



Optimum Viable Use Statement, National Planning Policy Update and further information in relation to flood risk

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 a bin, bike and storage outbuilding.

Westhouse Farm, Henfield Road, Albourne, BN6 9DE

August 2026

Introduction

The proposal seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the demolition of five existing modern farm outbuildings and the conversion and extension of the barn to a dwelling house.

The applications also propose the conversion of the stable building to ancillary accommodation in association with the converted barn. The applications propose the creation of a replacement stable buildings, games room outbuilding and bike and bin storage building.

National Planning Policy Framework Update

Since the submission of the application, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised on 17 August 2026. The revised NPPF introduces a significant clarification in national policy in relation to the public benefits that can arise from proposals affecting designated heritage assets.

Policy HE6(4) of the revised NPPF states:

“Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.”

This represents an important change from the previous 2024 NPPF. Paragraph 215 of the 2024 Framework stated that, where a proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The revised NPPF no longer refers specifically to the “optimum viable use” of a heritage asset. Instead, Policy HE6(4) expressly identifies **securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building** as an example of an important public benefit. It also expressly identifies **enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures** as a public benefit capable of being taken into account in the planning balance.

This is directly relevant to the proposal.

The development would secure the sensitive repair, conversion and extension of the existing Grade II Listed 17th-century barn, together with the restoration and conversion of the late 18th-century stable building to provide an annexe. The buildings have been vacant and/or underused for a considerable period and are no longer serving a functional use capable of securing their long-term conservation.



The proposal would therefore provide a clear and tangible heritage benefit by bringing these historic buildings back into a viable and sustainable use. Importantly, this is not simply a matter of finding a new use for the buildings: the proposed use would facilitate their repair, restoration and ongoing maintenance, thereby providing a realistic mechanism for securing their long-term future.

The scheme would also incorporate measures to improve the energy efficiency of the buildings and facilitate the use of low-carbon heating technologies. These measures fall expressly within the categories of public benefit identified in Policy HE6(4) of the revised NPPF.

Accordingly, the public benefits of the proposal are now particularly well aligned with the specific examples identified within national heritage policy. They comprise:

- securing the long-term reuse of vacant and/or underused listed buildings;
- securing the repair, restoration and ongoing maintenance of the historic buildings;
- providing a viable and sustainable future use for the heritage assets;
- enabling improvements to energy efficiency; and
- facilitating the incorporation of low-carbon heating measures.

These benefits should be afforded significant weight in the assessment of the proposal. They are not generic benefits arising from residential development but are directly related to the conservation and sustainable future of the heritage assets themselves.

The revised NPPF therefore provides particularly strong policy support for the approach taken by the proposal. Where the assessment identifies less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets, that harm must be weighed against the public benefits arising from the scheme.

In this case, the benefits are precisely the types of benefits which Policy HE6(4) identifies as important: securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building and enabling energy efficiency and low-carbon heating measures.

The proposal should therefore be considered in accordance with Policy HE6 of the revised NPPF, with significant weight given to the heritage and sustainability benefits arising from bringing the buildings back into an appropriate long-term use.

These benefits, when weighed against the identified level of harm, support the conclusion that the development represents an appropriate and sustainable approach to the conservation of the heritage assets.

Whilst the requirement to demonstrate that the residential use of the barn and outbuildings are the optimum viable use of the heritage asset is no longer required in respect of national planning policy, the additional commentary has been provided to aid Officer's understanding of the options relating to optimum viable use that has already been submitted to the Council.

Options Table (as previously submitted)

Option	Description	Value as advised by agent	Base value of site	cost of works to house	cost of works to house (inc VAT)	cost of work to barns	cost of work to barns (inc VAT)	Total cost of works	profit / loss
1	The farmhouse, barn and outbuildings as they currently stand unrenovated and no consents granted for extension/conversion	£1,350,000.00	£1,350,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
2	The house extended and renovated but with the barns etc in their current condition	£1,650,000.00	£1,350,000.00	£400,000.00	£480,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£480,000.00	-£180,000.00
3	The house extended and renovated but with the barn restored just as a barn and the remaining outbuildings in their current condition	£1,800,000.00	£1,350,000.00	£400,000.00	£480,000.00	£243,500.00	£292,200.00	£772,200.00	-£322,200.00
4	The house extended and renovated but with the barn converted and extended to a 2-bedroom annex and other outbuildings renovated:	£2,000,000.00	£1,350,000.00	£400,000.00	£480,000.00	£1,000,000.00	£1,200,000.00	£1,680,000.00	-£1,030,000.00

5	The house extended and renovated but separated from the barn and outbuildings which have been renovated and converted to a separate residential unit as per the proposed plans	£1,450,000.00	£675,000.00	£400,000.00	£480,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£480,000.00	£295,000.00
6	The barn extended and converted to a separate residential unit with the other outbuildings replaced/refurbished as per the proposed plans and the separate house also extended and renovated	£1,550,000.00	£675,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£1,104,500.00	£1,159,725.00	£1,159,725.00	-£284,725.00

Supporting Optimum Viable Use Options Commentary

Pricing:

The cost of the works have been obtained from a reputable contractor that specialises in listed buildings and in particular barn conversions. The costs have been developed based on the planning drawings so there will be some movement in the final figures once final detailed drawings are produced but we would typically not expect figures to change by more than 10% from the estimates.

From our extensive experience of these types of projects, the costs are not, in our view, excessive given the works required and we are confident that the figures reflect current market conditions

VAT:

The VAT is calculated at 20% for all options other than option 6 as that is the current rate for construction works. The rate is reduced to 5% for option 6 as conversion of non-residential buildings to dwellings benefits from a reduced rate of VAT in accordance with *HMRC Note: Buildings and construction (VAT Notice 708)*

Viability of options:

Option 1 -

This is essentially the baseline value of the property as it currently stands.

Option 2 -

This is the value of the existing property with only the approved works to the house implemented. This results in a loss of £180,000. This option could be viable for an owner that wanted to have an extended period house and is happy to invest in their own property and accepts they will not recoup all of their investment. But it leaves the barn vulnerable as it has no use and no works are undertaken. As a result, this is not considered to be the optimum viable use for the barn.

Option 3 -

This is the value of the existing property with the approved works to the house implemented and the barn made structural sound, weather and water tight to be used simply as a storage barn. This results in a loss of £322,000. This option is far less viable for an owner that wanted to have an extended period house and is happy to invest in their own property and accepts they will not recoup all of their investment.

The loss is significant and it is not viable to expect such an investment to be lost given the barn would have no use other than storage. Whilst this results in the barn being secured in the short term, the works to the barn cannot be recouped and so this is not a realistic prospect. As a result, this is not considered to be the optimum viable use for the barn.



Option 4 -

This is the value of the existing property with the approved works to the house implemented and the barn used as an annex. This results in a loss of more than £1m. This would give the barn a secured long term use and would avoid the need for the building to be separated from the house and so would have less impact on setting than it being a separate dwelling. However financially this is simply unrealistic and the option is not viable. As a result, this is not considered to be the optimum viable use for the barn.

Options 5 and 6 -

These should be read together as the two options must co exist.

This is the value of the existing house with the approved works implemented and the value of the barn converted to a separate dwelling with the outbuildings redeveloped as per the current scheme.

Note the value of the extended house is less than the same extended house in option 2 as the house would not benefit from the land acreage or outbuildings so its value is reduced.

The combined value is £3m (£1,45m + £1.55m) and collectively this result in a small profit of £10,725 (£295,000 - £284,275) = essentially the scheme breaks even.

This would give the barn a secured long term use and would be a viable project to undertake financially. Whilst this results in some impact to the barn (cutting of sole plates to make doorways to extensions) and has some potential for impact on the setting through subdivision these are limited impacts and have been mitigated and reduced to a minimum through the development of the scheme.

This approach is in accordance with Paragraph 15 of guidance on the Historic Environment which sets out 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*'

As a result, this is considered to be the optimum viable use for the barn.

Flooding & Drainage

The Council's Flood Risk & Drainage Team provided a response dated 29th July 2026 which requested the following updated information.

- revised hydraulic modelling using the correct surveyed topographical information to demonstrate that safe access and egress can be maintained during the relevant design flood events; or
- revised Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan to provide a robust and deliverable emergency response procedure that does not rely upon Environment Agency flood warnings which are not available for this site, and which demonstrates how occupants would be able to evacuate safely should the primary access route become affected by flooding.

Please find attached the hydraulic modelling report from Argent and updated Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan from Motion which covers the additional information requested.

