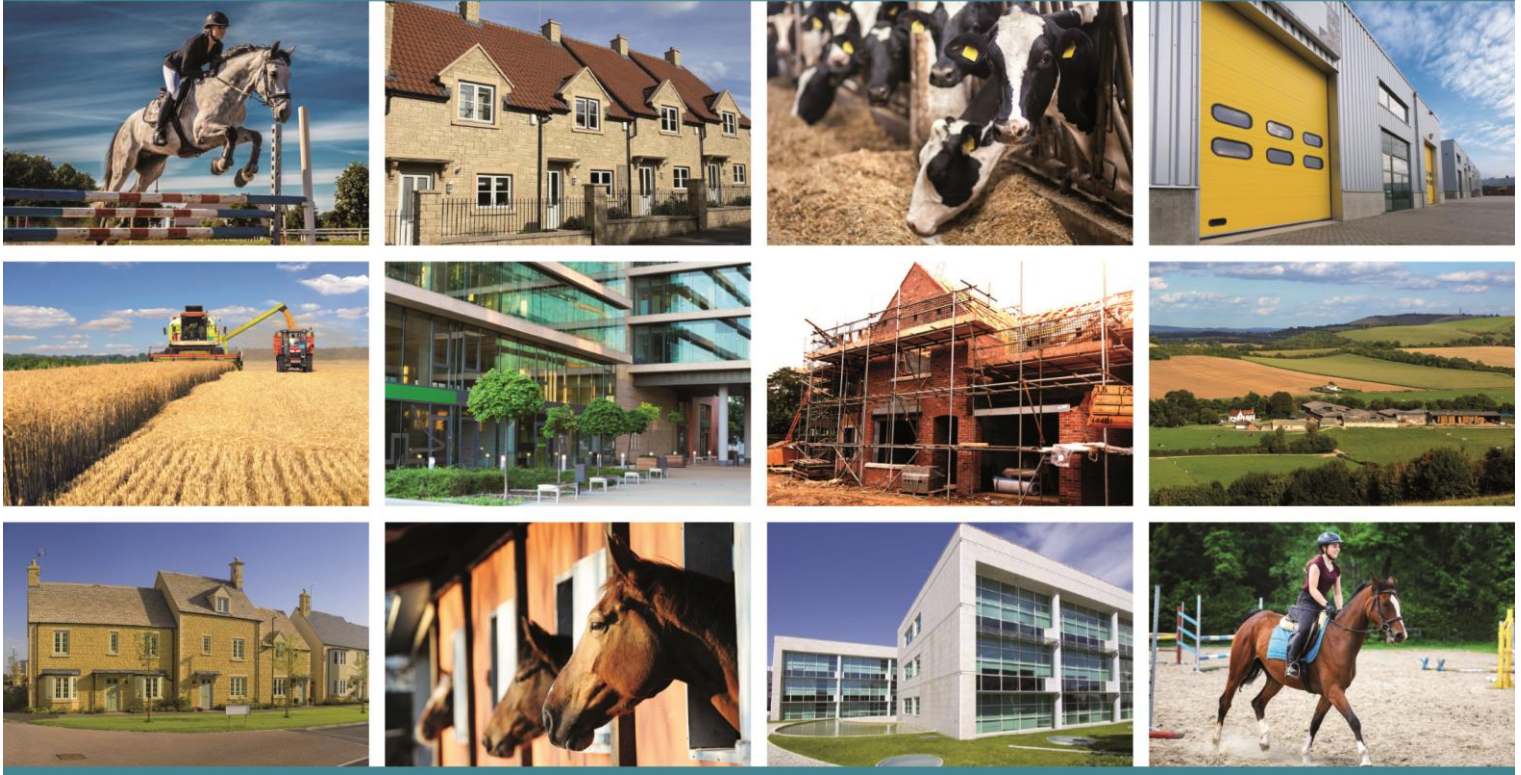




RCC TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANCY



Site: Kilmersdon Meeting Room, Coles Garden, Kilmersdon BA3 5TG

Proposal: Conversion of existing building to single dwelling,
internal and external alterations, and associated works

On behalf of: White Horse Housing

Date of Issue: October 2023



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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT & HERITAGE STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This combined design and access statement, and heritage statement has been prepared on behalf of the applicant to support the full planning and listed building applications for the conversion of Kilmersdon Meeting Room to form a single dwelling, internal and external alterations, and associated works.
- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to provide a framework to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and to demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.



2.0 BACKGROUND, PROPOSAL AND PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 White Horse Housing has been providing affordable housing for over 30 years, through building and managing homes at affordable rent for local people in villages throughout Wiltshire, Swindon and its surrounding areas. The Housing Association acquired the housing in Coles Garden in October 2015 from the former Kilmersdon Rural Housing Association.
- 2.2 The building the subject of this application is a grade II listed building, included together with the adjoining property, known as Orange Farmhouse and was previously used as a cart house in association with the farmhouse. The list description notes that the right part of the building (the current application building) was undergoing conversion to a village hall around the time of the listing in June 1986. The conversion was carried out by the former Housing Association.
- 2.3 The submitted proposal involves the complete refurbishment of the existing building, including the removal and replacement of most of the non-historic windows, doors and rooflights and internal partitions.
- 2.4 The proposal will provide a combined kitchen/dining/living room on the first floor. On the ground floor there is to be an entrance hall, one main bedroom, a second smaller study/guest bedroom and a bathroom.
- 2.5 There is no specific planning history relating to the application building. However, there are a number of applications submitted in respect of the adjoining buildings in Coles Gardens. Planning permission was granted in February 1981 for the change of use of the agricultural buildings (now Coles Gardens) to dwellings for elderly persons (reference 102287/001). In March 1983 permission was subsequently granted to rebuild the “ex-farm buildings” on this adjoining site (102287/002) and in August 1983 permission was granted to convert the 2 barns to four dwellings (102287/003). These properties are currently owned by White Horse Housing and are occupied by persons aged over 55.
- 2.6 The applicants are seeking to find a new use for the Meeting Room as it has only very limited usage as a community facility. The venue was quite well used up to the outset of Covid but like other facilities was closed during Covid restrictions. Once these were lifted, the number of bookings has fallen dramatically to almost nothing. Indeed, the Management Committee that previously looked after the venue for the applicants has now been disbanded as, despite advertising, it has not proved possible to generate any additional bookings. It is understood that part of the problem is that some of the groups have now ceased to operate or that they use other venues or new technology (for example zoom) for meetings. The other reason that the bookings have reduced is due to the lack of parking facilities at the Meeting Room site and also because the main hall is upstairs, which prevents disabled access. All of this has seen the Meeting Room's demise over the past 3 years.
- 2.7 At present the only regular bookings are from the Parish Council, who use the venue to meet up once each month and the local Bridge Club, who meet



twice a week. This means that generally the Meeting Room is only in use 9 times each month.

- 2.8 The Meeting Room is located less than 100m from the much larger Kilmersdon Village Hall which was constructed in the late 1980's and opened in 1992. This is a very attractive building, located closeby, at the heart of the community. It has a large car park and adjoins the attractive village playing fields. As well as the main hall, the building includes a large fully equipped kitchen and has easy access for disabled and elderly people to the building and all of its facilities.



3.0 CONTEXT

3.1 The application site is situated centrally within the village of Kilmersdon, see figure 1 below. The village benefits from a range of facilities and services, including Kilmersdon Primary School, St Peter and St Paul's Church, a public house, a large modern village hall and a recreation field. The village also benefits from regular bus services to the larger centres of Radstock, Frome and Midsomer Norton where there are a wider range of services, facilities and employment opportunities. There is also easy access from the centre of the village to the flat traffic free cycle route (the Colliers' Way) to Radstock (3.8 miles away).

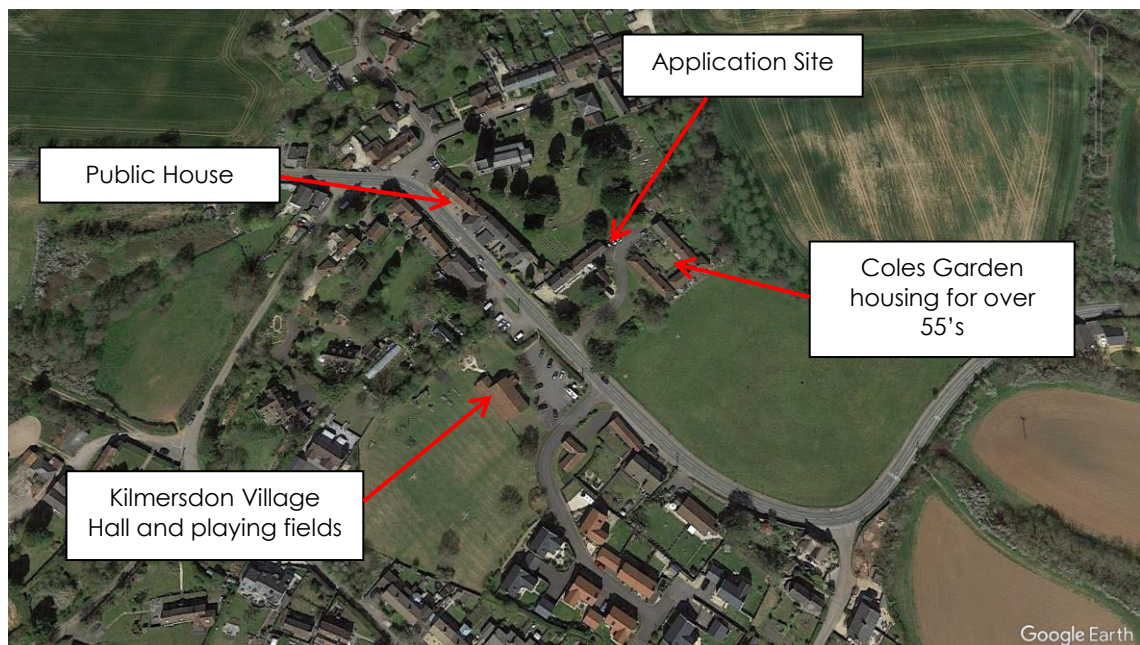


Figure 1 – Site context

- 3.2 The site is located within the designated Kilmersdon conservation area and the building itself is also Grade II listed, together with the attached Orange Farmhouse. There are no landscape designations covering the site and the site lies in an area at very low risk of flooding (FZ1).
- 3.3 The Farmhouse is described as having 2 distinct halves: the left part being early 19th Century and rendered with a slate roof. This part of the building is two storeys with 3 bays and 3 light stone mullioned windows. The central door has a dressed stone surround with a 6-panelled door, with a Gothic gabled wooden porch with a slate roof.
- 3.4 The section to the right (made up of the application building together with part of Orange Farmhouse) is 15/16th Century. This part of the building is lower than the left section and is constructed in coursed rubble with double Roman tiles on the roof. It has 5 bays and 2 light casements with glazing bars, wooden lintels and 3 door openings. The list description notes that in the application building there are a pair of plank doors and a half-glazed door. The listing refers

to re-used 17th and 18th century panelling but there is no evidence of this within the application building. It is noted that the listing was undertaken before the completion of the conversion of the building and does not make reference to the modern casement windows and rooflights or the modern internal partitions in the building. Figures 2 and 3 below show external views of the Meeting Room and the attached Orange Farmhouse, figures 4-7 are internal views.

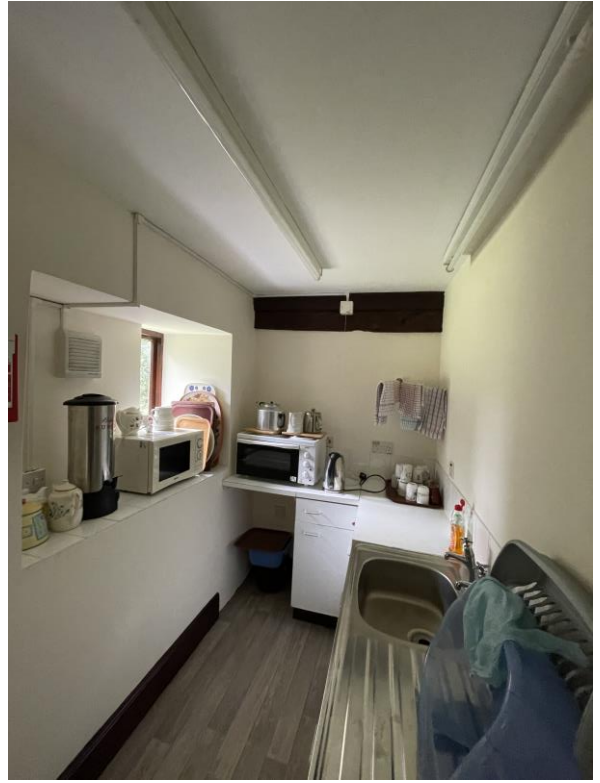


Figure 2 – Front elevation of Kilmersdon Meeting Room (part of the right end of the listed building)



Figure 3 – Rear elevation of Kilmersdon Meeting Room and part of Orange Farmhouse





Figures 4 and 5 – Entrance area and stairs and ground floor kitchen



Figures 6 and 7 – Ground and first floor halls



3.5 The following photographs show the context of the site. Figure 8 below shows the east elevation of Orange Farmhouse and the Meeting Room with the access leading on to the adjoining housing in Coles Garden.

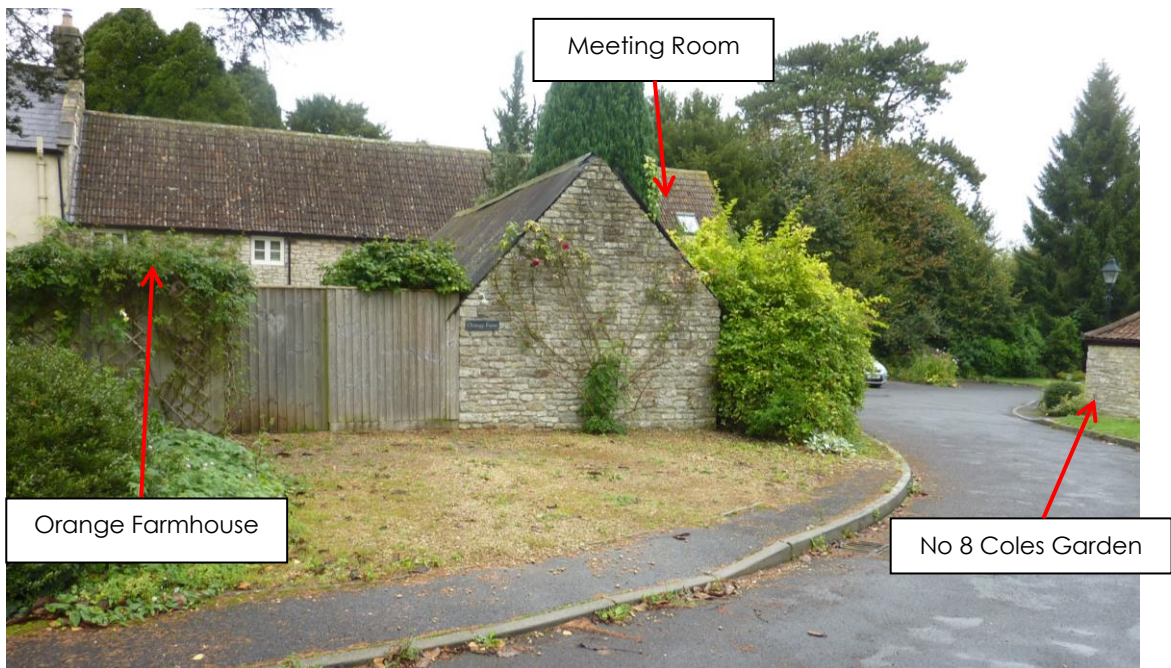


Figure 8 – Coles Garden in the vicinity of the application site

3.6 Figures 9 and 10 below and over show the character of the Coles Garden housing.



Figure 9 – Central courtyard garden in Coles Garden housing





Figure 10 – View looking northwards along Coles Garden towards housing

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 The main planning policy framework relevant to this proposal is the Mendip District Local Plan Part 1 Strategy and Policies (December 2014) (MDLP) and the Government guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework updated 2023 (NPPF).
- 4.2 At the national level, the NPPF is the foremost material consideration. This is supplemented with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 4.3 The relevant policies and guidance are set out in the tables below:

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Chapter	Title
2	Achieving sustainable development
5	Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
8	Promoting healthy and safe communities
9	Promoting sustainable transport
11	Making effective use of land
12	Achieving well designed places
16	Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

MENDIP DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN PART 1

Chapter	Title
CP1	Mendip spatial strategy
CP2	Supporting the provision of new housing
CP4	Sustaining rural communities
DP3	Heritage Conservation
DP5	Biodiversity and Ecological Networks
DP7	Design and amenity of new development
DP10	Parking standards
DP17	Safeguarding community facilities



5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 The key planning issues for the consideration of these proposals are:

- Principle of development, including loss of community facilities
- Design and visual impact on heritage assets
- Parking
- Residential amenity issues, and
- Ecology

Principle of Development

5.2 The two main considerations are the suitability of the site for residential development and the loss of the building for community purposes. As such policies CP1, CP2, CP4 and DP17 of the MDLP are the relevant policy considerations, together with the policies of the NPPF. At paragraph 60, the NPPF emphasises one of the Government's key objectives of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

5.3 Kilmersdon is designated a Secondary Village under policy CP1 of the MDLP, being a village that offers some services and the best available public transport services, making it appropriate for development aimed at meeting localised housing needs.

5.4 Policy CP2 stipulates the scale of development that is acceptable, identifying infill, conversions, and redevelopments as being acceptable within defined Development Limits of the settlement.

5.5 The proposal is for the conversion of an existing building, with the application site being located within the Development Limits for the sustainable village of Kilmersdon and embedded within the built form of the village. The site has easy access by foot or bicycle to the range of services in the village and very good public transport to larger centres further afield. As a result, having regard to the location of the site and the scale of the development, the proposal is clearly a sustainable location for residential development.

5.6 In terms of the conversion of the Meeting Room to a dwelling, Policy DP17 seeks to safeguard community facilities unless certain identified circumstances are met. The supporting paragraphs to this policy advise that to ensure that future development within the district is sustainable and to limit rural isolation, the MDLP seeks as far as possible to retain services and facilities to ensure that people will be able to access them as close to home as possible. In respect of this goal, policy DP17 states that:

“Development proposals that would result in the loss of sites or premises currently or last used for local facilities and services will not be permitted unless:

1. *Suitable alternative provision is being made in the locality and will be available before development or change of use can commence; or*



2. *The maintenance of the existing use would perpetuate existing amenity, highway or other environmental problems; or*
3. *If the service or facility is of a commercial nature (including pubs and neighbourhood shops), and there is no likelihood of a viable community use."*

- 5.7 These policies are considered generally consistent with the NPPF which seeks to guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs (paragraph 93c of the NPPF).
- 5.8 As set out in detail in sections 2 and 3 above, the village of Kilmersdon has a large modern Village Hall situated just a few minutes' walk away from the Meeting Room. In addition, the local pub (also very closeby) has a function room that can be used for meetings. It is therefore clear that the village is already very well served with alternative provision for meeting space, with the Village Hall providing the same type of facility as the application site. As a result, the loss of the Meeting Room would have no adverse impact on the local community and as such the proposal satisfies the criteria set out in policy DP17(1) of the MDLP.
- 5.9 Furthermore, as the Meeting Room is not used by sufficient numbers necessary to retain, maintain and run the building in its current use, the facility is no longer economically viable and is becoming a financial burden for the Housing Association. With the decline in usage, it would be difficult to claim that this proposal would result in the loss of a 'valued facility or service' as set out in the NPPF.
- 5.10 As a result, the principle of the proposed conversion of the Meeting Room to a single dwelling in this sustainable location is clearly supported by policies CP1, CP2, CP4 and DP17 of the MDLP and the NPPF.

Design and Visual Impact on Heritage Assets

- 5.11 The NPPF outlines government policy towards the historic environment. Section 16 "Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment" sets out the overall approach to heritage assets. At a local level, policy DP3 of the MDLP relates to the conservation of the historic environment. The application building is grade II listed and is situated within the Kilmersdon conservation area and within an area of High Archaeological Potential. As a result, a key consideration will be any impact the development may have on these heritage assets.
- 5.12 Together with the policies mentioned above, in terms of considering the details of the conversion scheme, policy DP7 of the MDLP advises the LPA will support high quality design which results in durable, adaptable, sustainable and attractive place. It identifies a number of criteria against which developments will be assessed.



- 5.13 Similarly, Section 12 of the NPPF, highlights the significance of good design to the principles of sustainability and paragraph 130 requires that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.
- 5.14 With regard to heritage assets the NPPF states that applicants should provide a certain level of information concerning the significance of the heritage asset affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. It goes on to state that, *“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”*. It is considered that the information within this statement, together with the detail on the submitted drawings meets those requirements.
- 5.15 In this instance the heritage assets are the application building itself, Kilmersdon Meeting Room, a grade II listed building, the Kilmersdon Conservation Area and the Area of High Archaeological Potential, in which the building is located.
- 5.16 It is noted in section 3 above that the Meeting Room is included with Orange Farmhouse and that at the time of listing it was undergoing conversion to a Meeting Room. This conversion significantly altered the building from its earlier use as an ancillary structure to Orange Farmhouse. It also saw the introduction of a number of modern windows, doors and rooflights.
- 5.17 The current proposal seeks to retain and improve the character and appearance of the Meeting Room. The conversion involves very modest internal and external changes to the building to convert it to a one-bed dwelling with a study/guest room. The scheme involves a thorough refurbishment of the interior and exterior of the building, including the replacement of the modern brown wood window, modern external doors and standard Velux rooflights with more sympathetic and appropriate alternatives. Most of the internal works are of a repair nature, to improve the insulation and the removal of some of the non-historic internal partitions. It is considered that these works will enhance the overall aesthetic appearance of the building.
- 5.18 The design approach to improving the energy performance of the building needs to be carefully considered and the Building Regulations recognise there are special considerations when it comes to Listed Buildings. Part L states, *‘The work should comply with standards in this approved document to the extent that is reasonably practicable’* and *‘in determining whether full energy efficiency improvements should be made, the building control body should consider the advice of the local authority’s conservation officer’*.
- 5.19 Thermally upgrading listed buildings need to be carefully balanced because of the change in the building’s moisture levels and the loss of historic architectural features etc. The submitted drawings set out suggestions for the insulation options for this building, including new breathable wood fibre insulation within the roof void and walls, with a lime plaster finish to internal walls and the underside of the ceiling. The existing flagstone floor is shown to be retained. Any work to the stone floor could risk undermining the external walls if excavated (as they are unlikely to have any foundation), and if insulation is



added above the floor, the door threshold will be compromised and floor to ceiling height at ground floor will be reduced. It is therefore suggested that final details should be agreed with the Conservation Officer.

- 5.20 Externally, the car parking space is to be re-surfaced in resin bound gravel and low-level planting is also included around the space to soften this area in front of the building. The rather overgrown vegetation close to the listed building and to the east is to be managed and enhanced. A modest garden is to be provided with low level shrub planting to the east of the building. A small bin store and bike store are included, with the bike store tucked against the existing buttress wall at the front of the site with a mono pitch roof that simply continues the roof slope of the building. It is considered that these works will enhance the overall setting of the listed building.
- 5.21 As well as renovating the historic fabric and its setting, the scheme will also bring a listed building that has been rather underused for some time back into a beneficial use, securing the long-term future of the heritage asset.
- 5.22 In terms of the impact of the proposal on the designated conservation area, it is accepted that change is inevitable, and the designation of a conservation area does not attempt to prevent change. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2 published by English Heritage acknowledges that most conservation areas have sites within them that can be beneficially developed. Changes within designated areas must be carefully thought through and be respectful of established character.
- 5.23 The existing modern windows, doors and rooflights installed in the building in the 1980's do not add to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area. In contrast the new proposal will replace the windows and doors with more traditional painted designs, enhancing the overall aesthetic appearance of the building. The conversion of the building to a dwelling will also bring the building back into more active use.
- 5.24 Given the existing residential character of this part of the conservation area, it is considered that the change of use of the application building from a Meeting Room to residential would not cause harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets, and that the conversion of the building to residential would integrate with the existing historic fabric of the village. It is therefore concluded that the proposed conversion of the existing building to a single dwelling would sit comfortably in this locality and would preserve the character and appearance of the listed building and the conservation area.
- 5.25 Therefore, in terms of the current proposal, as set out in detail above and on the submitted drawings, the scheme is seeking to renovate this listed building and bring it back into beneficial use, securing the long-term future of the heritage asset. Therefore, in considering the scheme as a whole, the benefits to the building and provision of a viable use outweigh the less than substantial harm of the loss of the community use (paragraph 202 of the NPPF).
- 5.26 Having regard to the above, no material harm to the designated heritage asset has been identified and the proposal therefore accords with policies DP3 and DP7 of the MDLP and sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF.



Highways

- 5.27 Having regard to the accessibility of the site, it lies within a sustainable and accessible location with good connections by foot and cycle to the facilities within Kilmersdon. There are also regular bus services to other larger centres further afield and a flat and traffic free cycle route to Radstock. As such, the development will assist in meeting the principle stated intentions of both the local plan and the NPPF of minimising the impact of travel.
- 5.28 It is proposed that the new dwelling would utilise the established vehicular access on to Cole Gardens and the existing parking space. The submitted drawings also indicate the provision of an EV charging point for the new dwelling and a bike store.
- 5.29 Coles Garden is a very lightly traffic road with low speeds, serving only the over 55's housing beyond the site. The scheme involves the reuse of the existing access point and parking space, that have been in use for many years (without any on-site turning) without adversely affecting highway safety. The site is situated towards the end of the cul-de-sac where there is very little passing traffic and close to a good-sized turning and manoeuvring area. It can therefore be concluded that safe and suitable means of access to the parking space can be attained.
- 5.30 Policy DP10 advises that new development will be supported where vehicle parking is proposed which is appropriate to the operational needs of the *development* and to prevent problems of highway safety, congestion or visual intrusion in the vicinity of the site.
- 5.31 In considering this matter, the parking requirements associated with the existing use at the site are a relevant consideration that must be taken into account. The existing Meeting Room will result in a parking requirement as events are for those living within and beyond the village and so are likely to come by car. In terms of parking provision, the existing use would have a requirement under the Council's adopted parking standards of 4 spaces, conversely the new use as a 1 bed dwelling would have a requirement for 2 spaces (or 2.5 if the study/guest room is included in calculations). The new use therefore has a lower parking requirement than the permitted use of the property and as such the existing facilities are considered to be sufficient.
- 5.32 In considering these matters, paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that:

'Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'.

- 5.33 For the reason set out above, it is submitted that the proposal would include and provide adequate parking and suitable access to the site and that refusal on these grounds cannot be warranted. The scheme is therefore considered to accord with the relevant policies in the MDLP and the terms of the NPPF.



Residential Amenity Issues

- 5.34 Turning to matters of residential amenity, Policy DP7 1(b) requires development to protect the amenity of users of neighbouring buildings and land uses and provide a satisfactory environment for current and future occupants.
- 5.35 In terms of the relationship between the new dwelling and neighbouring occupiers, the proposed conversion scheme would not result in any additional built structure and thus will have no impact in terms of overbearing, overshadowing to loss of outlook. There are also no additional first floor windows proposed and thus the scheme would have no impact in terms of a loss of privacy.
- 5.36 The proposed layout shows a small courtyard garden to provide an outside space for the occupants of the new residential unit. The proposed garden would provide space for sitting out and includes storage for bikes and domestic waste and recyclables. The new dwelling looks out over open green spaces to the front and rear ensuring that the occupants of the new dwelling will have an attractive outlook from the property. Whilst it is a modest amenity space and located at the front of the site, Coles Garden is a cul-de-sac with only a limited number of properties located beyond the application site and is not therefore used as a public through route. The communal open courtyard for the adjoining housing is also open to views from the street. Additionally, as the proposed dwelling only contains one bedroom, it is unlikely to be occupied by families with small children. It is therefore considered that the proposed amenity space is commensurate with the scale of this property.
- 5.37 Furthermore, due to its location in the centre of the village the occupants have easy access to the recreation space in the village playing fields and exercise area which are very closeby and an easy walkable distance from the application site.
- 5.38 For these reasons, it can be concluded that the proposal will not cause any demonstrable harm in terms of a loss of residential amenity to any of the neighbouring properties and that the new dwelling would have an acceptable level of amenity. As such the proposal meets the requirements of Policy DP7 1(b).

Ecology

- 5.39 Policy DP5 of the MDLP advises that the Council will use the local planning process to protect, enhance and restore the county's Ecological Network within Mendip and requires that development proposals must ensure the protection, conservation and where possible enhancement of internationally, nationally or locally designated habitat areas and species. It goes on to advise that proposals with the potential to cause adverse impacts on protected and/or priority sites, species or habitats are unlikely to be sustainable and will be resisted. Chapter 15 of the NPPF provides further guidance on conserving and enhancing the natural environment.



- 5.40 This application submission includes a Protected Species Survey prepared by Malford Environmental Consulting to support the scheme. The report includes a phase 1 bat roost inspection and ecology survey for other protected species.
- 5.41 The report states that there is no evidence that the building is being used or has been used by bats, and that the building is considered to be unsuitable to support roosting bats as there are no optimal external gaps and no internal hidden voids. The building also has negligible potential to support roosting bats in the future. No specific bat mitigation is necessary for the proposed development.
- 5.42 The report also advises that there is no evidence of active or previous nesting birds on the building and no birds can access the interior and that there are no other protected animals associated with this building or the immediate surrounding area. No other mitigation is therefore necessary for this project.
- 5.43 As a result, it can be concluded that the proposal will not have any adverse impact on wildlife within or adjacent to the application site and therefore meets the requirements of policy DP5 of the MDLP and the guidance contained in section 15 of the NPPF.



6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated how the proposal for the conversion of the existing Meeting Room in Coles Garden not only conforms to planning policy at all tiers but also makes the best use of the site within the development limits of Kilmersdon. The site is ideally positioned to provide much needed housing in a sustainable location and is considered acceptable in principle.
- 6.2 The scheme also ensures the retention and reuse of the listed heritage asset to provide a modest dwelling, thereby providing an appropriate use for the Meeting Room and ensuring the long-term future of the building
- 6.3 The scheme to convert the building has been carefully considered to ensure that the proposals would conserve and enhance the significance of the listed building, its setting, and the conservation area. Likewise, it will not cause demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area, neighbouring occupiers, biodiversity or highway safety.
- 6.4 This statement has detailed how the scheme complies with the relevant policies of the Mendip District Local Plan and the NPPF.
- 6.5 The Council is therefore requested to approve this application.

