



Mid Sussex District Council

Oaklands

Oaklands Road

Haywards Heath

West Sussex

RH16 1SS

Planning References: **DM/25/3028 & DM/25/3040**

12th March 2026

Dear Katherine,

Site	West House Farm, Henfield Road, Albourne, BN6 9DE
Proposal	Demolition of modern farm buildings. Extension and conversion of existing barn to dwelling house. Conversion of existing stable building to ancillary accommodation. Construction of replacement stables, games room outbuilding and storage outbuilding.

In response to the Council's Conservation Officer consultation comments received on the 27th January 2026, we have compiled additional information to support the planning application and listed building consent. We would be grateful if you could consider this with the documents already submitted on the applications.

This letter provides a summary of how the matters raised by the Conservation Officer have been addressed and a list of the amended and additional documents submitted as detailed in the table on the following page.

Document Title	Document Reference	Consultant Provided
Optimum Viable Use Table with Costings	N/A	Manorwood
Letter from Chartered Surveyor - H.J. Burt	Dated 11/03/2026	H.J.Burt
Cost Estimates - The Oak Blokes	Dated 26/02/2026	The Oak Blokes
Photo Montage - Mezzanine	N/A	Manorwood
Photo Montage - Proposed Frame Alterations	N/A	Manorwood
Amended Drawing Pack	Various Drawing No's	Manorwood

Viability and alternative options

We met with Rowan Allen of HJ Burt, a well-established rural agent who knows the property well.

Given the condition of the house and the cost of renovating and extending it there is limited financially viable scope to invest further in the outbuildings to make them ancillary to the house in his view.

Rowan Allen of H J Burt has provided written confirmation that in his professional opinion it is simply not viable to convert the barn to residential accommodation as the cost of doing so would exceed the value of the site.

He confirms that in his professional opinion the most practical and viable long term solution that sees the appropriate restoration and improvement of both Grade II Listed structures would be the renovation as two separate freehold units.

We wanted to ensure we had tested these assumptions and to look at the figures and so we have had a number of meetings with The Oak Blokes, a specialist historic building contractor and one we have worked with on a number of property renovations and listed farm building conversions.

They have looked at the works to the house and estimate the cost, including the extension to be in the region of £400,000 - 500,000 +VAT.

They have provided the attached estimate for the works to convert the barn which gives an estimated figure of £1,104,500 +VAT. This excludes the conversion of the stables and the new stable buildings and other outbuildings.

We also asked them to look at the condition of the timber frame with us and to provide an estimate of costs to simply repair and renovate the barn as a barn, install a new slab, re roof it, re clad it and install new doors. As you will see from the cost estimate they have suggested a budget sum of £243,500 +VAT for this.

Given this adds limited value to the house, it is simply not financially viable to spend this sum on the works to secure the barn and the only mechanism for securing the repair works to the barn would be its conversion to an alternative use.

As you can see from the cost estimates and from the advice provided by HJ Burt, conversion to ancillary use would not realise sufficient value and so we maintain that conversion to a separate unit is the optimum viable use of the building.

We have summarised this in the attached spreadsheet which clearly shows that all options result in a significant loss and would not be financially viable. Whereas options 5 and 6 combined, (the proposed scheme), essentially breaks even.

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF emphasises that the new use should be demonstrated to be the optimum viable use, i.e. the use amongst a range of alternative economically viable uses that is likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset(s), not just through initial changes but also in terms of likely future changes.

Planning Practice Guidance describes the optimum viable use at Paragraph 15 as ‘the use amongst a range of alternative economically viable uses that is likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset(s), not just through initial changes but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes.’ It also states that ‘Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised.’

We recognise that the changes to the building will lead to a degree of harm to the building but with the sensitive treatment of the setting and with the changes made to the plans we feel that the proposed use is the only use that is economically viable and as such is the only viable use likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset(s).

We note the comments in regard to the conversion of the stable building and why this could not be used as a stable still. Whilst new stables are proposed and we intend for this to be an equestrian property the location of the stables in proximity to the barn is not practical or desirable for a stable yard. The stables need to be further from the residential part of the site for practical reasons and due to the impact of smells etc. The stables are also far too small to be practical for modern equestrian stabling given they were designed for agricultural stabling. As such we maintain that repurposing the stables is an appropriate approach and the conversion which is heritage led and leads to removal of modern alterations would not be harmful.

Impact on fabric

With regard to timber repairs, we have assessed the building at high level with a conservation carpenter and it is clear there are a number of repairs required to the building. These include repairs to the joints on the sling brace frames which have partly failed and replacement or strengthening of the purlins which have failed. There are a number of timbers which are clad internally with tin sheeting which preclude full access to the timbers and so at this time it is not possible to carry out a detailed survey of all of the timber repairs required. We would request that a full survey of the timber frame and masonry plinths is reserved by condition including a detailed schedule of works and specification for repairs.

We note the comments in regard to the mezzanine. These are of limited quality and are not made by a craftsman, they are simply added by farmers to provide further space as agricultural practices on the farm evolved. Whilst we accept that they show the evolution of the farm they contribute little in our view in terms of their fabric significance. By recording the existing mezzanines (which can be controlled by condition) and retaining a mezzanine at one end the legibility of the buildings evolution is retained. (It is not in any case lost regardless of the mezzanines as the openings formed at mezzanine levels will remain which serve as a reminder of the buildings evolution).

The intention is to remove both mezzanine structures and reinstate only one on the west end of the building. We have however looked further at how we might incorporate the existing structures in to the conversion. Having looked at them in detail, we are of the view that they are both 20th century (that to the west end likely earlier).

The mezzanine to the west end includes steel girders and posts clearly taken from elsewhere incorporated in to it and mixed with softwood timbers, timber poles etc. It is not of any cohesive form and as a result cannot simply be retained. It is intended however to reuse the existing steelwork (which includes decorative posts - see attached photo) wherever possible to form the new mezzanine, (this is now noted on the plans). The detail of this will need to be resolved in the detailed design stage working with the structural engineer and if it is deemed necessary this detail could be controlled by condition.

With regard to the new openings in to the extensions, this will result in the loss of two studs, two small sections of sole plate and two sections of diagonal bracing. Two small sections of brick plinth will be removed. Whilst we recognise that this results in some loss of fabric these timbers, this is necessary to facilitate access to the extensions which in turn allows for subdivided spaces such as bathrooms and bedrooms and in turn avoids the need for the spaces being inside the barn meaning it can remain as a single open volume. On balance therefore we feel that this limited impact can be justified. We are happy to undertake a detailed recording of the fabric to be lost (controlled by condition).

Impact on the character of the building

We acknowledge the comments made in relation to the detailed design of the conversion and we have reviewed the plans with our client and made a number of amendments. The amended plans set is attached. The changes are summarised as follows:

- Revised the eastern extension so that it is inset from the north and south of the barn and therefor remains subservient
- Reviewed the elevational treatment and fenestration of the extensions to provide a less domestic and more agricultural character.
- Provided detailed drawings showing the approach to conversion of both the barn and stables
- Recued the number of new openings and where proposed made clear that these are to be inserted between existing timbers so would not involve cutting or removing historic timbers



- Removed the large, glazed window to the south elevation
- Reduced the number of rooflights from 3 to 2
- Removed the partitioning to form the snug and WC entirely so that the entire ground floor of the barn remains open its full length
- noted vertical boarding to the blocked up doorway on the west of the flint stable

We note the comments regarding the insulation to the roof and walls and ensuring that visible depth of the timbers remains. We are acutely aware of this having carried out numerous barn conversions and so we have looked at this further and changed the depth of the insulation between the timbers slightly and increased the depth externally to compensate. We are mindful of now wanting to alter the external appearance of the building unduly and so we would not want to increase the external build up further. We feel this is a good compromise between internal and external character.

We would want to avoid obscuring any tar marks, carpenters marks and alike and the insulation depth can be varied to accommodate these. We would be happy to accept a condition requiring a full survey of all such historic marks / features and a methodology for adapting the insulation to ensure they remain visible.

We hope that the above and attached further information is useful and provides clarity on the approach. We trust that the amended plans will show that this is a considered heritage led scheme and results in limited impact to the buildings, the setting of the farmhouse and secures the optimum viable use of the buildings.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Tier MRTPI

Principal Planner – Manorwood