heritage value. Providing the shower within a replacement lean-to structure would minimise the amount of subdivision within the building while replicating the existing form and character.

Openings

- 8.7 Existing openings would be reused with only a few modest new openings being created, preserving the building's character and being structurally suitable for cob construction.
- 8.8 The proposed windows and doors would be of traditional appearance and simple design, in keeping with the building. The character of the large doors on the

building's frontage would be maintained with the design, material and proportions of the window and boarding.

Roof

- 8.9 The roof would be insulated from the underside enabling the profile of the roof to be maintained. The double Roman clay tiles would be reused or complemented with second-hand ones to match. The brick chimney would be retained. Rainwater goods would match existing.
- 8.10 The 'balcony' rooflight would provide natural light and views to enable the provision of a gallery, maximising the floorspace within the building and making it economically viable to convert. The rooflight would be set within the plane of the roof and in a non-prominent position on the rear roof slope, where it might only be glimpsed from a distance.



Fig.15 Architect's sketch of the back of the building from the river

Internal Alterations

- 8.11 The main ground floor space would only be split in two and this would be undertaken naturally along the truss line with a stud partition that could be reversible. One half of the space would be open to the underside of the roof and the other half occupied by a gallery, enabling the original full-height space to remain appreciated.

- 8.12 The proposed Limecrete floor would provide the building with an insulated, usable and yet breathable floor finish.

Alterations Within the Building's Setting

- 8.13 The proposed timber deck at the rear of the building would provide the dwelling with a modest amount of outside space for seating and enjoying the riverside views in a way that would be discreet and would minimise the impacts of domestic paraphernalia.
- 8.14 The two parking spaces proposed within a layby to the north of the building would have a low level of encroachment into the plot and minimal loss of soft landscaping. The parcel of land to the north would remain verdant and unspoilt.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The Old Forge is an unlisted building but has a degree of heritage value and is deemed a non-designated heritage asset under the terms of the NPPF.
- 9.2 The building has been vacant for 10 years or so and is in poor condition. The proposed conversion of the building would facilitate its repair and help secure the long-term preservation of the heritage asset.
- 9.3 The works being proposed to convert the building to a single dwelling have been sensitively designed and would result in minimal alteration to the building's exterior, fabric and plan form.
- 9.4 In balancing the scale of harm or loss with the significance of the non-designated heritage asset as required by paragraph 216 of the NPPF, the scheme would result in an overall positive outcome for The Old Forge.
- 9.5 The proposals would improve the appearance of the village street, and the setting of the two nearby listed buildings would be preserved and enhanced.

Sources Used in the Report

Publications

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance, English Heritage (now Historic England), April 2008.

Historic Environment Advice Note 2: Making Changes to Heritage Assets, Historic England, February 2016.

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic England, December 2017.

Statements of Heritage Significance: Historic England Advice Note 12, Historic England, October 2019.

Websites

Wiltshire Community History: Woodford

<https://apps.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityhistory/Community/Index/255>

Date accessed: 17 July 2025.

Kelly's Directory for Woodford, 1867 via Wiltshire OPC

<https://www.wiltshire-opc.org.uk/Items/Woodford/Woodford%20-%20Kellys%201867.pdf>

Date accessed: 17 July 2025.

Mapping

Woodford tithe map of 1839.

Ordnance Survey maps: 1879, 1900.