

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION

CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2026/02713
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	Porton Baptist Chapel, High Street, Porton, Salisbury, SP4 0LH
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Change of use of the former Baptist chapel from Use Class F1 (non-residential institution) to a single residential dwelling (Use Class C3).
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION/CONTEXT

The application site comprises a former Baptist chapel located within the village of Porton, Wiltshire. The site sits on the edge of an established rural settlement characterised by a mix of residential properties, agricultural land and community buildings.

The chapel occupies a modest plot and is positioned stepped back slightly from the highway.

The site is subject to the following key constraints and designations: Porton conservation area, New Forest Protected Sites 15km Recreation zone of influence.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the former Baptist chapel (Class F1) to a single residential dwelling (Use Class C3), together with associated internal alterations and limited external modifications.

The proposal seeks to convert the building into a single residential dwelling with the following key elements:

Internal Works:

- Creation of an open plan living space within the main hall
- Installation of a mezzanine floor to provide additional accommodation
- Formation of a kitchen and bathroom within the existing footprint
- Integration of the existing rear sunken/under croft space into the main hall layout.

External changes include:

- Replacement of selected rear west-facing doors that access the Croft area with bifold doors to provide improved access to full height. Current doors do not conform to building regulations.

- Minor adjustments to openings where necessary to support the internal layout ie removal of side door (South-facing) (does not conform to building regulations and due to the height of the door is unsafe to use). Heat loss from this opening and unnecessary to the intended use of the building and its occupier.
- Replacement of the front east-facing brown PVC doors on the flat roof extension with double oak doors with wooden frames that match the current character and design of the building so that the overall public view is kept in keeping.
- The addition of solar panels to the south-facing sloped roof which is not visible from the street view.
- The addition of an Air source heat pump system within the grounds of the property situated on the north-facing approach, totally obscured from street view.
- The installation of 1 EV charging unit positioned on the south-facing flat roof extension.

PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal / Summary
S/2005/2210 - Full planning permission Decision - Approve with Conditions Date: 6/12/2005 – SINGLE STOREY FRONT EXTENSION REPOSITION OF ENTRANCE DOORS AND OTHER MINOR WORKS

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Legislation:

National Planning Policy:

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

Development Plan:

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

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

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

- Core Policy 1 Settlement Strategy;
- Core Policy 2 Delivery Strategy;
- Core Policy 3 Infrastructure Requirements;
- Core Policy 23 Spatial Strategy: Southern Wiltshire Community Area
- Core Policy 41 Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy;
- Core Policy 45 Meeting Wiltshire's Housing Needs;
- Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life;
- Core Policy 49 Community Facilities
- Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Core Policy 51 Landscape
- Core Policy 57 Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping;
- Core Policy 58 Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment;
- Core Policy 60 Sustainable Transport;
- Core Policy 61 Transport & Development;
- Core Policy 62 Development Impacts on the Transport Network;
- Core Policy 63 Transport Strategies
- Core Policy 64 Demand Management
- Core Policy 67 Flood Risk;
- Core Policy 68 Water Resources;

Supplementary Planning Documents and other Guidance:

- Wiltshire Design Guide (adopted April 2024)
- Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026, adopted 2015 - including the Car Parking Strategy and Cycling Strategy, adopted 2015
- Wiltshire Council's Waste Core Strategy, adopted July 2009
- Wiltshire Council's Waste Storage and Collection: Guidance for Developers Supplementary Planning Document, January 2017
- Wiltshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) o Active travel infrastructure design standards 2022 o Active travel parking standards and design guide 2022
- Air Quality SPD (July 2023)
- Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, adopted 25 February 2020

ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area
- Impact on Amenity
- Highways
- Ecology

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

The views of consultees are material considerations in the determination of the application. However, the decision-maker must exercise their own planning judgement. Where consultees raise concerns or recommend conditions, these have been considered and are addressed within the assessment section of this report.

WC Highways: No objection (Full comments below) subject to conditions relating to access surfacing and the provision of cycle storage.

WC Conservation: No objection, (Full comments below) subject to conditions relating to PD right removal for windows and roof covering to ensure the visual qualities of the building are upheld

WC Public Protection: No comment

WC Ecology: No objection subject to conditions

Parish/Town Council: Support

REPRESENTATIONS

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

Below is a summary of the representations received during the consultation period. Only material planning considerations have been taken into account in the assessment of this application. Non-material issues, such as property values or private legal disputes, cannot be considered in the determination process.

One letter was received, accepting the proposal in principle but raised a concern regarding the proposed West facing first floor window being altered to a Juliette balcony. It was raised that this may not be in keeping and could pose an adverse effect upon neighbouring residential amenities.

Each material planning issue raised is addressed within the assessment below.

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.

The assessment below considers each of the main issues identified above. Each topic is assessed in turn with reference to the relevant policy context, the evidence submitted, consultee responses, and all other material considerations, before a conclusion is reached.

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).

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

The site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Porton where an objection in principle would generally be anticipated. However, the site is located on the edge of the built-up area and within reasonable proximity of a limited range of local facilities and some public transport provision. In addition, the proposal seeks to convert a former chapel into a single dwelling. The development is considered in a reasonably sustainable location and involves the conversion of an existing building for a use that would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape, the building can be served by adequate access and infrastructure, and the site has reasonable access to local services.

Furthermore, Porton is designated as a small village and Core Policy 2 states that any development outside the defined limits of development 'Other than in circumstances as permitted by other policies within the plan identified in paragraph 4.25, development will not be permitted'.

Paragraph 4.25 lists exceptions such as: Additional employment land, Military establishments rural exemption sites development related to tourism specialist accommodation provision and supporting rural life.

Core Policy 48 Supporting Rural Life, states that: 'Proposals to convert and re-use rural buildings for employment, tourism, cultural and community uses will be supported 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.'

The proposed conversion of the former Chapel satisfies the above criteria as the building is capable of conversion without the need for major rebuilding, preserving the character of the original building, is set within a residential street and therefore the proposed use would not detract from the character or appearance of the landscape, and is suitably located close to local services and is served by adequate access and infrastructure.

Therefore, in line with the above relevant policy, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, subject to assessment of the site specific constraints.

5 Year Housing Land Supply

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

The Council can currently demonstrate a 2.8 years housing land supply of housing at a unitary authority level.

Loss of Community Facility

CP49 Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities, of the WCS, states that rural facilities and services are those that benefit the local community such as local shops, meeting place, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and place of worship. There is a need to protect and encourage the development of rural services and facilities in Wiltshire to ensure settlements can still meet some of the day to day needs of the people who live in them.

CP49 states: 'Proposals involving the loss of a community service or facility will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the site/building is no longer economically viable for an alternative community use. Preference will be given to retaining the existing use in the first instance, then for an alternative community use. Where this is not possible, a mixed use, which still retains a substantial portion of the community facility/service, will be supported.'

Redevelopment for non-community service/facility use will only be permitted as a last resort and where all other options have been exhausted.

The Design and Access Statement submitted in support of the application addresses the use and states:

The building has been marketed for sale by Carter and May with scope for a Residential Development, with no interest received from relevant organisations or groups. This demonstrates that there is no realistic prospect of the building returning to its former use or being taken on for an alternative community function.

In considering whether the building could reasonably be retained for an alternative community function, regard has been given to its physical characteristics and operational constraints. The building is modest in size and was designed for a specific purpose. The internal configuration including the presence of a rear undercroft space requiring upgrading, presents limitations in terms of flexibility and usability.

In addition, the level of investment required to bring the building up to modern standards for public use, including compliance with Building Regulations and accessibility requirements would be substantial.

These factors significantly reduce the likelihood of the building being taken forward for an alternative community use.

There is an established network of community and religious facilities within the wider area, which continue to operate and serve the local population.

The presence of these facilities reduces any reliance on the application site to fulfil a community function and indicates that the building is not essential to maintaining local provision.

There are a number of alternative Baptist and Christian places of worship within a short distance of the site, including but not limit to:

- *Wilton Baptist Church – 6.5 Miles - located in the wider Salisbury area*
- *St John the Baptist Allington – 4 Miles away, is a popular church in Allington*
- *Salisbury Baptist Church – 4.5 Miles a larger, well-established congregation offering regular services and community activities*
- *Amesbury Baptist church – 3.1 Miles*
- *Broughton and Wallop Baptist Church – 7.5 Miles*

In addition, other denominations are represented locally, including:

- *St Nicholas Church Idmiston*
- *St Mary's Church Porton*

These facilities collectively provide a range of accessible and active places of worship, ensuring that the spiritual and community needs of the area continue to be met.

The distribution of alternate Baptist churches within a 3-8 Miles radius demonstrates that the loss of the facility would not result in a lack of provision, with multiple established congregations accessible within a short travel time.

As such, it is evident that the building has been unoccupied for at least 17 Months and has been marketed adequately during this time.

It is accepted that the use as a community facility is no longer economically viable and has declined over several years. Alternative provisions are in close proximity to the site, and the local availability of community buildings is considered suitable mitigation against the loss of The Chapel, in accordance with NPPF Polich HC6 which states:

- a. It can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the use being retained, either due to there being insufficient community support for the service it provides, or because it is no longer viable or feasible to operate (in the case of shops and public houses where commercial viability is an issue, evidence should be provided that reasonable steps have been taken to market the property for its existing use without success, for a period of at least 12 months); or*
- b. The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or 76 better provision, in a location which offers comparable or improved accessibility for the community it serves; or*
- c. The decision-maker is satisfied that there is sufficient alternative provision of the type of use concerned in the local area, such that its loss will not diminish access to key community facilities and public service infrastructure.*

Design and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

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 14 of the NPPF emphasises design that is:

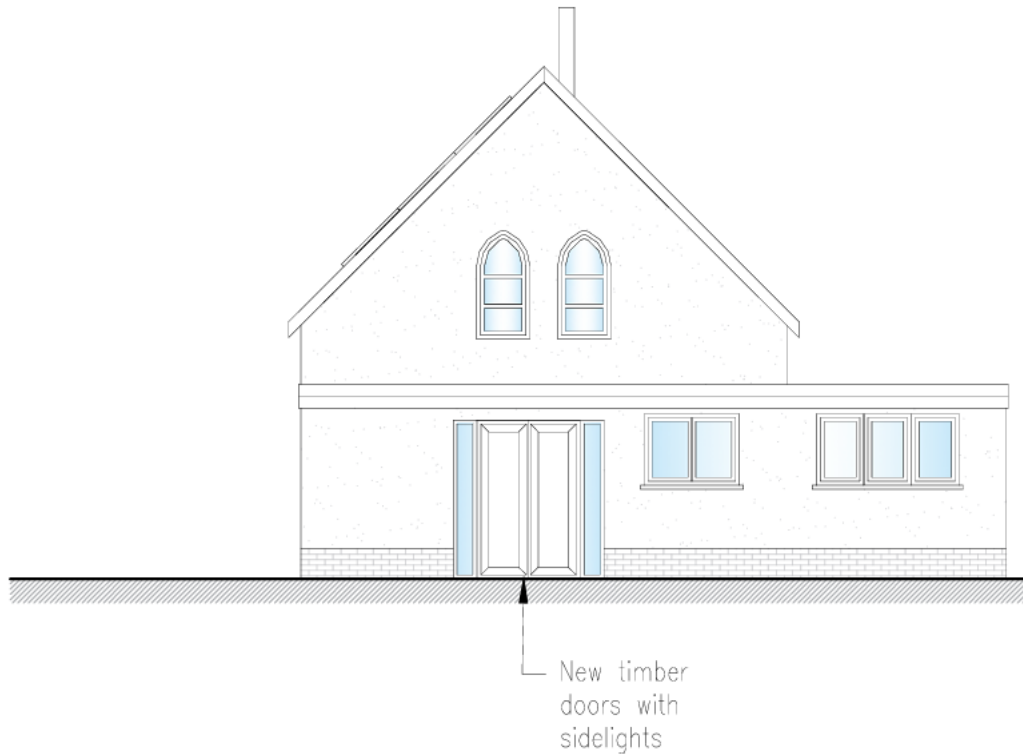
- Visually attractive.
- Functionally effective.
- Contributes to the quality of the built environment.

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

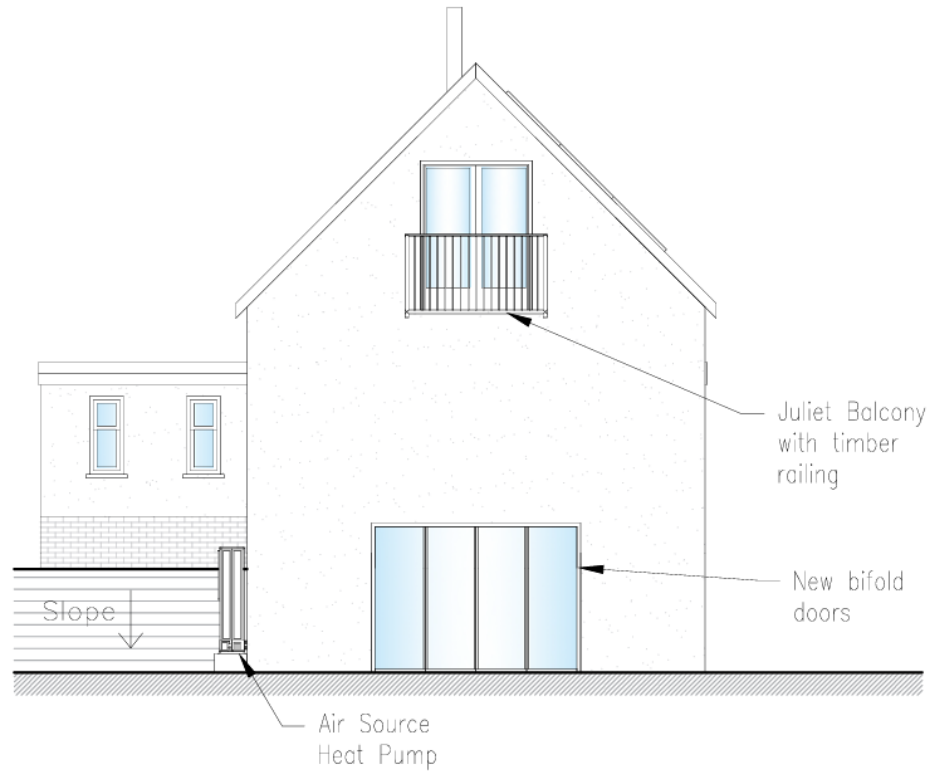
Assessment

The site is positioned amongst a sporadic mix of residential dwellings.

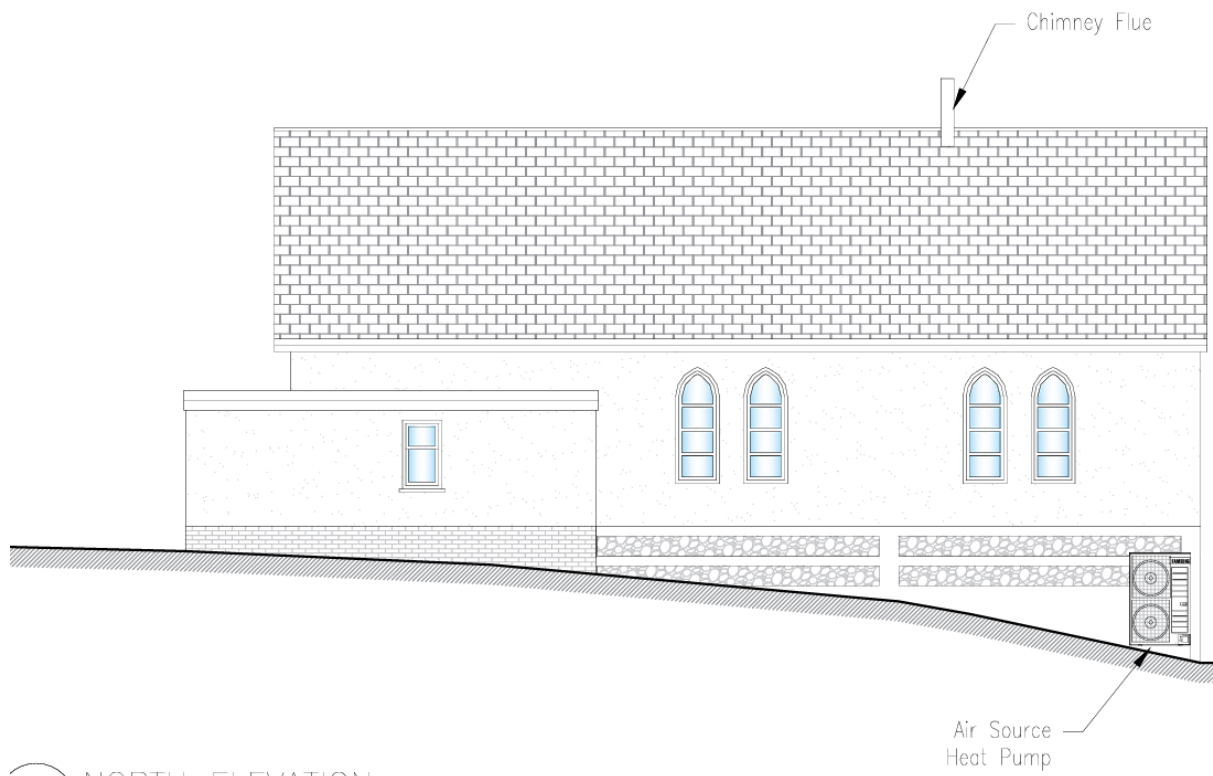
The proposal incorporates some minor exterior alterations but generally would not appear vastly different to the existing chapel. The proposal seeks to retain the character of the building, with the existing ground floor feature windows retained.



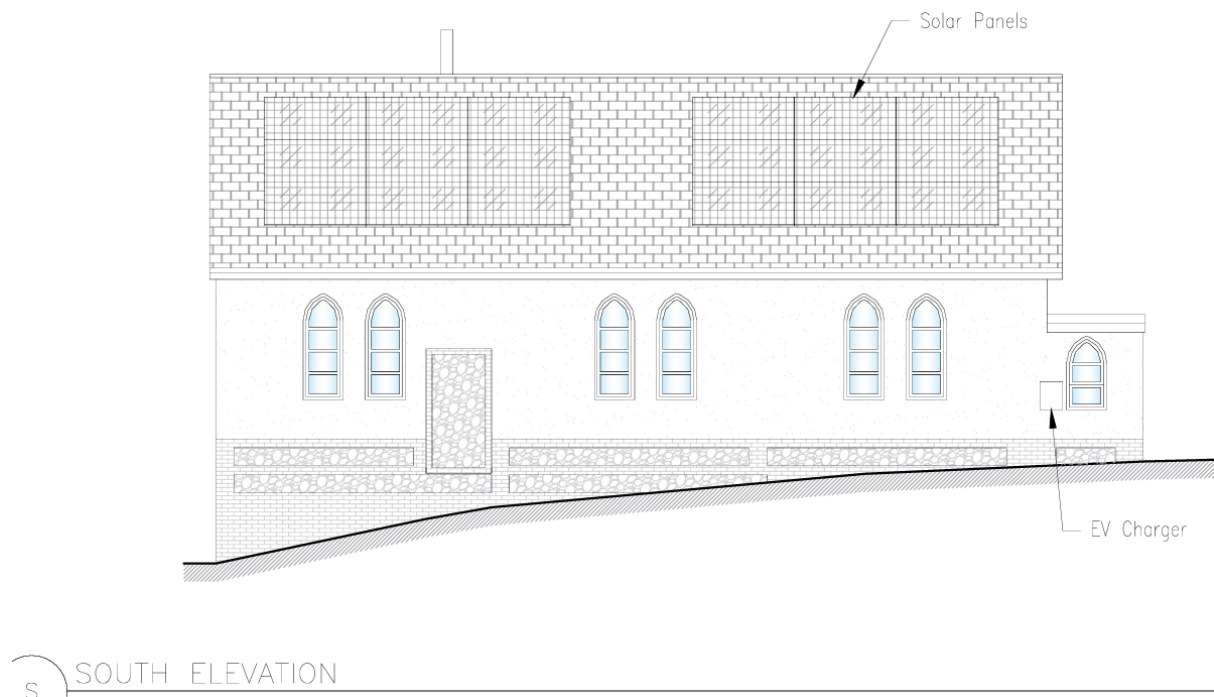
E EAST ELEVATION
1:75



W WEST ELEVATION
1:75



NORTH ELEVATION



The minimal external alterations, when viewed from within the streetscene are considered complimentary to the existing character and the internal configurations sympathetic to the existing building. Retaining the character of the former Church would ensure that the development integrates effectively into the setting, and the proposed alterations are considered sympathetic.

The proposal does incorporate altering the existing first floor level Western elevation window to double doors with a Juliette balcony. Being to the rear of the site this would not be visible from within the streetscene. Nonetheless, the addition is not considered to cause any visual harm for the building or the wider character of the Conservation Area and has not been raised by the Councils Conservation Officer.

Conclusion

Having regard to the above, it is considered the external alterations are modest and would not negatively impact the appearance of the Conservation Area and would retain the Chapels overall character within the streetscene.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy Context

From the point of view of the historic environment the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Section 72(1) of the Act requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

The NPPF outlines government policy for planning. HE9 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development. In particular: (a) *Retain and conserve buildings and*

other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible.

The Planning Practice Guidance provides guidance on interpreting the NPPF.

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

The Council's Core Strategy CP 57: Ensuring high quality design requires a high quality of design in all new developments. The policy requires applicants to "demonstrate how the proposal will make a positive contribution to the character of Wiltshire through (amongst other things) responding to the value of the natural and historic environment and being sympathetic to and conserving historic buildings and landscapes. Development is required to respond positively to the existing in terms of building layouts, built form, height, mass, scale, building line, plot size, elevational design, materials, streetscape and rooflines to effectively integrate the building into its setting.

As previously stated the proposed alterations are not considered to pose any visual harm upon the character and appearance of the Conservation area. In addition, as the church is located immediately adjacent residential properties the proposed residential use would not be an alien feature along the High Street.

The Council's Conservation officer was consulted on the proposal and provided the following comments:

The building is within the Porton CA and the application rightly describes it making a positive contribution. Section 72 of the PLBCA Act 1990, the NPPF and CP58 all apply. I have no significant issues with the scheme which takes a conservative approach to the conversion, however the heritage statement tells us very little about the building and provides no internal photographs. I have located sufficient internal photographs on an estate agent's website (in pdf attached) which show a typically plain interior. The building was erected between the 1845(ish) tithe map and the 1880 OS map, as one might expect from its appearance, although I suspect there is quite a lot more history to be found of Baptists in Porton.

The form and materials of the building do contribute positively to the character and interest of the CA, (excepting the modern front extension) complemented by the slate roofed property to the north, presumably originally the manse. I have no objections to the proposals but would urge consideration of the restriction of PD rights with regard to windows and roof covering - there will surely be a building regs requirement for better insulated windows as part of the conversion, and it would be decidedly harmful were they to become standard upvc, for example.

Conclusion

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with the NPPF policy HE9 and Core Policy 58. A condition can be imposed upon any approval ensuring PD rights are removed in

relation to the windows and roof covering to ensure the appropriate materials for the area are maintained.

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), in particular P3 reinforces the need for development to provide a high standard of amenity for both existing and future users.

The site is located nestled between a cluster of existing residential dwellings to the North, South and West.



The existing windows to the North and South are retained and therefore the current outlook from the building would remain. The properties of both Oakwood Cottage to the North and Eleys to the South are well stepped back from the church boundaries and therefore the proposal is not considered to result in any direct overlooking or loss of privacy which would warrant a refusal.

In addition, from visiting the site it was apparent that the outlook of these windows on both side elevations face towards access/driveways only and are also well screened by existing boundary treatments.

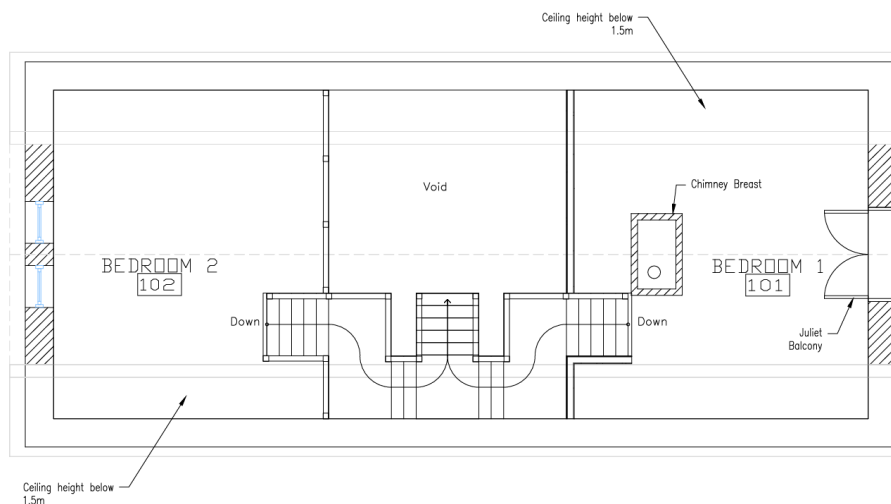


The concerns raised by a third party in relation to the West elevation first floor Juliette balcony replacing the existing window have been carefully considered. It is noted that within the representation that the author had concerns regarding the opening out nature of the double doors onto a balcony.

Officers have reviewed the plans which do illustrate the doors as being inward opening only. In addition, Juliette balconies do not allow any external platform area and therefore the proposed doors/Juliette balcony are not considered to pose any significant alteration to the existing window which could warrant a refusal, and the inclusion of such a feature has not been objected to by the Conservation Officer



Existing West elevations first floor window



Inward openings doors on proposed Mezzanine floor plan

In relation to the outlook from the Juliette Balcony and the concern in regard to potential overlooking/loss of privacy, although a larger opening, and it would be serving a bedroom the position of the opening is such that it would only provide an outlook to the rear of the site which is very well screened by dense hedging from any wider views.



Furthermore, all the neighbouring properties are well set back from the boundaries separated by driveways/access tracks and therefore the proposed Juliette Balcony is not considered to pose any adverse effects in terms of any significant overlooking or loss of privacy.

In residential areas, a degree of overlooking and interrelationship exists. The proposal is not considered to unduly impact on residential amenity and is considered to be in accordance with NPPF P3 and Core Policy 57.

Highways Impacts 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. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and LTN 1/20 (DfT) provide further design guidance for active travel infrastructure.

Proposals must also ensure safe access for refuse collection vehicles and comply with the Wiltshire Council Waste Storage and Collection SPD (2017).

Where necessary, Transport Assessments or Statements should be submitted to evaluate impacts and identify mitigation. Planning conditions or legal agreements may be used to secure off-site improvements, travel plans, or contributions to sustainable transport infrastructure.

The Councils Highways Officer was consulted on the proposal and provided the following comments:

The site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Porton where a sustainability objection would generally be anticipated. However, the site is located on the edge of the built-up area and within reasonable proximity of a limited range of local facilities and some public transport provision.

Whilst High Street is characterised by an absence of formal footways, the carriageway is narrow with constrained geometry, resulting in low vehicle speeds and relatively light traffic flows.

Accordingly, whilst opportunities for pedestrian movement are limited, the local highway environment is typical of a rural village context.

Access, Visibility and Highway Characteristics

The site is served by an existing single-width vehicular access located to the southern side of the property, leading to a gravel driveway and rear parking area. This access is adjacent to that serving Eleys Farm, with both accesses operating independently but in close proximity.

Visibility from the access is considered acceptable to the north, but is restricted to approximately 20 metres to the south.

This level of visibility would normally be considered substandard. However, it is important to consider the prevailing highway conditions, namely:

- *Low vehicle speeds due to road width and alignment*
- *Light traffic volumes*
- *Existing comparable access arrangements in the immediate vicinity*
- *Established pattern of vehicles manoeuvring in a similar manner on High Street*

In addition, the proposal does not intensify the use of the access (see below).

The proposed layout does not provide an on-site turning facility, and vehicles would therefore be required to reverse onto and off the highway. Whilst this is not ideal, it reflects the observed and established practice of neighbouring properties and is not considered uncommon or inappropriate within this rural context.

Traffic Generation and Use Comparison

The existing lawful use of the site as a place of worship (Class F1) has the potential to generate higher levels of vehicular activity, typically characterised by:

- *Periodic peak traffic flows associated with services and events*

- *Concentrated parking demand within short time periods*

By comparison, the proposed use as a single residential dwelling would generate:

- *Significantly fewer daily vehicle movements*
- *A more dispersed and predictable pattern of trips*

The planning submission also identifies that the former use gave rise to parking pressures and overspill parking in the surrounding area, particularly during peak periods. Accordingly, when assessed against the lawful fallback position, the proposal represents a material reduction in traffic generation and associated activity.

Parking Provision

The proposal includes provision for three car parking spaces arranged in a tandem layout along the access driveway.

In quantum terms, this exceeds the typical requirement for a two-bedroom dwelling. Whilst the tandem arrangement does not allow for independent access to all parking spaces and is not the most desirable layout, it is considered acceptable in this instance having regard to:

- *The low parking demand associated with a single dwelling*
- *The constrained nature of the site*
- *The absence of any highway safety concerns arising from the arrangement*

Overall, the parking provision is considered adequate and proportionate to the scale of development.

Cycle Provision

No cycle storage has been indicated. In accordance with the Local Transport Plan Cycling Strategy, provision should be made for a minimum of two secure and covered cycle parking spaces.

Whilst it is acknowledged that uptake may be limited in a rural location, such provision is consistent with policy objectives and can be secured by condition.

Summary and Recommendation

The proposal seeks to convert a former place of worship into a single residential dwelling.

The site access and parking arrangements are constrained and do not fully accord with modern design standards, particularly in respect of:

- *Restricted visibility to the south*
- *Lack of on-site turning*
- *Tandem parking arrangement*

However, these constraints must be considered in context. In particular:

- *The surrounding highway network is of a low-speed, lightly trafficked rural nature*
- *Similar access and manoeuvring arrangements are present locally*

- *The proposal would not intensify the use of the access*
- *The lawful fallback use could reasonably be expected to generate higher peak traffic flows. When assessed on this basis, the proposed development would result in a net reduction in vehicular activity and would not give rise to a severe impact on highway safety.*

Recommendation and Conditions

It is therefore recommended that no highway objection is raised, subject to conditions.

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.

Assessment

In assessing this aspect of the proposal, regard has been had to the site context, the details of the proposed development, the relevant development plan policies, and all other material considerations. The key considerations are set out below.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

Salisbury Plain SPA - 6400m Buffer

This application lies within the 6.4km zone of influence of the Salisbury Plain SPA and in light of the HRA for the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the HRA for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan it is screened into Appropriate Assessment due to the potential impact of recreational pressure on stone curlew in combination with other plans and projects.

A strategic Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been prepared pertaining to development within the 6.4km zone of influence that could result in a likely significant effect on the SPA as a result of an increase in recreational / visitor pressure. The AA reached a conclusion of no adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA or its qualifying features provided that the council's mitigation strategy continues to be implemented. Annual stone curlew monitoring and protection measures continue to be secured by the Council.

In January 2026 Natural England (NE) confirmed that the strategic AA for Salisbury Plain SPA continues to be supported by NE until end of December 2026.

New Forest Protected Sites 15km Recreation Zone of Influence

This development is within the outer zone and involves the creation of one housing unit (<50 units). A test of likely significance has been carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (Wiltshire Council) as required by Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This concluded that given the scale and nature of the development, there is no mechanism for likely significant impacts on the SAC and subsequently the application is screened out of Appropriate Assessment.

Hampshire River Avon Catchment

This development falls within the catchment of the River Avon SAC and has potential to cause adverse effects alone or in combination with other developments through discharge of phosphorus in wastewater. Appropriate Assessment must be carried out by the relevant Competent Authority (the LPA) to determine the potential significant effects and the suitability of any measures proposed to avoid or mitigate those effects.

The submitted nutrient calculation (Porton Baptist chapel Nutrient Calculator River Avon SAC V_03_01_6) calculated a total phosphorus budget of 0.13 kg TP/year pre-2030. A minor error has been noted in the annual rainfall figure input into the calculator. With reference to UKCEH annual rainfall data this was amended to 750-800mm which resulted in a total phosphorus budget of 0.14 kg TP/year pre-2030. The latter budget has been approved by Wiltshire Council. A Council-led scheme of phosphorus credits will be available for development which meets certain criteria at a fixed cost per kilogram of phosphorus, provided supply of mitigation is available. A completed Hampshire Avon Credit Screening Approval Certificate is required to apply for this scheme. The ecology section of this certificate has been completed by the Council's ecology team for this application. This certificate can only be issued by the case officer if the application meets the two deliverability tests. Further details of the Council-led scheme, including eligibility criteria, current cost to purchase credits, and details of how to apply, is available on our website [Phosphorus and nitrogen mitigation - Wiltshire Council](#).

Ecology officer approval	Document reviewed – Porton Baptist chapel Nutrient Calculator River Avon SAC V_03_01_6 (uploaded: 9 Jul 2026)
Approval of Nutrient Budget	Pre 2030 budget - 0.14kg TP/year
	Budget approved - Yes
	Date – 17/07/2026

Council-issued phosphorus credits are expected to be available; however, to ensure that adequate mitigation is secured and deliverable for this development, the necessary credits must be secured as part of the permission.

Where Council mitigation is secured with the permission, a strategic Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been prepared for qualifying planning applications for residential and non-residential development, within sewered and non-sewered areas of the River Avon SAC catchment. The AA reached a conclusion of no adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC or its qualifying features and has been endorsed by Natural England (NE) provided that the council's mitigation strategy continues to be implemented.

If the applicant has confirmed that they will be securing credits with the permission. The application must not be positively determined until the P-credits have been secured.

In the absence of a legal agreement the mitigation fee and administration charge for the scheme can be paid by a section 111. The administration fee must be paid on the granting of permission, the mitigation fee is payable prior to commencement of development.

An email from the applicant dated (05 August 2026 14:12) confirms that they will be seeking council credits for the approved nutrient budget (above). This will be secured through a section 111 prior to determination.

Compliance with CP50 (no net loss etc)

Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires all development to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity and to seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The NPPF also encourages applications to deliver measurable net gains (para 193d). No enhancement is included in the proposals. The redline of this development is limited to the footprint of the existing building. Enhancements in the form of bird boxes or bat boxes/tiles could be included. This will be requested by condition in line with policy drivers CP50 and NPPF.

The Planning Statement (dated April 2026) states that a sensitive external lighting design is to minimise light spill onto potential roosting or foraging areas for bats. An appropriate lighting condition should be added to the decision notice.

Protected Species

Bats

The site lies adjacent to woodland and wood-pasture habitat that could support bats. The internal and external photographs provided are not sufficient to reliably assess the building's bat-roosting potential. The loft/ceiling void has not been photographed or inspected, so its potential remains unknown. The planning statement notes "a reasonable possibility that bats could be present within roof voids, ceiling spaces, or other concealed structural features".

The proposed works including installing a central chimney feature and removing sections of the internal ceiling would affect the roof structure and loft void, where bat-roosting potential has not yet been assessed.

No works affecting the roof, loft void, ceiling void, or other potentially sensitive areas should begin until an appropriate ecological assessment has been completed and any required mitigation agreed. A PRA is required initially, and further bat survey may be needed depending on the findings to inform appropriate mitigation design.

An updated bat survey has been submitted (Ecological Survey Report (Bats) – Preliminary Roost Assessment/DBW, Ref: NWP/ESR-25/7/26-version 2, dated 25/07/2026). This was reviewed by Ecology on 01/09/2026. The preliminary roost assessment found that the building has negligible bat-roost potential. The survey concludes that there are no obvious external roosting features due to the good condition of the tiles, soffits and other fixtures, and that there are no suitable access points into the internal roof void. Although vents are present on the gable ends, the report confirms these are blocked by insulation and do not provide access for bats. The survey was carried out by a qualified ecologist and follows current best-practice guidelines. Based on the findings and conclusions of the report, and the information available to the council, the assessment is considered valid and there is a low risk that bat swill be impacted. An appropriate informative should be added to the decision notice. No further bat survey work is required.

Conclusion

Having regard to the above, it is considered that subject to conditions the proposal accords with the requirements of Core Policy 50 and the NPPF. In addition, a completed S111 has now been secured by the LPA dated 28/09/26.

Planning Balance

Considering the above and the Councils currently housing supply the proposed change if use to a single dwellinghouse is acceptable. It is evident that the hall has been empty and vacant for some time with no significant interest. The proposed change of use allows for the building to be brought back into a viable use and although it result in the loss of a community asset there is evidence that the wider area retains various community facilities, and therefore there would not be a shortfall in this regard.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Planning Permission be GRANTED, subject to conditions

All conditions imposed have been assessed against the six tests set out in paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework and are necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

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:

D87-08 Existing West Elevation received 27/04/26
D87-06 Existing East Elevation received 27/04/26
D87-07 Existing South Elevation received 27/04/26
D87-01 Site location plan received 27/04/26
D87-09 Proposed lower ground floor plan received 27/04/26
D87-12 Proposed North elevation received 27/04/26
D87-16 Proposed section 1 received 27/04/26

D87-14 Proposed South elevation received 27/04/26
D87-04 Existing upper ground floor plan received 27/04/26
D87-15 Proposed west received 27/04/26
D87-17 Proposed section 2 received 27/04/26
D87-03 Existing ground floor plan received 27/04/26
D87-13 Proposed East elevations received 27/04/26
D87-05 Existing North elevations received 27/04/26
D87-11 Proposed mezzanine plan received 27/04/26

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

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No.3) (England) Order 2020 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting or amending that Order with or without modification), there shall be no external alterations to any windows and roof of the building forming part of the development hereby permitted.

REASON: In the interests of the amenity of the area and to enable the Local Planning Authority to consider individually whether planning permission should be granted for such external alterations.

4. Within 3 months of occupation the ecological enhancement features as shown upon the Bird/Bat box features details received 01/10/26 shall be installed and retained for the lifetime of the development.

REASON: To provide mitigation /enhancement for biodiversity.

5. The overnight development hereby approved shall be designed to ensure it does not exceed 110 litres per person per day water consumption levels (which includes external water usage) in accordance with building regs.

REASON: To ensure compliance with the prevailing mitigation strategy for nutrient neutrality in the water catchment within which this development is located.

A water efficiency calculation will be needed to discharge this condition. For guidance on how to do this and what is required, please refer to the following document: *'The Building Regulations 2010 – Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency'*, Appendix A (p36-44).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/504207/BR_PDF_AD_G_2015_with_2016_amendments.pdf

6. All lighting provided on site shall be in accordance with the appropriate Environmental Zone standards set out by the Institute of Lighting Engineers in their publication GN01:2021, 'Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (ILP, 2021), and Guidance note GN08/23 "Bats and artificial lighting at night", issued by the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals.

REASON: In the interests of the amenities of the area and to minimize impacts on biodiversity caused by light spillage to areas above and outside the development site.

7. The access hereby permitted shall not be first brought into use until the first 5 metres, measured from the edge of the carriageway, has been properly consolidated and

surfaced in a bound material (not loose stone or gravel). The access shall thereafter be maintained as such.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to prevent the migration of loose material onto the highway.

8. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No.3) (England) Order 2020 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting or amending that Order with or without modification), there shall be no additions to, or extensions or enlargements of any building forming part of the development hereby permitted.

REASON: In the interests of the amenity of the area and to enable the Local Planning Authority to consider individually whether planning permission should be granted for additions, extensions or enlargements.

INFORMATIVE: Evidence of compliance to the Wiltshire Council River Avon Special Area of Conservation Mitigation Scheme means the certificate of allocation of credits and confirmation of financial contribution to the scheme. An alternative mitigation package must be approved by the local planning authority and Natural England with evidence of allocation to the scheme.

INFORMATIVE: There is a low risk that bats may occur at the development site. Many species of bat depend on buildings for roosting, with each having its own preferred type of roost. Most species roost in crevices such as under ridge tiles, behind roofing felt or in cavity walls and are therefore not often seen in the roof space. Bat roosts are protected all times by the Conservation of Habitats and Species 2017 (as amended) even when bats are temporarily absent because, being creatures of habit, they usually return to the same roost site every year. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation or substitute for the need to obtain a bat licence if an offence is likely. If bats or evidence of bats is found during the works, the applicant is advised to stop work and follow advice from an independent ecologist or the applicant is advised to follow the advice of a professional ecologist or to contact Natural England's Batline through the internet.