

Planning Statement

Evergreen
Bowbridge Lane
Prestbury
Cheltenham


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Project: 16215

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application seeking permission for the conversion of an existing rural building to a new self-contained dwelling.

1.2 This statement sets out the main planning considerations and justifications for the scheme. In support of the application, this statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme is acceptable in principle and expands upon issues relating to the Green Belt, design and amenity, landscape impact, access and parking, ecology, and energy.

1.3 The application submitted comprises the following plans and documents.

- Location Plan – P001 Rev P1
- Existing Site Plans – P002 Rev P1
- Proposed Site Plan – P003 Rev P1
- Existing Ground Floor Plan and Elevations – P004 Rev P1
- Proposed Floor Plans - P005 Rev P1
- Proposed Elevations – P006 Rev P1
- Illustrative Sketch Views – P007 Rev P1
- Structural Assessment – 02 Rev P1
- Transport Note – Peter Evans Partnership
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – All Ecology Ltd
- Solar PV Feasibility Study – LZC Consultants
- Design & Access Statement – Design Storey Ltd
- Klargester BioAir technical specifications

1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and documents that make up the application.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The application relates to a modern agricultural barn that is situated in a 3.7-acre paddock to the west of Evergreen House, Bowbridge Lane, Prestbury. The site is accessed via an existing driveway off Bowbridge Lane, which also provides access to Evergreen House.

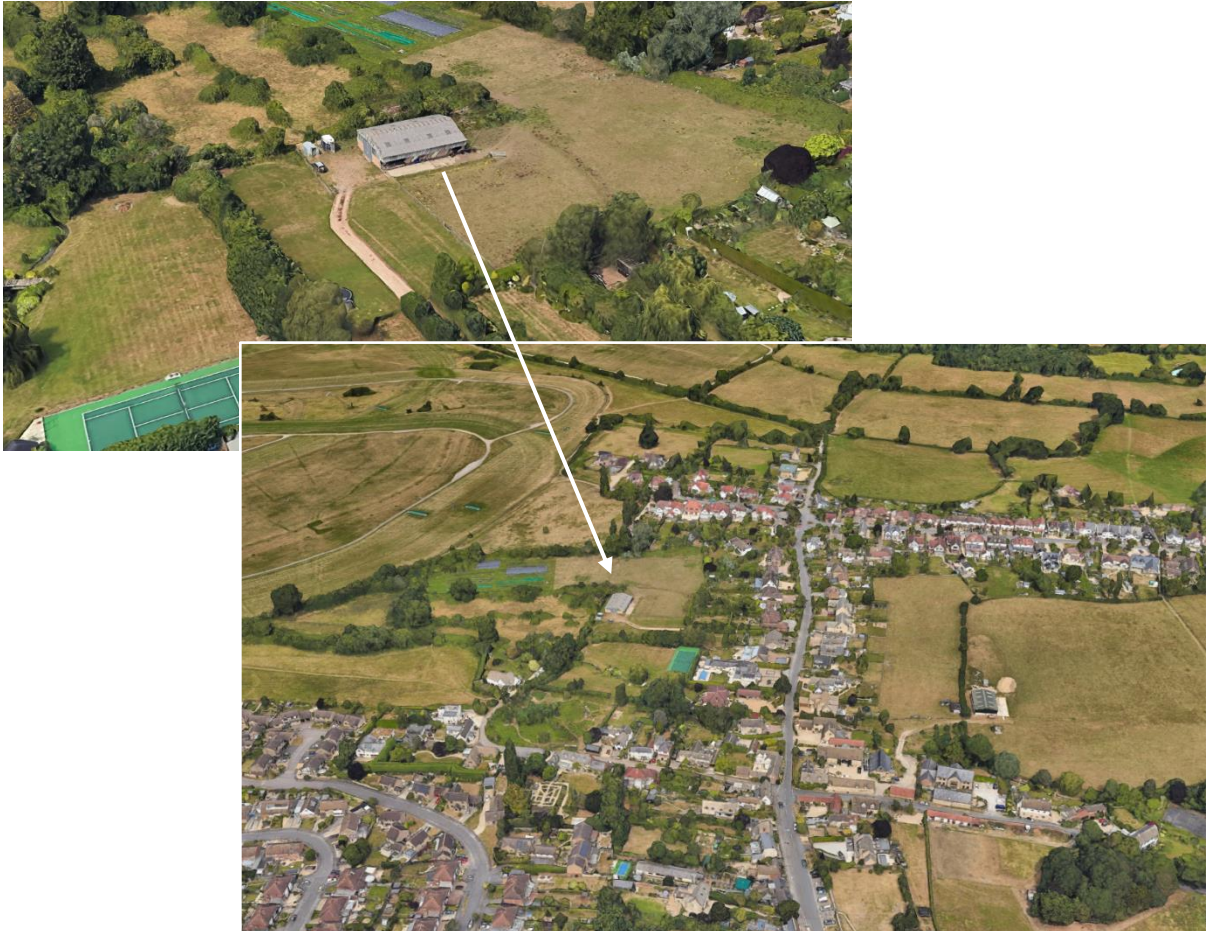


Figure 1 - Site Location (taken from Google Maps)

2.2 Whilst the barn sits within a large paddock, the site is heavily influenced by existing residential development to the north, east and south. To the west of the site is the Cheltenham Racecourse.

2.3 In policy terms, the site lies just outside of the Cheltenham Principal Urban Area, which incorporates the existing properties along Bowbridge Lane. The site is not subject to any formal or informal landscape designation although the site is within the Green Belt. The site is in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at a low risk from fluvial flooding. The site is also not within an identified Critical Drainage Area.

2.4 There are no known heritage constraints in the vicinity of the site.

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

3.1 The application seeks planning permission for the conversion of a modern barn to a new four bedroomed dwelling, with an open-plan living area and bedroom on the ground floor and a new mezzanine level with three bedrooms above.



Figure 2 – Visualisations of converted barn.

3.2 The proposals seek to preserve the agricultural character and appearance of the building, with the roof form and mass of the building retained. Existing openings, including the main barn doors on the southwest elevation, will be retained, and repurposed with new glazing added. The large opening to the southeast corner and stable doors openings will also be retained with a new opening added to the northeast to create access to the garden from the downstairs bedroom.

3.3 On the west elevation, two of the bays will be opened with larger glazed sections. New

openings are proposed to the north elevation, these are vertical in proportion and have a utilitarian feel that is appropriate in the context of the barn.

- 3.4 The existing material palette comprises of masonry will be retained to maintain the agricultural character; however, the bricks will be stained dark to give the building a more contemporary appearance. The block on the west elevation will be overclad with metal panels.
- 3.5 It is proposed to use skylights to provide light and ventilation to the first-floor bedrooms and bathrooms and a linear ridge skylight to provide light to the landing area. A discreet balcony is proposed on the northwest corner of the building to provide views and external space for the master bedroom. The roofing is proposed to be metal standing seam to reflect the barn typology and semi-rural location.

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

4.2 The development plan is currently comprised of the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031 (JCS), the saved retail policies of the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan 2nd Review – 2006, the Cheltenham Plan 2011-2031, and a number of made Neighbourhood Development Plans. However, there are no Neighbourhood Development Plans that are applicable to this site. The saved retail policies are also not relevant to this proposal.

4.3 The JCS policies that are of relevance to this application are:

- SP2 – Distribution of New Development
- SD4 – Design Requirements
- SD6 – Landscape
- SD9 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- SD10 – Residential Development
- INF1 – Transport Network
- INF5 – Renewable Energy/Low Carbon Energy Development

4.4 The Cheltenham Plan policies that are of relevance to this application are:

- D1 – Design
- L1 – Landscape and Setting
- L2 – Conversion of Rural Buildings
- SL1 – Safe and Sustainable Living

National Planning Policy Framework

4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) was revised on 20th December 2023. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is a material consideration in planning decisions.

- 4.6 The Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, this can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.
- 4.7 So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. 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, granting permission unless: i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
- 4.8 The Framework defines the three overarching objectives of sustainable development as:
- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
 - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.9 These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of policies in the Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

5. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Having regard for the proposed development, the relevant planning policy context, and all other material issues, the main planning considerations for the determination of this application relate to the principle of development, Green Belt, design and amenity, landscape impact, access and parking, ecology, and energy.

Principle of Development

- 5.2 The principle of this development is established through Policy SD10 of the JCS and Policy L2 of the Cheltenham Plan. Criterion 5 of Policy SD10 supports proposals involving the sensitive, adaptive re-use of vacant or redundant buildings. Similarly, Policy L2 of the Cheltenham Plan supports the conversion of rural buildings to uses other than agriculture provided the building is structurally sound, suitable for and capable of conversion to the proposed use without substantial alteration, extension, or rebuilding. Policy L2 also requires the conversion and alternative use to not harm the character of the building and be appropriate to the character and setting concerned, and the proposal must not cause conflict with existing or planned uses on or in close proximity to the site.
- 5.3 Whilst historically used for agricultural purposes, it has been used for car and boat storage over the past 20 years and used as stables for up to four horses at any one time. Two horses were permanently in the barn and adjacent paddock between 2015 – 2022. Over the past 18 months, a vegetable growing business has been using the barn and adjacent land. It is of note that Policy L2 of the Cheltenham Plan, which post-dates the JCS, does not require a building to be vacant or redundant prior to conversion.
- 5.4 The structural integrity of the barn proposed to be converted has been assessed by a qualified structural engineer. He reports that at present the building structure appears to be performing satisfactorily and, for this reason, conversion to domestic use would be appropriate. Additional stiffness will be gained via the introduction of roof bracing and a mezzanine floor, and the compartmental nature of domestic living naturally enhances the lateral stability of the building as a whole. As such, the building is structurally sound and suitable and capable of conversion to a dwelling without substantial alteration, extension, or rebuilding.

- 5.5 Regarding the character of the building, the barn is currently a modern steel frame structure with a mixture of brick and block walls with slatted timber panels above and a sheet cement fibre roof. The barn has a typical utilitarian appearance and is of limited architectural merit, however, the proposed conversion seeks to retain the overall character of the barn using timber cladding, stained brick, a standing seam metal roof and glazing to the existing openings. This would ensure that the converted building respects the character and setting of the immediate area. Furthermore, given the residential context of the surrounding area, the converted building would be entirely appropriate in this location.
- 5.6 It is also the case that the Local Authority cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites, with a recent appeal decision at Land South of A46 Shurdington Road, Cheltenham confirming that the current figure stands at 2.9 years (Appeal Ref: APP/B1605/W/22/3309156). That is due in part to some of the strategic sites in the JCS not coming forward to planning timescales due to site specific constraints. Because of this, the Local Authority's housing policies cannot be considered up-to-date, and the 'tilted balance' is triggered, as per paragraph 11 of the Framework.
- 5.7 As the principle of this development is firmly supported by the development plan, the acceptability of this proposal is not reliant on the application of the 'tilted balance'. However, the provision of additional housing should be seen as a considerable benefit in this context, especially given the constrained nature of Cheltenham.

Green Belt

- 5.8 The Framework states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It explains that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt save for a number of exceptions. It goes on to state that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. One form of development is the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.
- 5.9 At a local level, Policy SD5 of the JCS reflect the advice in the Framework and states that with its boundaries, development will be restricted to those limited types of development which

are deemed appropriate by the NPPF, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Policy GB1 of the Cheltenham Plan further reiterates this.

- 5.10 As previous set out, the building is of a permanent and substantial construction and no extensions are proposed to the structure. As such, the conversion of the building to a dwellinghouse would not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 5.11 Regarding the openness of the Green Belt, other than the conversion of the existing building, no other buildings or structures are proposed within the application site. Furthermore, the outdoor amenity area has been purposely kept close to the building to prevent any harmful encroachment into the surrounding land.
- 5.12 In summary, the proposal does not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It will preserve the openness of the Green Belt and will not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The proposal therefore accords with Policy SD5 of the JCS and Policy GB1 of the Cheltenham Plan.

Design and Amenity

- 5.13 The Framework sets out that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. That is reflected in Policy SD4 of the JCS that requires new development to respond positively to, and respect the character of, the site and its surroundings, enhancing local distinctiveness, and addressing the urban structure and grain of the locality in terms of street pattern, layout, mass, and form.
- 5.14 At a local level, Policy D1 of the Cheltenham Plan states that development will only be permitted where it adequately reflects principles of urban and architectural design, and compliments and respects neighbouring development and the character of the landscape. Similarly, Policy SL1 states, inter alia, that development should not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of adjoining land users and living conditions in the locality and not give rise to crime or the fear of crime nor endanger public safety.
- 5.15 It is clear that strong design principles need to be followed for development and to demonstrate this, a Design and Access Statement is submitted as part of this application. The

Design and Access Statement explains the design rationale that has been adopted and demonstrates a well-considered and appropriate design solution that fully responds to the site's constraints and opportunities.

- 5.16 In terms of amenity, the proposed dwelling would have an acceptable impact on existing residential property in terms of privacy, light, and outlook. The proposed dwelling itself would also be afforded good levels of amenity, both in terms of internal accommodation and private outdoor space.
- 5.17 Considering the above, the proposed development accords with Policies SD3, SD4 and SD10 of the JCS and Policies D1 and SL1 of the Cheltenham Plan.

Landscape

- 5.18 The site is not subject to any formal or informal landscape designation although it is surrounded by open land to the west, which includes the Cheltenham Racecourse. Policy SD6 of the JCS states that development will seek to protect landscape character for its own intrinsic beauty and for its benefit to economic, environmental, and social well-being. Similarly, Policy L1 of the Cheltenham Plan states that development will only be permitted where it would not harm the setting of Cheltenham including views into or out of areas of acknowledged importance.
- 5.19 As set out above, the proposed dwelling has been carefully designed to respect the character and setting of the immediate area. The existing building is of limited architectural merit and the proposed conversion would markedly improve the appearance of the building and its setting. In addition, new native planting will be used around the barn along with new fruit trees along the east elevation. The sloped areas of the site will also be planted with wildflower meadow.
- 5.20 In summary, the proposed development would have a beneficial impact on the surrounding landscape and would not harm the setting of Cheltenham. As such, the proposal accords with Policy SD6 of the JCS and Policy L1 of the Cheltenham Plan.

Access and Parking

- 5.21 The Framework sets out that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual

cumulative impacts of development are severe. Those requirements are reflected in Policy INF1 of the JCS.

- 5.22 The application is supported by a Transport Note (TN) that considers the impact on the proposed development in transport terms. It sets out that access to the site is via the existing drive to Evergreen from Bowbridge Lane. The drive passes the southern side of Evergreen and is approximately 110m long and varies in width between 4.3m and 3m.
- 5.23 The TN advises that the site access is suitable for the low level and type of trip typically associated with one dwelling. The drive is wide enough for a fire appliance to reach a fire if necessary and is also generally wide enough for a pedestrian or cyclist to pass a car. The visibility from the driveway where it meets Bowbridge Lane is appropriate for the low speeds and volume of traffic and other road users on Bowbridge Lane. In terms of the visibility to the right; this is consistent with the MfS requirement of 2.4m x 38m for the recorded 85th percentile speed of 27.3mph. To the left a visibility of 2.4m x 34m is provided to the nearside kerb and centreline, which is consistent with the recorded 85th percentile speed of 25.5mph.
- 5.24 Parking will be provided on site for at least two cars and a minimum of four cycle parking spaces will be provided within the site curtilage. An electric charging point will also be provided on site.
- 5.25 The proposed development would generate one additional vehicle movements in a peak hour and six vehicle movements across the day. The number of vehicle movements associated with Evergreen would also be low and the likelihood of two vehicles turning into and out of the junction with Bowbridge Lane at the same time would remain low. Furthermore, the vehicle movements associated with Evergreen and the vegetable growing activities and stables have coexisted satisfactorily for over eight years, with no report of any highway safety or capacity related issues. The number of vehicle movements on the driveway would not change with the proposed development.
- 5.26 In summary, the site will be served by a safe and suitable access and the residual cumulative impact on the highway network would not be severe. The proposals therefore accord with Policy INF1 of the JCS.

Ecology

- 5.27 Policy SD9 of the JCS states that the biodiversity and geological resource of the JCS area will be protected and enhanced in order to establish and reinforce ecological networks that are resilient to current and future pressures. It follows that where there is a risk of harm as a consequence of development, this should be mitigated by integrating enhancements into the scheme that are appropriate to the location and satisfactory to the local planning authority.
- 5.28 The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) that considers the impact of the proposed development in terms of biodiversity. The PEA notes that the site is composed of common habitats that have little to no ecological value except for the hedge, which will be retained. Any impacts because of loss/changes to the remaining habitats are negligible and the proposed areas of wildflower grassland and fruit trees will increase the biodiversity value of the site.
- 5.29 In terms of fauna, the PEA advises that the building on site has negligible potential for roosting bats. It further notes that the site is poor foraging and commuting habitat, but it is likely that low numbers of common species will forage over and around parts of the site at times, mainly the hedge. The proposed works are not expected to have any significant impact on bats and no further surveys for activity are required.
- 5.30 In terms of birds, the PEA advised that the site provides minimal poor quality foraging habitat for the most part except for the hedge which also provides nesting habitat. Again, this will be retained. There is also limited potential for nesting in the building.
- 5.31 Regarding invertebrates, the habitats on site are mostly poor but will support a limited variety of common invertebrate species. However, potential for more notable species is negligible.
- 5.32 In summary, the proposed development would have an acceptable impact in terms of biodiversity in accordance with Policy SD9 of the JCS.

Energy

- 5.33 Policy SD3 of the JCS requires development proposals to demonstrate how they contribute to the aims of sustainability by increasing energy efficiency, minimising waste, and avoiding

the unnecessary pollution of air, harm to the water environment, and contamination of land or interference in other natural systems.

- 5.34 The Council adopted a Climate Change SPD on 20th June 2022. The purpose of the SPD is to enable sustainable design and construction and help reduce the negative environmental impacts of the property development industry. It incorporates guidance on different aspects of sustainable design and construction including energy and carbon, climate change adaptation, water efficiency, flood prevention, pollution, sustainable transport, biodiversity, and waste reduction.
- 5.35 From the outset, the Applicant has sought to deliver a dwelling that meets high environmental standards in terms of its carbon footprint and energy consumption. Where possible, sustainable, and local materials will be used to minimise the impact on the environment.
- 5.36 In addition, the new dwelling will be constructed with a very high level of air tightness, which will exceed current Building Regulations, and will utilise proven technologies such as the following:
- Air source heat pump in conjunction with underfloor heating.
 - Solar panels.
 - Heat recovery system.
 - Natural ventilation and shading.
 - Electric vehicle charging point.
- 5.37 The proposed landscaping will comprise of drought tolerant and native species which will encourage wildlife whilst minimising water consumption.
- 5.38 Subject to the implementation of these measures, the proposed development would comply with Policy SD3 of the JCS, and the guidance contained in the Council's Climate Change SPD.

6. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The Framework sets out the three overarching objectives of sustainable development. These are independent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, so that opportunities can be taken to secure new gains across each of the different objectives. As previously mentioned, these objectives are economic, social, and environmental.

An Economic Objective

6.2 Economic benefits would stem from this development during the construction phase. Indeed, the Government recognises that construction underpins our economy and society. Construction output in the UK is more than £110 billion per annum and contributes 7% of GDP. The Local Authority would also benefit from the New Homes Bonus and increased Council Tax receipts.

A Social Objective

6.3 The proposed development will provide much needed housing that would help meet the objectively assessed need for housing in the Borough. This is of particular importance since the Local Authority cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The provision of housing of any scale should therefore be afforded significant weight in the planning balance, especially given the constrained nature of Cheltenham.

An Environmental Objective

6.4 The proposal promotes high standards of design that will complement the character and appearance of the surrounding area and will have an acceptable impact on existing neighbouring development. The site will be served by a safe and suitable access and the residual cumulative impact on the highway network will not be severe.

6.5 The site is not at an unacceptable risk of flooding and the proposal would have an acceptable impact in terms of biodiversity.


Conclusions

6.6 In summary, this statement demonstrates that the proposal accords with all relevant Development Plan policies and national guidance, and there are no other material considerations present to override them. It is therefore urged that the Local Planning Authority grant planning permission for this sustainable development.



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