



**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)  
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE  
ACT 2004**

**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**RE: CONVERSION AND ALTERATIONS OF  
STABLE BLOCK TO SINGLE DWELLING**

**Land Parcel north-east of Greenhatch Farm, Cowley, GL53 9NJ**

**On behalf of:  
MS CROUCHER**

Date: February 2024

Ref: AP/P/C-089

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Chartered Town Planner

## CONTENTS:

	Page No:
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	2
3. PLANNING HISTORY	3
4. THE PROPOSALS	4
5. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK	5
6. PLANNING AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS	10
7. CONCLUSION	13

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared by **Plan-A Planning and Development Ltd** in support of a full planning application for the conversion and alteration of an existing stable block located on a parcel of land to the north-east of Greenhatch Farm, Cowley to provide a single-storey dwelling. It assesses and evaluates the context and character of the site and surrounding area and considers the proposals against the local and national policy framework, referring as appropriate to the following drawings and documents:-

- Visual Structural Inspection & Subsequent Assessment for Planning Purposes (David Smith Associates LLP)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Cotswold Environmental)
- Drawing No. 2312-3 Rev C – Drawing Sheet

1.2 Based on our assessment and having taken all relevant material planning considerations into account, the statement concludes our case that the application proposals accord with all relevant detailed policy criteria and will not generate any adverse impacts that would otherwise outweigh the benefits of permitting the application. And as such, that planning permission should therefore be granted.

## 2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site lies at the western edge of the built-up area to Cowley, which is a small settlement largely characterised by development fronting onto two lanes that loop round to the cluster of development at Cowley Manor, approximately 750m to the east. The site comprises a former stables building, set along the southern boundary of an adjoining paddock and backs on to the adjoining lane which connects the village with Stockwell and the A417 Birdlip by-pass further to the west.



*Google Earth extract of approximate site location (accessed January 2024)*

- 2.2 The site lies outside of the village conservation area and there are no listed buildings within proximity to the site. The site falls within Flood Zone 1 (areas within the Environment Agency's lowest category for flood risk) and also within the Cotswold AONB, which 'washes over' the village and surrounding area.
- 2.3 Apart from the existing built development associated with the village, the land surrounding the site and associated paddock is primarily in agricultural use. However, this is largely screened to view by the existing roadside vegetation and the steeply sloping valley sides, which rise to the north and north-west, although partial views of the site can currently be achieved from the public right of way which runs along the track located a short-distance to the east of the site.

### **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 The site has been subject to the following planning applications:-

**13/02718/FUL**

3.2 This application concerned the replacement of an existing field shelter with a stable block and was granted permission in August 2013.

**23/01397/PLP**

3.3 This concerned an application for 'Permission in Principle' for a development of 9 no. dwellinghouses which was refused in July 2023. Whilst the corresponding Officers Report confirmed that Cowley is considered one of the District's 'Non-Principal Settlements', the site was considered to fall outside of the settlement and subject to Local Plan Policy DS4, which precludes new-build open market housing except for a limited number of exceptions. As none of these were considered applicable to the scheme proposals, they were deemed unacceptable in principle. Also, whilst only for permission in principle, the illustrative site plan showed clearance of the existing vegetation along the site's southern boundary and a total of 8 no. units fronting onto the highway. The amount of development proposed together with the likely access arrangements and associated domestication of the landscape were considered to 'represent a significant addition to the landscape' that would compromise its rural landscape character to the detriment of the Cotswolds AONB.

#### 4. THE PROPOSALS

##### Use/ Amount

- 4.1 The proposals comprise the conversion and alteration of the existing stables block to create a new single dwelling.

##### Scale, Siting, Layout and Appearance

- 4.2 The proposed conversion is entirely contained within the existing building envelope, albeit modified to incorporate the existing roof overhang. The scale and siting of development is therefore unaffected, and through use of the existing materials palette, the building also retains its existing rural appearance. Other alterations have been kept to the minimum necessary to ensure adequate natural light is provided to the habitable accommodation, with shuttered windows to the upper section of each stable door, full height folding glazed doors serving the proposed living area and hallway, and three rooflights to the rear of the building. Furthermore, internal alterations are limited to reconfiguration of internal partitioning necessary to subdivide the living space from the bedrooms and bathroom.

- 4.3 Externally, amenity space is to be limited to that associated with the existing hardstanding which currently adjoins the stable building and is to be separated from the remainder of the paddock by simple post and rail fencing together with new native hedgerows and trees (details of which can be submitted and approved as part of a landscaping scheme controlled by a suitably worded condition).

##### Access/ Parking

- 4.4 The proposals will utilise the existing hard surfaced track which runs from the gated vehicular access located in the south-eastern corner of the site to the parking area adjoining the stables. As was the case when this was used in connection with the stables, this provides adequate room for vehicles to enter, manoeuvre, and exit the site in forward gear.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 confirms that where determination is to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 although the updated NPPF also represents a material consideration in its own right.

### Cotswold District Local Plan to 2031

#### Policy DS4 - Open Market Housing Outside Principal and Non-Principal Settlements

- 5.2 This policy states that new-build open market housing will not be permitted outside Principal and Non-Principal Settlements unless in accordance with other policies that expressly deal with residential development in such locations.
- 5.3 Supporting paragraph 6.4.3 states that the Local Plan has policies allowing for certain types of housing development in the countryside, such as the conversion of rural buildings (Policy EC6). Supporting para 6.4.4 further confirms this, where it is stated that this policy does not preclude the development of some open market housing in rural locations; for example, housing created from the conversion of rural buildings.

#### Policy EN1 – Built, Natural and Historic Environment

- 5.4 This policy seeks to ensure that new development will, where appropriate, promote the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic and natural environment. The policy's criteria include a requirement to ensure that design standards compliment the character of the area and the sustainable use of the development.

#### Policy EN2 – The Built Environment

- 5.5 This policy is supportive of development which accord with the updated *Cotswold Design Code*. The policy requires that proposals should be of a design quality that respects the character and distinctive appearance of the locality.
- 5.6 The revised *Cotswold Design Code* emphasises the importance of designing development that either follows an authentic vernacular and traditional approach in line with local architectural character, or that it is designed in a high quality contemporary and innovative manner which reflects and respects local character. The plan recognises that the decision as to whether to

adopt a traditional or contemporary approach will depend on the type of development proposed, the site and its setting.

Policy EN5 – Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 5.7 This policy outlines the determining factors when considering developments within the Cotswolds AONB. It outlines that great weight must be given to a development's setting, the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape, its character and special qualities.

Policy EN8 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity: Features, Habitats and Species

- 5.8 This policy outlines that development will be permitted as long as it conserves and enhances biodiversity and geodiversity, providing net gains where possible. Development resulting in habitat fragmentation and loss of ecological connectivity will not be permitted.

Policy EC6 – Conversion of Rural Buildings

- 5.9 This policy confirms that the conversion of rural buildings to alternative uses will be permitted, subject to the following requirements being met:-
- a) *The building is structurally sound, suitable for and capable of conversion to the proposed use without substantial alteration, extension or re-building;*
  - b) *It would not cause conflict with existing farming operations, including severance or disruption to the holding that would prejudice its continued viable operation; and*
  - c) *The development proposals are compatible with extant uses on the site and existing and planned uses in close proximity to the site.*

Policy INF4 – Highway Safety

- 5.10 This policy outlines that development will be permitted so long as it provides safe and suitable access that is well integrated with the existing transport network.

Policy INF5 – Parking Provision

- 5.11 This policy seeks to ensure that developments for new residential properties comply with the corresponding parking standards and associated guidance.



### Other Material Policy Considerations

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.12 The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England, together with guidance on how they are expected to be applied. It is a material consideration in its own right in the determination of planning applications (paragraph 2 of the revised Framework).
- 5.13 The NPPF reconfirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which encompasses the three overarching and interdependent economic, social and environmental objectives. It confirms that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions. In doing so, Local Planning Authorities are instructed to take local circumstances into account to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area (paragraph 9 of the Framework refers).
- 5.14 At the heart of the NPPF is a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development (see paragraphs 10 and 11). For decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay, or where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date (such as is in cases where there is no five year housing land supply), granting permission unless: policies in the Framework provide a clear reason for refusing the proposals; or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits (NPPF para. 11 refers).
- 5.15 The Framework instructs LPAs to approach decision-making in a positive and creative way, and to *“work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area”*. The Framework stipulates that decision-makers at every level should *“seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”* (para 38 refers).
- 5.16 Para 60 emphasises that there is a need to *“significantly boost the supply of homes”* whilst para 123 confirms that planning decisions should promote the effective use of land. In promoting sustainable development in rural areas, para 83 confirms that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It also states that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where

this will support local services and, where development in one village may support services in a village nearby.

- 5.17 Paragraph 84 confirms that the development of isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided, unless it applies to any stated circumstance, such as whether *“the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings or enhance its immediate setting”*.
- 5.18 Para 114 outlines that planning decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. However, para 115 goes on to confirm that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.19 The updated NPPF attaches great importance to achieving well-designed places and making effective use of land (paragraph 123 refers). Paragraph 124 supports the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially where this would help to meet identified needs for houses where land supply is constrained. Paragraph 128 affirms that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land whilst also taking into account the desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting and the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.
- 5.20 Para 131 highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and helps create better places to live and work. Accordingly, para 135 confirms that planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments:-
- - *“will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
  - - *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
  - - *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
  - - *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
  - - *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
  - - *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and where*

*crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

5.21 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF confirms that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, providing net gains for biodiversity, and preventing new development from contributing to unacceptable levels of pollution. Para 182 emphasises the importance of AONBs, confirming that great weight should be given to their conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty.

## 6. PLANNING AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The planning considerations of most relevance to the assessment of this application are:-

- The Principle of Development;
- Design Considerations;
- Biodiversity Considerations; and
- Access and Highway Safety Issues.

### Principle of the Development

6.2 Although the application site is situated on the western edge of Cowley, it has previously been identified as falling outside of the 'Non-Principal Settlement' and subject to Local Plan Policy DS4. Nevertheless, as referred to in para 5.3 above, the supporting text to this policy confirms that housing development created through the conversion of rural buildings is acceptable in principle within such locations. However, all such proposals will need to meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy EC6, which confirms that the conversion of rural buildings to alternative uses will be permitted subject to compliance with the corresponding policy criteria.

6.3 Specifically, it is necessary to demonstrate that:-

- a) The building is structurally sound, suitable for and capable of conversion to the proposed use without substantial alteration, extension or re-building;*
- b) It would not cause conflict with existing farming operations, including severance or disruption to the holding that would prejudice its continued viable operation; and*
- c) The development proposals are compatible with extant uses on the site and existing and planned uses in close proximity to the site.*

6.4 In this case, the Structural Engineer's report submitted in support of the application concludes that the building is structurally capable of taking the likely loading associated with its conversion, without the need for any significant alteration or enhancement. Furthermore, as the proposals are contained within the existing building envelope, they are in clear accordance with criterion a) of the policy. As for the remaining criteria, the proposals are entirely compatible with ongoing use of the remainder of the site as a small paddock and would not prejudice its continued operation as such.

6.5 Accordingly, the proposed development is in full accordance with the relevant policy requirements and is therefore acceptable in principle.

### Design Considerations

- 6.6 The *Cotswold Design Code* (as embedded within Appendix D to the Local Plan) confirms that all good design is informed by the needs of the current and future users, and by a proper understanding of the site and its setting. In this case, the proposals are contained within the existing building envelope. Modifications are limited to those appropriate to its proposed new use as habitable accommodation, whilst retention of the existing palette of materials and limited private amenity space will ensure that the proposals have no significant adverse impact on the existing rural character of the site and surrounding area – particularly since the vehicular access and parking provision simply carries forward the existing arrangements associated with the site’s existing lawful use as stables.
- 6.7 Unlike the illustrative proposals submitted as part of the application for permission in principle, the existing vegetation along the southern boundary is to be retained and can be supplemented as part of a comprehensive landscaping scheme controlled by condition. This will also provide additional hedgerow and tree planting alongside the existing vehicular access which serves the site. Therefore, the proposed conversion of an existing building will have no adverse impact on the wider AONB, which is any case mitigated by the building’s discreet location and the existing topography of the steep valley side. Furthermore, potential lightspill is mitigated through use of shuttered windows which can also be supplemented by screening of the full height windows as appropriate, whilst any low-level external lighting will be no greater than would be associated with the existing stables use and will be suitably controlled as part of measures to address biodiversity interest as referred to below. Accordingly, the proposals can be considered in full accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policies EN1, EN2 and EN5.

### Biodiversity Considerations

- 6.8 A survey was undertaken in January 2024 by a suitably qualified ecologist to establish the suitability or use of the building by birds and bats. The survey confirms that no evidence of bats or nesting birds was found and that, when considering the lack of potential roosting features associated with the building combined with the lack of evidence, the building has a negligible potential to support roosting bats.

The report identifies a number of potential options with regard to on-site biodiversity enhancement, and recommends measures are taken (such as suitably worded conditions) to protect the trees and shrubs that lie alongside the site’s southern boundary both during and

after construction. It also suggests the addition of one or more bat boxes and bird nesting boxes to mature trees within the site together with appropriate provisions to allow for the movement of foraging hedgehogs.

#### **Access and Highway Safety Issues**

- 6.9 As referred to in Section 4 above, the proposals make use of the existing vehicular access and parking area which serves the site. Particularly when set against the traffic generated in connection with the existing lawful use of the site as stables, the low traffic volumes associated with the proposed development will not have a severe impact on the local highway network or on highway safety in general. As such, the proposals are in full accordance with Local Plan Policies INF4 and INF5.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The application proposals represent a carefully designed scheme which, through the use of good design principles, will result in a high-quality development that is entirely sympathetic to its rural context and setting. Whilst located outside of the existing built-up area to Cowley - an established non-principal settlement – it is in full accordance with relevant Local Plan policy which allows for the conversion of rural buildings within the countryside. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the proposals are in general accordance with all other relevant national and local planning policy requirements such that, in accordance with the provisions of s38(6) of the Act, planning permission can safely be granted for the submitted proposals.