



CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed conversion of redundant barns into residential accommodation along with creation of outdoor pool; provision of new bat roost

**Barrington Downs Farm, Barrington Downs,
Aldsworth, GL54 3PT**

June 2021

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Statement provides planning justification for the conversion of existing redundant farm buildings at Barrington Downs Farm to provide additional self-contained residential accommodation and accompanies applications for planning and listed building consent to Cotswold District Council.
- 1.2 The Statement accompanies a resubmission following the withdrawal of previous applications for planning permission and listed building consent – in particular, further input has been provided by specialists in the historic environment to isolate the significance of the buildings and how the proposals as amended seek to preserve this, not only with regard to the details of the submission itself but also by ensuring a greater sense of stewardship of these buildings for the future.
- 1.3 Further justification has also been provided by the consultant ecologist in order to vindicate the approach taken with regard to the proposed bat roost.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application site sits at the District's eastern edge, less than 500m from the boundary with West Oxfordshire. The site is accessed via a track (approximately 400 metres in length) running in a south-westerly direction from the B4425 which links Burford and Aldsworth. The village of Westwell lies to the east, while the settlement of Barrington lies to the north on the northern side of the A40.
- 2.2 The subject structures comprise a complex of vernacular former agricultural buildings which form the north-eastern and north-western ranges of a former farm complex. The north-eastern range comprises a redundant threshing barn, whilst the north-western range was formerly a piggery and cart store.
- 2.3 The threshing barn and the former piggery are both Grade II listed – its description on the Historic England website is as follows:

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1090395

Date first listed: 28-May-1987

Statutory Address: BARN CIRCA 50 METRES NORTH OF BARRINGTON DOWNS FARMHOUSE

BARRINGTON - SP 10 NE 7/2 Barn c50m north of Barrington Downs Farmhouse GV II Large double barn. Mid-late C17. Limestone rubble with dressed stone quoins. Stone slate roof. Long rectangular plan with a 3-bay extension to the left gable end. Two projecting porches on the south side. Lean-tos either side of and between the porches. Low double doorways with timber lintels to both porches. Right-hand porch two storeys with single-light window to the first floor, slit-like access to pigeon loft with two stone slate landing platforms above. Single width doorways to lean-tos. Two segmental-headed double doorways on the north side. Blocked pitching window. Triangular ventilation holes. Extension to left gable end with central flat-chamfered doorway flanked by single lights. Flat coping at the gable ends of the barn and extension. Interior; barn with two-storey porch. Three bays with collar and tie beam trusses, some timbers replaced C20. Pigeon loft lined with pigeon holes. Low double-width doorway in wall dividing the two halves of the barn. Adjoining barn 5 bays with original collar and tie beam trusses.

- 2.4 Barrington Downs Farmhouse is also Grade II listed in its own right.

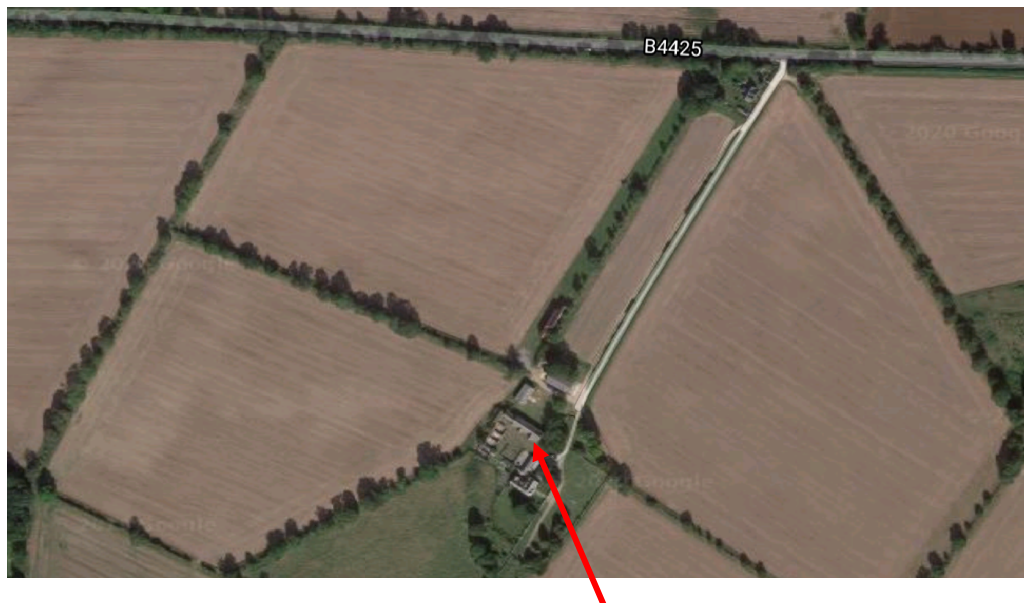
BARRINGTON - SP 10 NE 7/1 Barrington Downs Farmhouse GV II Former farmhouse (possibly once two houses). C18 with late C19 and C20 extensions. C18 range; limestone rubble with dressed stone quoins. C19 extensions; coursed squared and dressed limestone. Stone slate roof with ashlar stacks. Rectangular plan to C18 main body with C20 extension to the left gable end, C19 extensions at right angles at rear of main body. C18 main body; 2 storeys and attic lit by two C20 slate-hung 2-light roof dormers from eaves. All other windows 2 and 3-light stone-mullioned casements. All windows with horizontal glazing bars. C20 glazed door with glazing bars within a flat-chamfered surround lower left. Similar but blocked doorway to the right. Cellar under the right-hand end. The right-hand return of the C19 extension forms the present entrance front. Part-glazed C19 door within a round-headed surround with a keystone initialled 'R.H.H.' (Hurst) and 4-pane sashes to the C19 part.

- 2.5 The site is within the Cotswolds AONB – the B4425 forms part of the AONB’s boundary (the land on the northern side of the road within Cotswold District is identified as a Special Landscape Area).
- 2.6 The site is not located within an SSSI – the closest SSSI (Westwell Gorse) is located 3.7km to the north-east, however the proposal here is of a scale and nature which is not anticipated to affect this SSSI’s setting. Although there are trees on the site – immediately to the east of the subject building – these would be unaffected by the proposal. The alterations do not propose any work whatsoever within the root protection areas of existing trees, nor are future felling pressures intensified by the creation of new openings, which are intended to be minimal in scope.
- 2.7 The site is not within Flood Zones 2 or 3. The nearest public right of way (a bridleway ref. KBA20) runs in a south-easterly direction from the B4425 and is 400m from the site at the closest point.

Aerial photographs taken from GoogleMaps



APPLICATION SITE



APPLICATION SITE

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 11/03182/LBC** Listed building consent was granted for the carrying out of essential structural repairs to the existing building, including the construction of two new buttresses to the external wall, repairs and strengthening of roof trusses, masonry crack repairs, stitch repairs and the dismantling and rebuilding of defective areas of external stone walling. Listed building consent was granted on 22nd August 2011.
- 3.2 20/03933/FUL and 20/03934/LBC** Applications for planning permission and listed building consent were submitted for the erection of a link extension, the installations of flues, fenestration and roof alterations in order to facilitate the creation of a dwelling, along with the creation of an outdoor pool, landscaping and the erection of a new bat roost. Following liaison with the Council's development management officer, these applications were withdrawn on 5th February 2021.
- 3.3** The Council's Conservation Officer had commented that whilst in general terms the principle of residential conversion would be acceptable, with the inevitable small level of associated harm being outweighed by the public benefit of securing the building's use in the longer term along with its associated long term maintenance and repair. However, it was Officers' view that this particular structure would be of particularly high sensitivity, with the building potentially dating from the mid 17th century. A thorough understanding of the building would be required in respect of the history and evolution of the building, alongside a phasing diagram to better understand the full impact of the proposed works and the features that have survived.
- 3.4** Officers also raised concerns regarding some of the proposed interventions including additional openings and modes external alterations, amendments to the shelter sheds which included the loss of enclosing and dividing walls and the proposed loss of the stock pen enclosures. Further detail was stated to be required in respect of exploring other viable uses.
- 3.5** Turning to the comments raised by the Council's Countryside Officer, these were as follows:

I have just had a review of the above planning application, including the bat survey report. 6 bat species have been found to be using the main barn (Barn 1) as a roosting site, including some roosts of moderate and high conservation significance, which make the site of regional importance for bats. The bat survey report makes recommendations for mitigation and a specific architectural drawing of the proposed new bat house has been submitted. My query therefore relates to the 3 derogation (licensing) tests and whether you think we have sufficient information with which to determine whether these are likely to be met due to the high importance of the site for bats. Further information about how the mitigation hierarchy has been considered as part of the proposals in relation to roosting bats is required. We need to understand why other “satisfactory alternatives” to the proposal have been discounted, including retaining some (if not all) of the bat roosts within the converted barn building or other buildings on site that could be made more suitable, particularly for crevice dwelling pipistrelle bat species. The principle of a new bat house is not objectionable per se, but we need to understand the justification for this approach in order to consider whether the 3 derogation tests are likely to be met.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The starting point for the determination of any planning application is the local development plan – applications for development will be determined in accordance with these policies unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The development plan for Cotswold District is the Cotswold Local Plan (2011-2031), adopted in 2018.

Cotswold Local Plan (2011-2031), adopted in 2018

- 4.3 **Policy EC6** The conversion of rural buildings to alternative uses will be permissible, provided that:
- The building is structurally sound, suitable for and capable of conversion to the proposed use without substantial alteration, extension or rebuilding;
 - It would not cause conflict with existing farming operations, including severance or disruption to the holding that would prejudice its continued viable operation;
 - The development proposals are compatible with extant uses on the site and existing / planned uses in proximity to the site.
- 4.4 Policy EC6 applies to the conversion of all rural buildings, whether of modern or traditional construction. New uses should be compatible with the rural character of the area, in keeping with their surroundings and assured of avoiding adverse environmental effects due to nuisance or traffic generation. The policy does not require alternative commercial uses to be explored before residential use is considered.
- 4.5 **Policy EN1** New development will, where appropriate, promote the protection conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environment by:
- a. ensuring the protection and enhancement of existing natural and historic environmental assets and their settings in proportion with the significance of the asset;
 - b. contributing to the provision and enhancement of multi-functional green infrastructure;

- b. addressing climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation through creating new habitats and the better management of existing habitats;
 - c. seeking to improve air, soil and water quality where feasible; and
 - d. ensuring design standards that complement the character of the area and the sustainable use of the development.
- 4.6 **Policy EN2** Development will be permitted which accords with the Cotswold Design Code (Appendix D). Proposals should be of design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the locality
- 4.7 **Policy EN4** Development will be permitted where it does not have a significant detrimental impact on the natural and historic landscape (including the tranquillity of the countryside) of Cotswold District or neighbouring areas. Proposals will take account of landscape and historic landscape character, visual quality and local distinctiveness. They will be expected to enhance, restore and better manage the natural and historic landscape, and any significant landscape features and elements, including key views, the setting of settlements, settlement patterns and heritage assets.
- 4.8 **Policy EN5** In determining development proposals within the AONB or its setting, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape, its character and special qualities will be given great weight.
- 4.9 **Policy EN7** Where such natural assets are likely to be affected, development will not be permitted that fails to conserve and enhance:
- a. trees of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historical value;
 - b. veteran trees;
 - c. hedgerows of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historical value; and/or
 - d. woodland of high landscape, amenity, ecological or historical value.
- 4.10 **Policy EN8** Development will be permitted that conserves and enhances biodiversity and geodiversity, providing net gains where possible.
- 4.11 **Policy EN10** In considering proposals that affect a designated heritage asset or its setting, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Development proposals that sustain and enhance the character, appearance and significance of designated heritage assets (and their settings), and that put them to viable uses, consistent with their conservation, will be permitted. Proposals that would lead to harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset or its setting will not be permitted, unless a clear and convincing justification of public benefit can be demonstrated to outweigh that harm. Any such assessment will take account, in the balance of material considerations: the importance of the asset; the scale of harm; and the nature and level of the public benefit of the proposal.
- 4.12 **Policy EN13** Proposals for the conversion of non-domestic historic buildings to alternative uses will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:
- a. the conversion would secure the future of a heritage asset, and/or its setting, which would otherwise be at risk;
 - b. the proposed conversion would conserve the significance of the asset (including its form, features, character and setting);
 - c. the heritage asset is structurally sound; and
 - d. the heritage asset is suitable for, and capable of, conversion to the proposed use without substantial alteration, extension or rebuilding which would be tantamount to the erection of a new building.

- 4.13 It is noted that the Policy doesn't require an applicant to consider potential commercial uses for non-domestic historic buildings before a residential use is explored; the important thing is that the criteria above are met.
- 4.14 **Policy INF5** Development will make provision for residential and non-residential vehicle parking where there is clear and compelling evidence that such provision is necessary to manage the local road network. Provision will be in accordance with standards and guidance set out at Appendix F.

National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) ("the NPPF")

- 4.15 **Paragraph 11** Development proposals which accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant policies, permission should be granted unless the application of policies within the NPPF protecting areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason to refuse permission, or where the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 4.16 **Paragraph 59** To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.
- 4.17 **Paragraph 61** Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies including people wishing to commission or build their own homes).
- 4.18 **Paragraph 79** Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside. There are exceptions to this policy – these include situations where development represents the optimal viable use of a heritage asset **or** where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance the immediate setting.
- 4.19 **Paragraph 118** Planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised buildings and land where this would meet identified housing needs.
- 4.20 **Paragraph 127** Developments should be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, without preventing appropriate change.
- 4.21 **Paragraph 172** Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs where the scale of development should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development.
- 4.22 **Paragraph 175** Where determining planning applications, local planning authorities should seek to avoid significant harm to biodiversity. Permission should be refused if such harm cannot be adequately mitigated or compensated for.
- 4.23 **Paragraph 189** In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be

proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

- 4.24 **Paragraph 192** In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of putting heritage assets to viable uses consistent with their conservation and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.25 **Paragraph 193** 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 (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 4.26 **Paragraph 194** Harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

Further Material Considerations

Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2033

- 4.27 The overall objective of the Cotswolds Management Plans are the conservation and enhancement of the AONB's natural beauty, whilst increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. This includes appropriate management of its historic environment and cultural heritage. Policy CE6 of the Management Plan identifies that proposals likely to impact upon the historic and cultural heritage of the AONB should have regard to special features and seek to conserve and enhance them – this should include respecting historical features, as well as layout and context.

Historic England – Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings: Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse

- 4.28 The guidance issued by Historic England (2017) identifies that without appropriate uses to fund their long-term maintenance and repair, traditional farm buildings risk disappearing from the landscape. Although poor adaptation poses a threat, new commercial, residential or other uses which enhance their historic character and significance are encouraged. The advice from Historic England seeks to inform sympathetic change and development in rural areas to ensure good quality adaptations and innovative design.
- 4.29 When taking planning decisions involving farm buildings, local authorities should consider all relevant matters, including wider policy on the open countryside and the need to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

5.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The proposed scheme involves the conversion of traditional stone agricultural buildings to provide a family home, it is therefore considered to be supported in

principle. The proposal is not a major development within the meaning of paragraph 172 of the NPPF, it is not therefore presumed against in the AONB.

- 5.2 Furthermore, the reuse of redundant farm buildings is supported, both by the NPPF (which is permissive of their use to provide housing where improvements to the surroundings can be secured – Paragraph 79) and by Policy EN13 of the Local Plan. There is nothing within national or local policies which would require alternative uses to residential to be explored before a residential use is proposed. The building is of sound and substantial construction and its adaptation for residential use would not compromise the operation of the farm.
- 5.3 Although attractive and long-established landscape features, the buildings are no longer required for the purposes of agriculture. They cannot be used for any other agricultural purpose. The buildings do not meet modern cleanliness standards for storage of grain, nor can they be accessed by large farm trailers. They cannot offer the levels of light and ventilation to satisfy modern welfare standards for livestock. Additional structures, better suited to the storage of crops and of machinery, have been constructed and these buildings have been disused for many years. Whilst the 2011 listed building consent is evidence of the applicants' strong custodianship of this range of buildings, the preference would be for them to be put to a beneficial use where the buildings original use is no longer viable.
- 5.4 The location of the buildings is also considered to make them ill-suited to commercial use, given the close proximity of the existing farmhouse and the pair of semi-detached properties adjacent to the B4425, as well as the proximity of the adjacent farmhouse. Alternative commercial use is likely to impose demands for larger openings to the building. That said, there is no policy-based requirement to consider uses of the building that are commercial in nature before a residential use is explored.
- 5.5 The buildings in question are in good condition – repair work was undertaken in 2011 - and their conversion can be undertaken without major external works or works to the surviving internal fabric of the building. The internal layout of spaces is designed to be retained as much as possible, whilst the accretion of additional inappropriately scaled openings is to be avoided, as the proposed plans illustrate. It is demonstrable that **all** of the criteria of Policy EN13 can be met.
- 5.6 Whilst obviously attractive structures and features in the landscape in their own right, the buildings are considered to have particular social and cultural value in contributing to understanding for the historic working landscape as noted by Policy CE6 of the Cotswold AONB Management Plan and the proposal seeks to respect this heritage, by the use of appropriate materials for repair and replacement and maintaining the structures' existing historic internal layout.

Impact of development

- 5.7 The proposed development is considered to offer benefits in heritage and landscape terms as encouraged by Policies EN4, EN5, and EN12 of the Local Plan. Policy CE6 of the Cotswold AONB Management Plan encourages the positive management of historic features, including undesignated heritage assets, in order that the cultural heritage of the landscape is conserved and better understood.
- 5.8 As noted above the proposed development will safeguard a historic building which is presently without a viable purpose. It will facilitate substantial investment and provide a use which can sustain the cost of future maintenance.

- 5.9 The most effective way to protect historic buildings is to put them to viable use. The restoration and retention of the historic building in the landscape is very much considered a benefit to the AONB. Nonetheless, the applicants are aware of the national importance of the Cotswolds and the need for the development to be sensitively undertaken to protect the special character of the AONB.
- 5.10 The site's visibility in public views is limited to intermediate and longer-range views from the B4425 and from the public right of way running in a south-easterly direction. The visual impact of the proposed change of use would be extremely limited – the alterations to the building are not of a scale or type which would be easily perceptible from the highway or public rights of way, if at all. In particular, the courtyard area enjoys such a degree of containment by the buildings on its north-eastern and north-western flanks that the proposed swimming pool could not be seen in these views.
- 5.11 The proposed scheme has been carefully designed in order that neither physical works nor activity associated with the change of use would be detrimental to the landscape and required by Local Plan policies EN4 and EN5. As noted above in discussion of the principle of development the proposal is sympathetic to the significance of the building maintaining, and where possible enhancing, its character in line with Local Plan policy EN12.

Internal and external amenity

- 5.12 Internally, the proposal seeks to deliver primary residential accommodation of a high standard that accords with the Government's Nationally Described Space Standard. The dwelling will benefit from a substantial area of private amenity space within what was formerly the farmyard.
- 5.13 The proposed change of use will not impact adversely upon the amenities of the neighbouring farmhouse – this is located some 40 metres to the south of the buildings which are the subject of these applications, with intervening outbuildings. The principal outlook of the farmhouse is to the south and east. Equally, the presence of the farmhouse is not considered harmful to the amenities of the occupants of the new dwelling.

6.0 REVISIONS TO WITHDRAWN APPLICATIONS 20/03933/FUL AND 20/03934/LBC

- 6.1 The current submission seeks to overcome concerns raised by the Council in respect of an alternative submission of the same description, submitted to Cotswold District Council in October 2020, in particular comments from the Council's Conservation and Countryside Officers.
- 6.2 Turning first to the comments raised by the Conservation Officer, the applications are accompanied by an Historic Building Report, prepared by Donald Insall Associates (DIA) which seeks to establish firmly the origins and significance of the buildings affected by these proposals. Research undertaken by DIA appears to confirm an error within the listing description provided by Historic England – as enclosure of this land did not take place until the mid-eighteenth century (and prior to this there would have been no real justification for agricultural buildings of this nature), it seems unlikely that the buildings pre-date the middle part of the eighteenth century. Without a use which means that someone is prepared to keep the buildings in good order, they will rapidly become derelict and the historic fabric within them will disintegrate.

- 6.3 Although the barn is not a particularly early example of its type, it does contain features of interest – these features have been dated wherever possible to better enable the Council to understand the impact upon them. It appears that the principal elements of the roof structure of the main threshing barn are largely original but the rafters have mainly been replaced. Some elements have rotted away and modern elements have been added. There is no cobbled floor as such – the floor in the stable appears to be original but has been undermined and is suffering from heave.
- 6.4 The area where internal subdivision to full height is proposed is within a very small part of the barn against a modern blockwork wall; 7/8 of the overall space would be retained as open to the rafters.
- 6.5 Other points to note:
- The scheme has been amended such that the pigeon loft and its opening are all to be retained;
 - The glazed link between the main barn and the attached small barn has been omitted;
 - The new first floor opening (south-east elevation) has been redesigned to consist of two much smaller vertically proportioned openings;
 - The shelter sheds are to be retained and converted to provide additional guest bedroom in such a way that the original internal layout remains legible;
 - The scheme has been altered so that the stock pen enclosures can be retained and the swimming pool omitted.
- 6.6 The comments raised by the Countryside Officer have been relayed to the ecological consultant who undertook the Bat Survey Report. The comments provided are as follows:

In the instance of converting Building 1 at Barrington Downs Farm Barns successful retention of roost sites would not be possible for the vast majority of roost sites associated with Building, due the location of the roost sites and the way in which bats are utilising the building. The majority of bat species are using internal crevice features which are not conducive to retention with proposals for conversion. It would not be possible to retain the internal crevice features, which are used by bats as day roosts, transitional roosts, swarming roosts and hibernation roosts, within the main barn and successfully convert Building 1 to provide living accommodation.

Further consideration has been given to retaining the roost sites within the north-western lean-to of Building 1, to not including the lean-to within the conversion plans. However, given the way in which brown-long eared bats are using the lean-to and the main barn in combination for a swarming roost it is unlikely that drastically reducing the size of the roost, the resultant alterations of conditions within the swarming roost and ceasing the free movement of bats within the different areas of the bats will in the long-term ensure its use into the future. At present the barn mimics a natural swarming roost resource, such as cave, where bats gather to mate. It currently providing a series of different spaces and range of conditions, in converting the barn these conditions would be lost and it is considered likely that the bats would abandon the roost site as it will become unsuitable.

Further to this, it would be highly likely that retaining the roost sites within the lean-to would lead to human/wildlife conflict and indirect impacts such as anthropogenic disturbance within the vicinity of the roost (garden/amenity space

outside the roost) and disturbance via lighting. Retaining the roosts associated with the lean-to, would lead them to becoming isolated within the new development and may cause bats to abandon the roosts retained in the lean-to. To bats, darkness is important as it provides the principal protection against predation and therefore influences the survival and reproduction directly. Illumination of buildings where bats roost exposes the bats to increased predation risk and the bats change their behaviour accordingly. A level of lighting will be required around the converted building or reasons of security and safety. In particular, brown long-eared bats are using the barn for a sensitive life stage, mating, and lighting is likely to disrupt this. Furthermore, bats that gather in larger numbers are more vulnerable to predation. Retention of the roosts within the lean-to are unlikely to be successful in the long-term. Research shows that activity patterns and movements are disrupted, which in turn result in deteriorating foraging opportunities, lower food consumption and impacts on and ultimately slower growth and lower survival.

The surveys found that Building 2 is not used by bats as a roost site. Consideration has been given to making sections of Building 2 more suitable for bats, for reasons mentioned above regarding disturbance issues the solution provided by the stand-alone bat house will be the most effective against the likely effects of the proposed development on bats and will provide specific like-for-like replacement of roost sites in an area that is undisturbed by human activity and most importantly lighting. The stand-alone bat roost provides the opportunity to create a bespoke and dedicated bat roost building that caters directly for all species concerned, rather than trying to adapt a building that will be less suited, and within which is unlikely to provide all the dedicated features and conditions that are required. It also gives the opportunity to provide an enhanced roost resource that could increase the number of hibernating bats and creation of features that are suitable for breeding as well as swarming, day roosting and transitional roost sites. Steps to minimise the impacts of a development on bats have been included within the bat mitigation strategy.

It should be noted that Cotswold stone roof tiles will remain on the converted building (once re-roofed). Therefore, similar roosting opportunities to those existing for crevice dwelling species, such as common and soprano pipistrelle bats that have been found roosting in external crevice features mainly below roof tiles, will be provided into the future. Due to their nature the replacement/salvaged Cotswold stone roof tiles will provide naturally occurring gaps which in turn will provide a continuity of roosting opportunity for crevice dwelling bat species and maintain ecological functionality of the roof as a roost resource. In addition, it would be possible to retain the external crevice above the lintel of the door along the south-west elevation, south-east side of the barn.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Statement has explored the proposed reuse of the building for residential purposes with regard to its existing character and appearance as well as with regard to local and national planning policies. It has also considered the associated historic significance of the buildings.
- 7.2 Both national and local planning policies are supportive of the reuse of traditional vernacular buildings in the countryside to provide dwellings, particularly where this can achieve enhancements to the immediate context of the buildings – this is certainly achievable here as the proposals allude to, both in the introduction of appropriate new landscaping and also biodiversity enhancement in the form of a

new bat roost. Neither the NPPF nor the Cotswold Local Plan require applicants to explore alternative commercial uses before a residential use is proposed.

- 7.3 In the current instance a residential use of the buildings will ensure their continued maintenance in a way that makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the AONB without substantially changing the form or appearance of the structures or altering their landscape impact in any way at all. The proposals seek to work with the existing internal layout of the structures and to make the very minimum of external alterations required to facilitate residential use. They seek to protect the historic significance of the buildings such that their historic origins as agricultural buildings can continue to be understood.
- 7.4 The extent of the alterations in terms of the impact upon existing fabric is very modest – the change of use can be accommodated in such a way that the existing structural elements within the building are preserved in situ with new partitions constructed in such a way that they would be unaffected. New openings have been kept to a minimum and repairs are to be undertaken in matching materials (stone slates and natural limestone).
- 7.5 Since the withdrawal of the original applications, significant work has gone into understanding the origins of the buildings and their fabric. Alterations have been made to the original proposals which seek to reduce further the scale of contemporary interventions.
- 7.6 The residential use proposed offers high standards of internal and external amenity whilst also ensuring that the amenities enjoyed by the adjacent farmhouse are preserved. The wider landscape impact associated with the proposal are neutral.
- 7.7 The proposed home can contribute to housing supply in an area of need with residents contributing to the local economy and community. The proposed development can be considered to benefit the area, including the AONB, in social and economic terms. The proposal represents a more beneficial use of the building in social and economic terms than the present very sporadic agricultural occupation. Compared to the withdrawn scheme, the degree of harm to significance has reduced further, while the public benefits associated with continued stewardship of an historic building and the role it plays in our understanding of the historic development of the AONB and its character remain central to what the proposal seeks to achieve. The scheme ought to be considered acceptable within the terms of Paragraph 196 of the NPPF.
- 7.8 The development proposed should not give rise to any harmful impacts which would justify refusal of planning permission, particularly when weighed against the cultural and economic benefits of the proposal. Having regard to the NPPF exhortation to achieve sustainable development this proposal would meet the required test in providing tangible benefits without material planning harm. In view of compliance with relevant development plan policies the presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF, para. 11) sets out that planning permission should be granted.