

Planning Statement

**SITE ADDRESS: STANBRIDGE INDUSTRIAL PARK, STAPLEFIELD LANE,
STAPLEFIELD, RH17 6AS**



APPLICATION TYPE: FULL PLANNING PERMISSION

ON BEHALF OF: J D MOYLE PROPERTIES LTD

JUNE 2024

Client: J D MOYLE PROPERTIES LTD
Site Location: STANBRIDGE INDUSTRIAL PARK, STAPLEFIELD LANE,
STAPLEFIELD, RH17 6AS

Job History:

Version	Date	Author	Checked	Notes
Draft v1	03.06.2024	ZD		
Draft v2	14.06.2024	ZD	SB	Sent to team
Final	24.06.2024	ZD/SB	SB	Submission version

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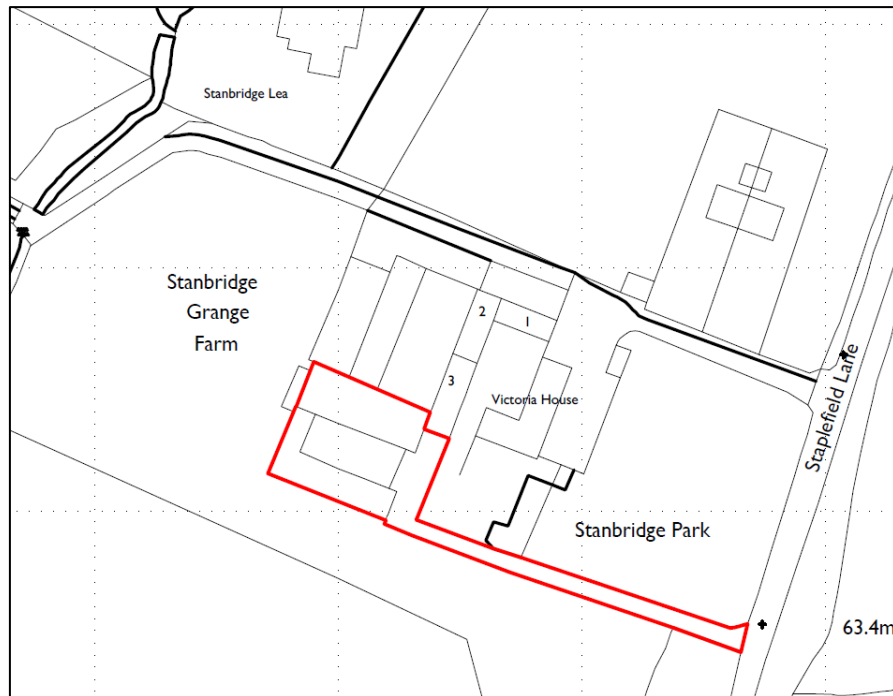
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted on behalf of J D Moyle Properties in support of the application for planning permission for the redevelopment of two storage barns at the site, to provide a new office building. This statement should be read in conjunction with submitted plans and statements.
- 1.2 The application site comprises two existing storage barns, which were granted a change of use from agricultural barns under reference DM/21/2913. The site is located in a cluster of agricultural, and commercial buildings.
- 1.3 The proposed development will replace the existing underutilised storage space with approximately 450m² of floorspace. This will provide about 350m² of office space.
- 1.4 This application follows a pre-application advice request, which was received on the 28th July 2023. The application has been revised following the advice received.
- 1.5 The application is supported by this statement and the following documentation:
 - Application Forms
 - Ownership Certificates
 - Floor Plans and Elevations by LRA-R
 - Transport Statement by Steve Reeves Transport
 - Preliminary Ecological Assessment + Roost Assessment by Carly Teague
 - Energy Statement by Delta Green
 - Surface Water Management Report by Flo Consulting

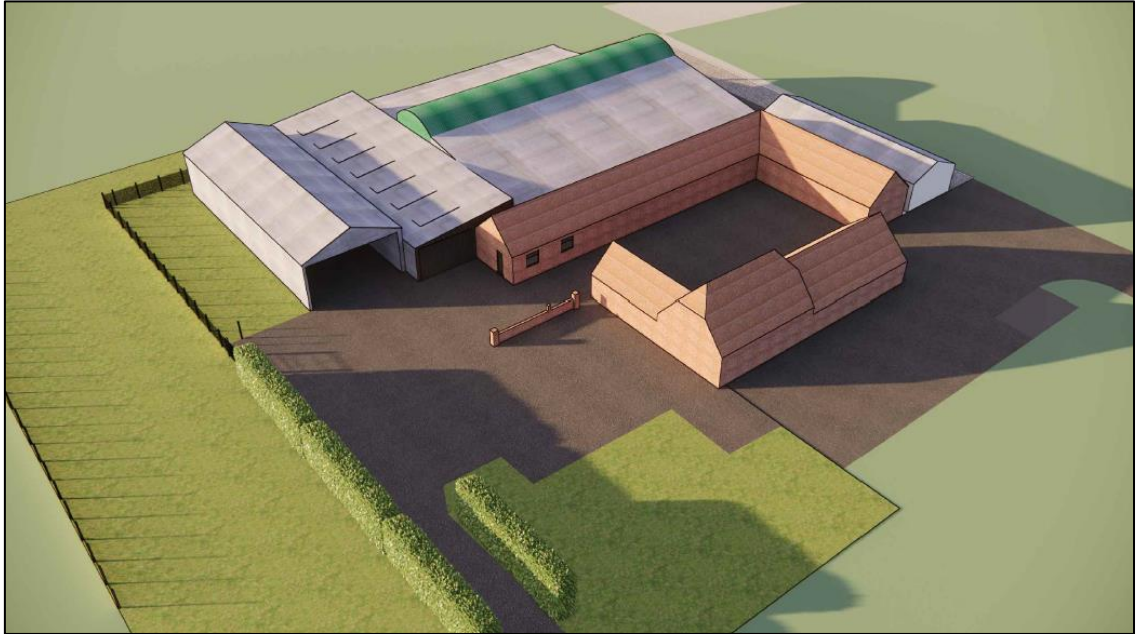
2.0 APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The site comprises two storage buildings within an area of agricultural and former agricultural buildings on Staplefield Lane. The site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



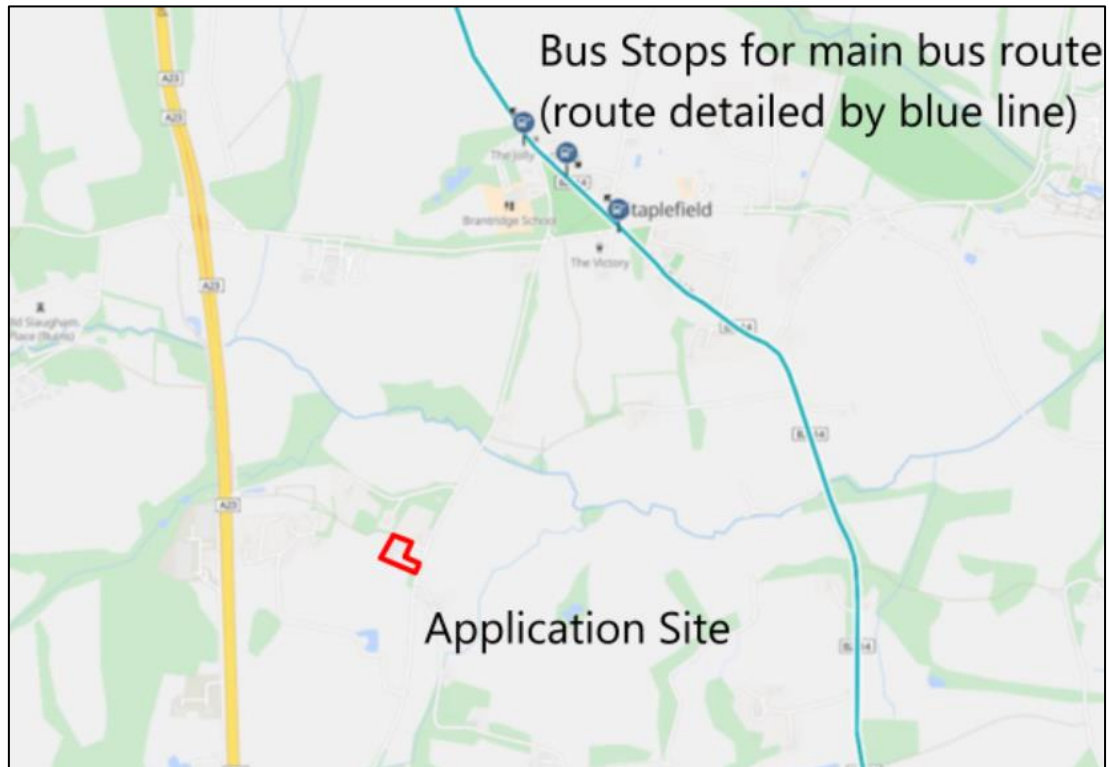
Above: Site Location Plan

- 2.2 The buildings vary in height, largely due to their differing roof form. Barn 1 (the northern of the two) features a single-pitch roof and is approximately 3.1m high. Barn 2 (the southern of the two) is significantly larger, with a maximum height of 5.1m. The buildings were historically agricultural but were converted to Use Class B8 storage under the Class R prior approval process.



Above: 3D Render of existing site

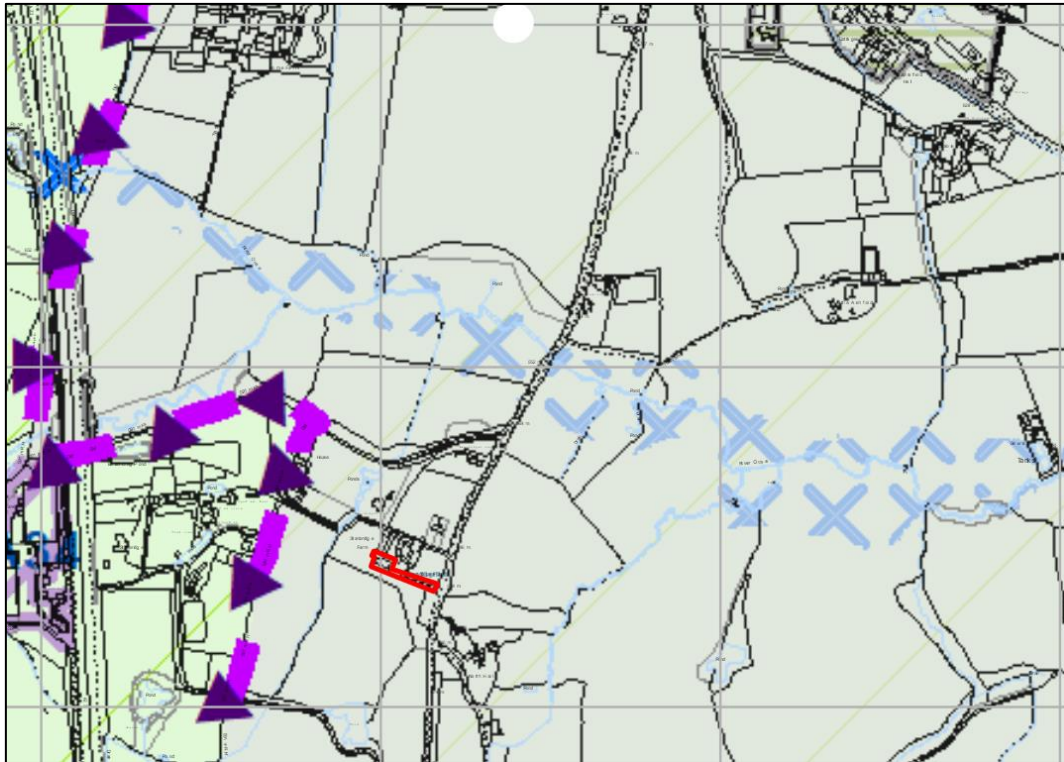
- 2.3 The existing buildings do not have any design merit. They are constructed of corrugated metal doors and roofing, with metal framed doors.
- 2.4 The Stanbridge Industrial Park is fully occupied by a mixture of agricultural buildings and commercial buildings. The site is accessed by way of a short access lane from Staplefield Lane. Other buildings within Stanbridge Park provide studios, offices and workspaces for businesses. The storage buildings overall are not fit for purpose, due to their dilapidated state and due to the evolution of the Park, as moving towards providing higher quality commercial spaces.
- 2.5 The site benefits from a sustainable location, with community bus stops located at the entrance point on Staplefield Lane, and the site is within about a 15 minute walk of the main 271 bus route between Brighton and Crawley. The site is also highly accessible by bicycle, as it is along a popular cycling route.



The site is also accessible by bicycle, with Staplefield Lane showing up on the Garmin "popularity heat map" for road cycling:



- 2.6 The site is outside of any Conservation Area. However, the site is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The policy map below denotes the site as being within a countryside location.



Above: Extract from the Mid Sussex Policies Map, with the approximate site boundary outlined in red.

- 2.7 The location of the site is ideal for a high-quality, office building. The location is sustainable, and therefore employees of the office units, would benefit from sustainable transport connections, whilst also enjoying a pleasant environment in which to work.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The proposed development relates to the redevelopment of two storage barns at the site to form an office building. This includes the provision of associated landscaping, parking and associated works.
- 3.2 The proposed office building will be a two storey, office building which is constructed to modern energy efficiency standards. The building is approximately 7.9m high, 14.7m wide and 23.6m deep. It is of a traditional design, featuring a dual-pitched roof, and barn features including sliding barn doors, and shuttered windows.
- 3.3 The proposed development will result in an increase in height of 2.8m, and a reduction in width of 2.8m. The depth of the building matches that of the existing building. This reconfiguration of the site will reduce the physical bulk of the site, and result in a more sympathetic building which reflects the rural character of the area.
- 3.4 The development also proposes a comprehensive overhaul of the existing building fabric. This provides the opportunity to replace the existing buildings which have fallen into disrepair since their original construction. This includes significant upgrades in the energy efficiency and insulation of the building. With a 'fabric first' approach, efficient systems and the use of PV and ASHP, the potential CO2 emissions for the development have been reduced by 62%, and have a 24% improvement above current Building Regulations.
- 3.6 The scheme proposes the following uses over its storeys:
- Ground Floor – Flexible co-working space, including toilets, refuse/cycle area, kitchen, and individual offices.
 - First Floor – Flexible co-working space, including toilets, kitchen, board room and executive office space.
- 3.7 Full existing and proposed plans by LRA-R are submitted with this application.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

4.1 The Development Plan comprises the Mid Sussex District Plan and the Ansty and Staplefield Neighbourhood Plan. The following policies are relevant to the determination of this application.

4.2 Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031

DP1: Sustainable Economic Development states that high-quality development of land and premises will be encouraged where it meets the needs of 21st Century businesses. This also including giving priority to the re-use/adaptation of rural buildings for business, and the diversification of activities on existing farm units. This is to make effective use of the District's existing employment land.

DP12: Protection and Enhancement of Countryside sets out that developments will be permitted within the countryside where it is supported by a specific policy reference elsewhere in the Plan. In this case, this is Policy DP14, relating to sustainable rural development.

DP14: Sustainable Rural Development sets out that small-scale economic development within the countryside will be supported where it supports the vitality of the rural economy, and utilises previously developed sites. Further, the diversification of existing farm units will be permitted where they are of a consistent scale with the local of the farm holding.

DP16: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty sets out that development within the AONB will be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty, and has regard for the AONB where it is sited.

DP21: Transport looks to ensure new development has good access to services, including employment and housing. This looks to ensure there are a number of alternative, sustainable means of transport within the area, and also ensures appropriate car parking provision is provided at the site.

DP26: Character and Design sets out the criteria against which applicants are required to demonstrate proposals compliance, in order to ensure they do not result in harm to the character of the area. This relates to high-quality design, active frontages, sense of place, protection of open spaces, protection of identities, harm to neighbouring occupiers, well-designed parking, layout, community interaction and optimisation of site potential.

DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage looks to ensure developments follow a sequential risk-based approach in reference to flooding. It also looks to ensure new development utilises SuDS systems, rather than draining directly to the foul sewer.

4.3 Ansty and Staplefield Neighbourhood Plan

The relevant policies from the Ansty and Staplefield Neighbourhood Plan are set out below.

Policy AS3: High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty seeks to ensure development within the AONB conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the area, and meets the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

4.4 High Weald AONB Management Plan

The key part of the above document is the High Weald Partnership's 20-year vision for the management of the National Landscape. The vision does not necessarily preclude development potential within the AONB, but seeks to ensure that which comes forward is of a high quality, and is landscape-led.

The relevant text is pasted below:

“Exhibits appropriate high quality and landscape-led new housing, including affordable housing, and workspace to support thriving rural communities, and which does not compromise the High Weald’s character, aided by a consistent approach to planning across the National Landscape.”

4.5 Mid Sussex Design Guide

The Mid Sussex Design Guide provides clear guidance on the design of commercial buildings, found at Section 7.3.

Principle DG44: Design of commercial buildings provides us with clear criteria for the design of the scheme at hand. This includes a number of considerations which must be taken into account at design stage of the planning process.



Above: 3D render of the proposed scheme.

5.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 The main considerations in this proposal are:

- The principle of development
- Assessment of previous advice
- Design and character of the area
- Amenity of adjacent occupants
- Biodiversity

Principle of Development

5.2 The proposed development will provide high-quality office space within an existing mixed-used agricultural and commercial area. Several policies within the Mid Sussex Local Plan support the provision of appropriate and high-quality redevelopment of existing brownfield sites, to provide good-quality commercial schemes. Policy DP1 supports the specifically supports the development and extension of employment uses, and gives priority to the diversification of activities on existing farm units. Policy DP16, in relation to the conservation or enhancement of the High Weald AONB, supports the principle of small scale proposals which can support the economy and social wellbeing of the AONB. The sustainable growth of business in rural areas, and the diversification of agricultural (or land-based) businesses are also supported by Paragraph 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.3 The principle of the proposed redevelopment of the site is acceptable. The other main considerations include the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and the conservation and enhancement of the High Weald AONB.

Response to pre-application advice

5.4 This application follows the recent request for pre-application advice submitted under DM/23/1585. This was provided to the applicant in the form of a meeting on site, and an email containing the Local Authorities' view on the development of the site.

5.6 The pre-application advice confirmed the principle of the development at the site was acceptable. However, there were two main concerns with the scheme presented at the pre-application stage:

- The full two-storey appearance and height of the proposal will have a prominent and residential appearance.
- The number of visible windows will have a residential appearance.

5.7 It was recommended that the height of the building be reduced to reflect surrounding buildings, and the number and design of the openings were reconsidered to ensure they reflect an agricultural building.

Design and Character of the Area

5.8 The application looks to redevelopment the site, which will replace the existing rural storage barns, with a two-storey office building. The main concerns highlighted within the pre-application advice received related to the height of the building, and concerns around the fenestration creating a residential appearance.

5.9 The detailed policies for considering the design of the development proposal, the character of the area and the High Weald AONB are DP26, DP12 and DP16 of the Mid Sussex Local Plan. These policies require a high standard of design for developments, ensure proposals have no harm upon the rural character of the locality, and conserve the character of the AONB. Further, the building should account for the character of the immediate area through the use of materials to complement the rural setting.

5.10 Some initial amendments were made to the scheme, and comments were expressed by the Case Officer. These were as follows:

“The reduction in the overall height of the building, although still be taller than the existing surrounding barns, would sit more comfortably within the existing complex of buildings and would no longer be a prominent feature within the surrounding landscape.

However, I do still have concerns regarding the design and appearance of the proposed fenestration which would still give the building a residential appearance contrary to the existing rural

and agricultural appearance of the buildings and the locality. I note that some of the windows would now be obscured by screen details, however, the number and design of the windows and doors remaining would still retain the residential character and would need further changes to better reflect the intended agricultural appearance.”

5.11 Following this feedback, the application proposal has been subject to several further design amendments in order to address the concerns raised within the advice received. The most prominent include:

- Significant reduction in height of the proposed building.
- Reduction in the number of windows
- Reduction in the repetition pattern of windows
- Introduction of hit-and-miss timber panelling to reduce visibility of key windows
- Removal of ‘residential features’ (balconies, full height gable windows)
- Inclusion of more ‘rural’ features (sliding barn doors, external shutters, etc)
- Re-design of existing windows to create, simple rural form
- Increase in planting adjacent to car parking area
- Increase in planting within car parking area



Above: 3D render of proposed scheme.

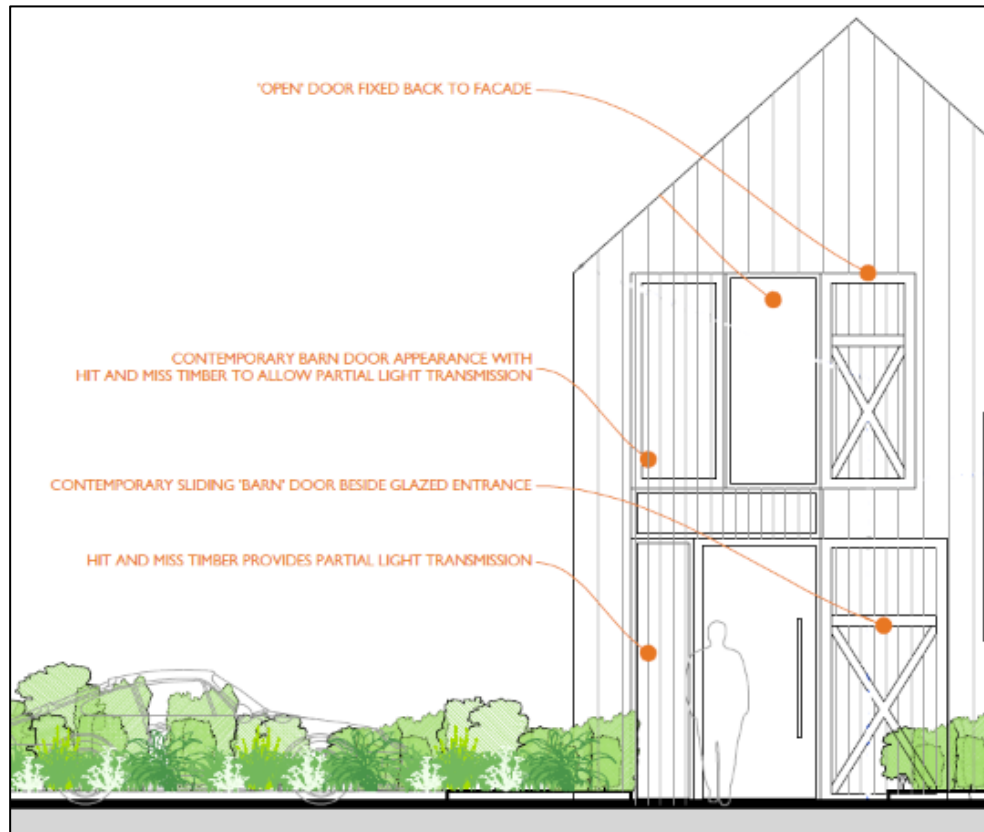
- 5.12 Policy DP26 looks to ensure development is well designed, and reflects the distinctive character of its locality. The sub-criteria of this policy are set out and addressed separately below:

“is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;”

The proposed building is of high design quality, as it has taken design cues from the agricultural character of the immediate locality. The proposed building utilises a dual-pitched roof form, with a small central area of flat roofing which will not be visible from the street scene. Through this roof form, and the scale of the building, the proposal reflects the character of the immediate buildings. Despite being slightly taller than the surrounding buildings, the building appears sympathetic to the form and established character of the area through its design and use of materials.



Further evidence of the high quality detailing can be seen from review of the plans. The proposed building includes classic features of agricultural barns. This includes the use of sliding barn doors, ‘open door’ shutters, and hit-and-miss timber. These features are concentrated primarily on the eastern elevation of the barn, being the elevation which is framed by the context of the agricultural and commercial buildings



Turning to the western elevation of the buildings, the proposal has a more plain, traditional appearance. This is because when viewed from the west, the building is viewed in the context of the existing agricultural and commercial buildings, which have limited openings. As such, the first floor windows on this elevation are entirely shuttered to reduce their appearance from this aspect. At lower levels, the proposal utilises traditional openings, to resonate with the basic 'barn' appearance.



Above: View of existing agricultural/industrial buildings from the west.

“contributes positively to, and clearly defines, public and private realms and should normally be designed with active building frontages facing streets and public open spaces to animate and provide natural surveillance;”

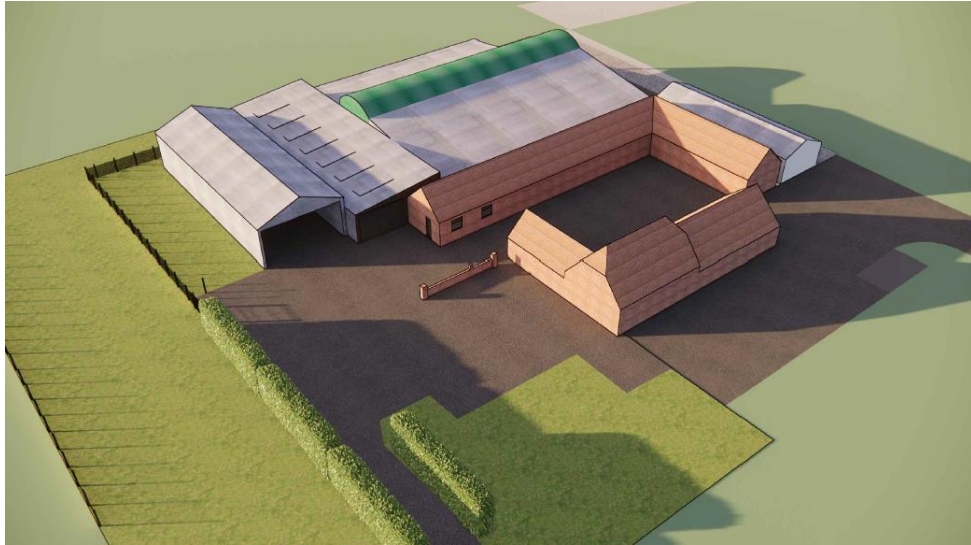
The application site is sited approximately 70m from the public realm to the west, and around 30m from the public footpath to the north. As such, all views of the building are at a significant distance, and the building will be framed by the existing industrial park. This clearly defines the proposal as a private realm for employees. The building features openings on all elevations to provide active frontages, in particular overlooking the car parking area.

“creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;”

The application site forms a small part of the existing industrial park, however, the redevelopment allows the site to improve the appearance of a dilapidated area of the site.



Above: Image of existing barn.



Above: 3D render of existing industrial park.

The proposed redevelopment takes the opportunity to improve the appearance of the site, while retaining the agricultural character, and scale of its immediate locality. Further, as discussed previously, this is through use of materials, and intelligent design allowing the proposed building to resonate with the established character of the area.

“protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;”

The proposed development has a smaller footprint than the existing buildings, which ‘open up’ this southern part of the site. The proposal also includes enhancements to the existing landscaping at the site, through native planting areas to the south and east of the building.

“protects valued townscapes and the separate identity and character of towns and villages”

The proposed development will have no impact on the coalescence of settlements. The application site is located a significant distance from any areas which could give rise to a ‘merging’ impacts.

“does not cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwellings, including taking account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, and noise, air and light pollution (see Policy DP29);”

The proposed development will have no harmful impact upon the residential amenities of nearby residents. This is considered later within this Statement.

“creates a pedestrian-friendly layout that is safe, well connected, legible and accessible;”

The layout of the proposal is pedestrian-friendly, and will allow for safe enjoyment of the nearby area. The building features openings on all of its elevations, this creates active overlooking of the proposed car parking area, and external amenity area.

“incorporates well integrated parking that does not dominate the street environment, particularly where high density housing is proposed;”

The proposed development provides parking provision along the south side of the building. The majority of the parking spaces are proposed within the footprint of the existing buildings, and are sited approximately 70m from the street scene of Stanbridge Lane. As such, the parking is well integrated with the form of the site, as it does not result in the loss of any ‘green’ area, due to the siting of the spaces on previously developed land. Furthermore, due to the significant ‘set back’ distance, the car parking spaces will have no harmful impact upon the street scene.

“positively addresses sustainability considerations in the layout and the building design;”

This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted Energy Report by Delta Green. This statement confirms that the development has a 24% improvement above the existing Building Regulation requires, and results in a potential CO2 emission reduction of 62%. This is through the use of ASHP and PV units to provide efficient heating. Further, due to the use of ASHP and PV units, the burning of fossil fuels will be eliminated on site.

“take the opportunity to encourage community interaction by creating layouts with a strong neighbourhood focus/centre; larger (300+ unit) schemes will also normally be expected to incorporate a mixed use element;”

The proposed development is of a smaller scale than referred to within the policy criterion. However, in line with the office use of the building, there is provision for an external amenity area to allow for community interaction of staff.

“optimises the potential of the site to accommodate development.”

The proposed development is of an appropriate scale for the brownfield site. The two-storey building results in a reduction in footprint, and creates car parking provision for the users of the site. A larger scale of development was proposed at the pre-application stage, which has been reduced following correspondence with the Case Officer.

5.13 Therefore, as addressed above, the proposed development complies with Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex Local Plan.

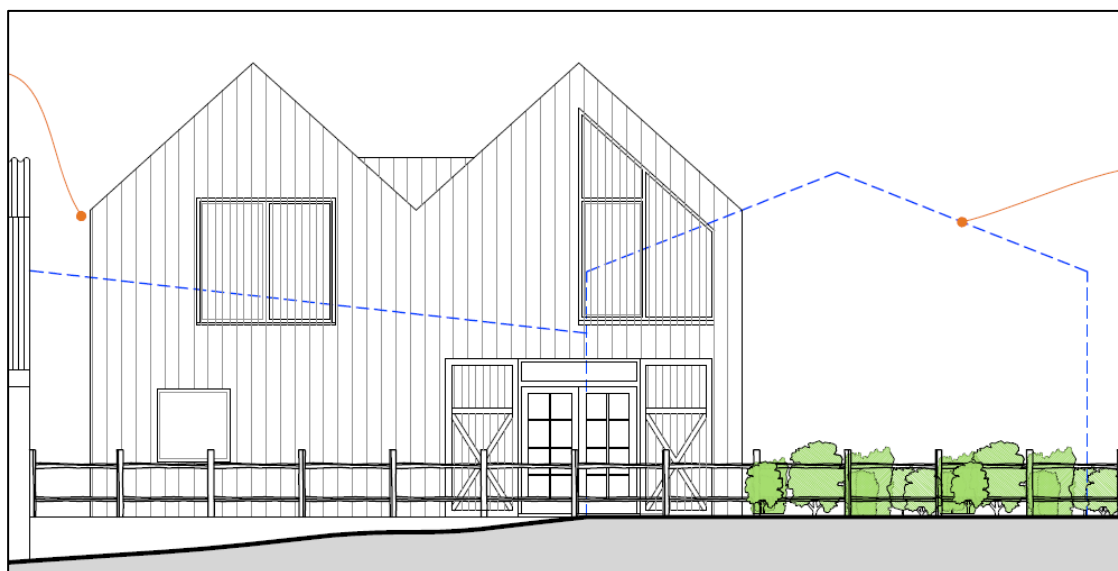
5.14 Policy DP16 looks to ensure development within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is only permitted where it conserves, or enhances natural beauty, and has regard for the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

In landscaping terms, it is clear the high quality of design creates a building that responds to local character and the natural beauty of the area. The proposed building retains a plain, agricultural form in order to conserve the rural character of the area. Evidence of the high-quality detailing of the development is clear from review of the plans. The proposal incorporates features classic of agricultural barns, including sliding barn doors for access, ‘open door’ style windows shutters, and the use of ‘hit and miss’ timber. These elements are predominantly located on the western side of the barn, which is framed by surrounding agricultural and commercial buildings.

The southern elevation of the barn retains a number of openings at ground and first floor level. This is largely to ensure there retains active surveillance of the car parking area, to ensure employee safety. In order to avoid any ‘residential’ appearance, some of these windows have been fitted with shutters. The other windows are typical of a two-storey ‘lofted’ barn, and are felt to resonate with the barn aesthetic of the building.

It should also be noted that the development is sited a significant distance from the public realm to its southern and eastern aspect, so any views will be at a significant distance. From the east, due to roadside foliage, most views of the building are from the access itself, which (unless the views are associated with the use of the building) will be fleeting. Views of the southern elevation are limited to those from Staplefield Lane. Again, due to roadside foliage, there will be occasional fleeting glimpses of the site. The development also includes the continuation of the established hedge line, which will further reduce any prospective views of the site. Sat in the context of the industrial park, and viewed at distances over 130m, the proposed development will conserve the natural beauty of the AONB from this aspect.

In contrast, the western elevation is of a more straightforward, basic appearance. This is because when viewed from the west, the building is viewed more in the context of the squat, windowless agricultural buildings. To minimise the visibility of the fenestration from this aspect, all first floor windows are shuttered in their entirety. At lower level, the features proposed are of a basic form, to retain the 'barn' aesthetic of this aspect.



Above: western elevation of proposal, including outline of existing building in blue.

As a result of matters considered above, the proposed building is considered to conserve the natural beauty of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The proposal also aligns with considerations taken from the High Weald AONB Management Plan. In

particular, through the provision of a high-quality workspace, which contributes towards a thriving rural community, and economy.

- 5.15 The Mid Sussex Design guide includes guidance relating to the provision of commercial buildings. This is found in Section 7.3, under Principle DG44. The proposal at hand was designed and developed in line with these principles and is in clear alignment with the recommendations. In particular, this is through the use of materials, and the layout of the fenestration. The use of a variety of fenestration scales creates a more human scale for the elevations of the building, in particular, the southern elevation of the building.
- 5.16 Therefore, as considered above, the proposed development is acceptable in design terms, and in respect of its impact on the character of the area. The proposed development clearly conserves the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, through the provision of a high-quality building that responds and reflects the rural and agricultural character of the locality.

Amenity of future occupants

- 5.17 The future uses of the building will benefit from a high standard of amenity. The proposed building creates well-designed commercial floor space, where users of the site will benefit from good natural light and have adequate floor-to-ceiling heights.
- 5.18 The proposal facilitates commercial floor space in an accessible location. The building also features a number of windows, leading to most rooms being dual-aspect. This, alongside the use of 'hit-and-miss' window shades, will also help alleviate any potential future overheating.
- 5.19 Therefore, it is clear that prospective occupiers of the development will benefit from a high level of amenities.

Amenity of adjacent occupants

- 5.20 The proposed development will result in a reduction in the footprint of the existing building, with all of the redevelopment contained within the footprint of the two existing barns. The

closest neighbouring property is Stanbridge Lea, which is located over 50m to the north-west of the site. The application site, and therefore any prospective development is heavily screened by existing buildings and landscaping. As such, the development will not result in any harmful overshadowing or overbearing impact upon nearby occupiers due to its scale and the separation distance from nearby occupiers.

- 5.21 Further, resultant of the aforementioned separation distance, the development will not lead to any overlooking of, or loss of privacy, to nearby occupiers.
- 5.22 The proposed development will not result in any harmful overshadowing or overbearing impact on nearby occupiers due to its siting and scale. Resultant of these factors it is considered that the amenity of adjacent occupiers will be protected and the proposal therefore accords with DP26 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity

- 5.23 This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by CT Ecology.
- 5.24 The submitted Appraisal confirms the site has negligible potential to support roosting bats, and some potential for breeding birds and great crested newts. However, further surveys with respect to these groups are not considered necessary, and precautionary working practices will take place. These recommendations, and recommendations relating to the planting at the site are covered within the Appraisal document.

Summary

- 5.25 Therefore, as addressed, it is clear the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the redevelopment of two storage barns at the site, to provide a new office building.
- 6.2 The application site relates to two existing storage barns, which were granted a change of use from agricultural barns under reference DM/21/2913. The site is located in a cluster of agricultural, and commercial buildings.
- 6.3 This statement, and the documents and plans submitted alongside this, detail the design process which has taken place to create the scheme. This includes pre-application advice correspondence, which was received from the Case Officer.
- 6.3 The proposed development clearly will deliver a scheme that responds to the character of the locality, protects the amenity of surrounding residents, and conserves the natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. It will also create a more attractive, and energy efficient building.
- 6.4 The proposal is fully compliant with national and local planning policy. For these reasons, we ask the Council to approve the application without undue delay.

Lewis & Co Planning
June 2024