

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF
A BARN AT CASTLE FARM, WRAGG CASTLE LANE,
PITCHCOMBE, STROUD, GL6 6LU INTO ONE DWELLING**

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Prepared by

**Simon Chambers, BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI
Director
LPC (Trull) Ltd**

Our Reference: SWLC.LPC4134

September 2023

LPC (Trull) Ltd
Trull Tetbury
Gloucestershire
GL8 8SQ
Tel: 01285 841433
Fax: 01285 841489
www.lpctrull.com

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared to support the submission of an application for planning permission to convert a stone barn into a dwelling at Castle Farm, Wragg Castle Lane, Pitchcombe. This is a resubmission following the withdrawal of application S.22/2245/FUL.
- 1.2 This Statement will briefly describe the location of the site and the appearance of the building before setting out what is proposed by the application. The Planning Policy Context will then be addressed, making particular reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and to the Stroud District Local Plan, which is the Development Plan applicable to the determination of all applications unless there are overriding material considerations to the contrary. It will be maintained that the proposed conversion will not cause harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty within which this site is located, or to the character or appearance of this building. On the contrary, it will be maintained that the removal of existing buildings in close proximity to the barn will enhance the location and also the setting of a nearby Listed Building.
- 1.3 For clarification the 2022 application was withdrawn in light of the comments made by the case officer; Ms Sarah Carruthers by email dated 21st November 2022. Those points raised are listed below.
- It is not clear on the site location plan or within the planning statement as to the extent of the agricultural land associated with the site and within the applicant's ownership.
 - There are no details of the existing agricultural enterprise, it was clear on my site visit that livestock was kept on the site and the existing buildings were in use. The site and building are not considered to be redundant or disused and therefore the

proposal to convert the site into residential use conflicts with the NPPF para. 80.

- There is no information on how the proposal would impact on the existing agricultural enterprise. Without demonstrating or accounting for the loss of the agricultural site and buildings, the proposal may put unnecessary pressure on the need for additional agricultural buildings within the open countryside and within the AONB, which affords the highest level of protection.
- In terms of heritage impact, the Conservation Specialist has raised concerns in that the over domestic fenestration could be deemed to erode some of the special interest of the heritage asset. Whilst this harm may be considered as 'less than substantial' and should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme, the public benefits are considered to be limited given the loss of agricultural use and impact on the rural economy, and unfortunate design for this non-designated heritage asset.
- Whilst the proposal may accord with principle 4 of CP15, by enabling development to maintain a heritage asset, the design concerns would conflict with the further criteria in that, (i) it does not have an adverse impact on the heritage assets and their setting', and would therefore undermine its heritage interest, in which it's seeking to preserve.
- It is noted within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Recommendations that further dawn/dusk surveys are required and these would need to be undertaken prior to submitting the application, to fully ensure that appropriate mitigation is incorporated into the scheme. In view of this, there is currently

insufficient information to demonstrate that the proposal would not adversely affect protected species, contrary to policy ES6.

- 1.4 The revised application enclosed seeks to address these matters and thus specifically demonstrate that the application will not conflict with local planning policies CP14, CP15, ES10 and ES6 and the NPPF.

2.0 LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 Castle Farm is located to the north east of Wragg Castle Lane, which links the Gloucester to Stroud road and the Cheltenham to Stroud road, some 900m north of their junction. It comprises a stone barn with a cement fibre roof with utilitarian farm buildings attached to its front and rear. There are existing openings within the stone walls and there is also at mezzanine within part of the building.

- 2.2 In light of the responses received during the assessment of the withdrawn application it is noted that the Council consider the application building to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset. It is a solitary stone built barn, which has had various utilitarian accretions added, in a similar style to the low and open fronted pole and corrugated structures positioned along the north eastern boundary of the small yard enclosed between the two groups. The application is supported with a separate Heritage Statement which considers its status and the positive effect on the heritage environment that will result from the site's redevelopment.

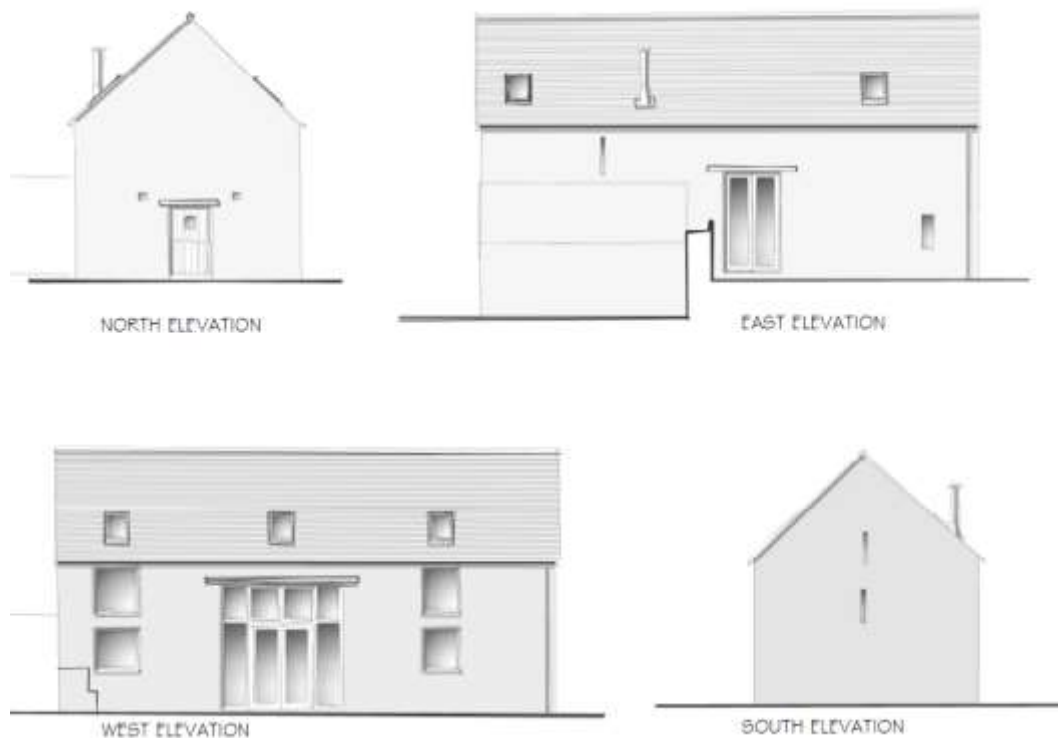
- 2.3 The small holding owned by the applicants is shown by the map extract inserted below. It amounts to approximately 13.55ha. The hobby farm has involved a partnership between Mr C Russell and my clients. Mr C Russell retired in 2022 though, and the cows have now been sold, there is no plan to replace them. The few remaining sheep and pigs belong to the applicants – the agricultural plans are to keep a small flock of sheep on the holding only going forward to assist with land

management and nothing more. They do not propose to breed any more pigs. The cost of feeding and management vastly exceeds the value of any pork sold – as experienced by so many UK farmers that no longer breed pigs. The building (particularly given its restricted accessibility) and those attached to be removed are not required in respect of the low impact land management anticipated going forward. There is no pressure on the site’s agricultural use therefore as a consequence of the re-use proposed of this now very clearly redundant asset, nor will the land around the barn be farmed as it has in the past. In that regard it is strongly maintained that this application development once approved would be a material planning consideration, and particularly given the great weight afforded to the protection of the area’s scenic beauty would legitimately allow your Council to resist a possible future hobby farm seeking new buildings. It is more likely in the long run the land will be acquired by a neighbouring farmer, who has their own buildings.



3.0 THE PROPOSED SCHEME

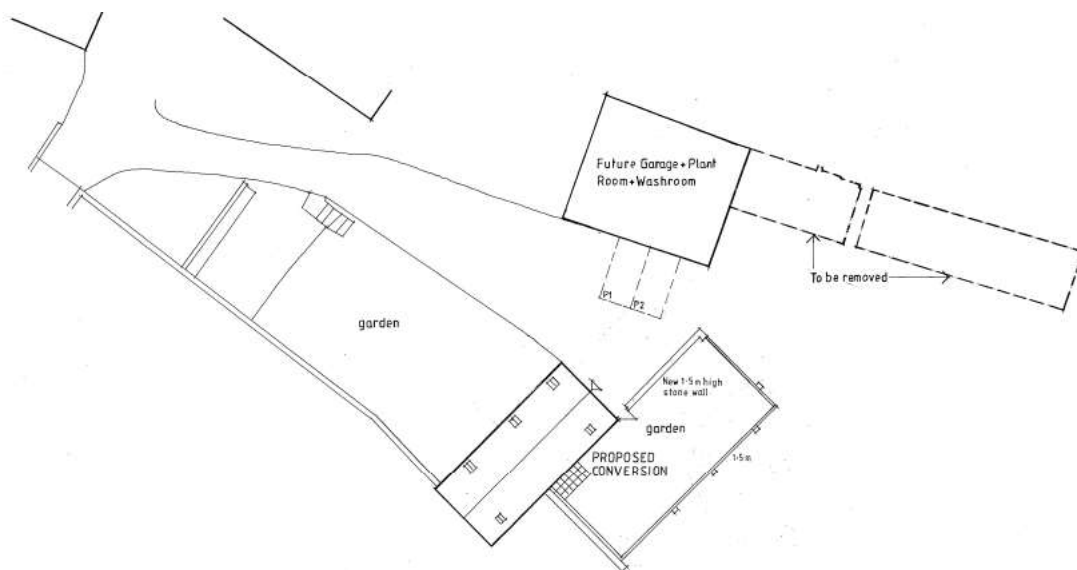
3.1 The application proposes the removal of the adjoining buildings and the conversion of the existing barn into one dwelling. The main elevation will be to the western aspect, which currently contains the main opening, and will be infilled with a glazed screen to provide the main source of daylight into the central portion of the barn. An existing opening at the northern end of that elevation will be glazed and a window inserted, with a similar width window proposed below. At the other end of this elevation, matching windows are proposed with the one on the ground floor. Small conservation rooflights are proposed above the line of the windows.



3.2 A timber door with small glazed light will be inserted into the opening on the northern gable end with a door also proposed in the existing opening on the eastern elevation in order to provide access on to the rear garden area which will be formed as a result of the removal of an

existing building. Two small rooflights are also proposed in the roofspace to provide light into the bathrooms.

- 3.3 On the southern elevation, the slit windows will have glazing inserted and the roof will be covered with slate.
- 3.4 The existing access will be utilised, and provision will be made for two car parking spaces near the northern end of the barn. The retained building at the end of my client's garden beyond these spaces could be the subject of a future application for incidental garaging and associated uses. As it stands though the parking is very enclosed by the application building and garden some walling reflecting the historic yard enclosure to the south east of the barn.



4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 Section 38 (6) to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all development is determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate

otherwise. The relevant development in this case is the Stroud District Local Plan and the following policies are believed to be most applicable to the application's assessment.

Stroud District Local Plan

- CP1-National Planning Policy Framework: a presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CP14-A 'checklist' for quality design and development
- CP15- A quality living and working countryside
- ES6-Providing for biodiversity and geodiversity
- ES7-Landscape Character
- ES10-Valuing our historic environment and assets

4.2 The Stroud District Local Plan was adopted in November 2015 and contains two Core Policies that are relevant to this proposal. Core Policy CP14 says that high quality development, which protects, conserves and enhances the built and natural environment, will be supported. It adds that development will be supported where it achieves the re-use of previously developed land and/or the adaptation of existing buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the site and surroundings, unless demonstrably unviable. It adds that there should be no unacceptable adverse effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupants and that the proposal should contribute to the retention and enhancement of important landscape and geological features, and biodiversity interests including trees, hedgerows and other natural features. It also states that such a proposal should contribute to a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way in which they integrate with their

surroundings, including appropriate landscaping, biodiversity enhancement, open space and amenity space.

- 4.2 Core Policy CP15 concerns a quality living and working countryside. It says that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and the quality of the countryside (including its built and natural heritage), proposals outside settlement development limits will not be permitted except where the principles contained within the policy are complied with. Although this policy does not refer to the conversion of buildings into dwellings, one of the criteria for permitting development in the countryside is if in the case of proposals to re-use an existing building or buildings, these are appropriately located and capable and worthy of conversion. It adds that any such conversions will involve a building that positively contributes to an established local character and sense of place. The approach of this policy runs counter to National Planning Guidance as contained within the NPPF which permits, as an exception to the restraint on new housing in the countryside, the re-use of redundant or dis-used buildings where it will enhance its immediate setting. This is precisely what will happen if this building is converted into a dwelling.
- 4.3 The application is supported by a Building Survey prepared by Western Building Consultants Ltd. The author confirms the building is of permanent and substantial construction and is capable of conversion as proposed without major rebuilding. The report includes a series of specific photographs showing the robust and traditional form of the barn.
- 4.4 Additionally the application includes a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal as previously prepared by Pure Ecology Ltd. The report confirms there were no bat roosts in the building. The buildings to be removed have negligible potential to be used in the future, however the application building was said to have a moderate potential, limited to a small number of crevasses at the top of the walls, to the exterior of the

building. Accordingly, the report provided a robust mitigation strategy to take this potential into account and thus enhance the long term potential biodiversity of the site arising as a result of the conversion, rather than just infill the crevasses over the winter. Although the mitigation/enhancement strategy from 5.2.2 of the attached assessment report could be conditionally controlled and coupled with the licencing oversight the reasons for withdrawing the original application were in part based on a precautionary need to carry out further survey analysis.

- 4.5 Accordingly the application now includes an updated Ecological Appraisal expanding on the previous PEA documentation and nocturnal survey works. The attached report confirms that the site does not support roosting bats and at the same time includes biodiversity enhancements at section 6 which can be conditionally controlled.

5.0 DESIGN CONCEPTS

- 5.1 The design solution that has been employed is one that will remove existing, unattractive utilitarian farm buildings to reveal the traditional barn, which will then be converted in a way that will retain its traditional appearance and contribute positively to its surroundings and the wider area, designated as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The enclosed application has revised the previous fenestration treatment and specifically as advised avoids an overly domestic treatment. Those changes are reviewed in more detail in the associated Heritage Statement as the early approach was said to harm the Non-designated Heritage Asset.

Use

- 5.2 The building has been used for many years for agricultural purposes. Planning permission is sought to use it for residential use, comprising one dwellinghouse. Given the nature of the farm holding and the age of

the applicants, and retirement of their retained 'farmer' to all intents and purposes the building is redundant, and the principle of a change of use is supported by both Local and National planning policy.

Amount

- 5.3 The barn that is to be retained will have a gross footprint of 84m². Due to the width of the external walls, this results in a gross internal floor area on the ground floor of 61.5m².

Scale

- 5.4 This is dictated by the existing barn, the scale of which will not be enlarged as a result of the proposed conversion. It has a span of 6.2m with the principal elevation being 13.6m wide. The eaves are approximately 4m above ground level and the ridge 7m high.

Layout

- 5.5 As the building exists, there will be little change to the existing layout, other than for the removal of buildings that are attached to its front, rear and side. These will all be removed to facilitate the provision of gardens to parking area to its side.

Appearance

- 5.6 This application proposes the conversion of the stone barn in a way that seeks to make minimal changes to its external appearance enhancing it by the removal of the existing agricultural buildings to reveal a stone barn, in isolation with a roof that will be harmonious to its appearance. The existing openings will be utilised to provide light within the building and these will be supplemented by new simple glazing, in harmony with the existing appearance and undertaken in a way that will not affect the amenities of the occupiers of nearby properties. In particular, the removal of the utilitarian buildings will enhance the setting of the nearby Listed Building, Haylesmead a

Grade II Listed Building that dates from the early to mid C17 with extensive early C19 alterations.

Landscaping

- 5.7 There will be no impact upon existing trees. The removal of the clutter of buildings though will green the rural transitional areas around the building, albeit it has a residential envelop.



Access

5.8 Vehicular access to the proposed development will be by way of Wragg Castle Lane and then turning northwards past Norton Cottages towards Haylesmead Bungalow and the existing farm buildings. This existing means of access has been appropriate for the agricultural use of the premises (and shared neighbours) and will be appropriate for the amount of traffic generated by a two-bedroomed dwelling. Parking provision of two spaces will be made within the defined curtilage and there will be sufficient room for such vehicles to turn within the curtilage of the application site and therefore enter and leave it in a forward gear. Two parking spaces are proposed for the dwelling, which is considered to be sufficient.



6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The barn that is the subject of this application is clearly in open countryside and represents a type of building that paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework states can be converted into a dwelling as an exception to the policies of restraint on new housing in such areas. With one of the main aims of the NPPF being to provide sustainable development, the re-use of such a building would be in conformity with National Planning Guidance and also with Core Policy CP14.6. Its conversion would make a positive contribution to the

character of the site and its surroundings, and the enhancement required by the NPPF respecting the landscape and scenic beauty of the wider AONB, given high status in the NPPF. With the design being appropriate and there being no unacceptable adverse effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupants, the proposal would comply with Core Policy CP14 of the Local Plan, especially as the removal of the associated buildings would represent a landscape benefit, beyond just improving the setting of the barn.

6.2 Core Policy CP15 then appears to impose restrictions on principles for development outside identified settlement limits. These appear to apply to new build development rather than the conversion of existing buildings though before stating that where development accords with those principles, the re-use of existing building will only be permitted if it is appropriately located and capable and worthy of conversion. As demonstrated by the structural report accompanying the application, this building is capable of conversion into a dwelling without major structural repairs within the confines of the host building. The Non-designated Heritage Asset status of the barn also underpins the worthy test as the best way to secure the survival (and related investment required) of the building is to keep it in an active use. The end result will be one that will have a positive impact on the immediate area and upon the setting of a nearby Listed Building. Indeed, the site's decluttering can only enhance the area's visual amenities and the heritage environment by association, albeit that the nearest Listed Building's setting is considered to be tightly contained by its defined/walled curtilage.

6.3 In view of the above, I trust that the Case Officer will have no hesitation in recommending that planning permission be granted for a form of development that is entirely consistent within the context of National Planning Policy and with Core Policy CP14 of the Stroud District Local Plan, as well as CP14, ES10 and ES6 referenced in the introduction.