



Planning, Design & Access Statement



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.

Westhouse Farm, Henfield Road, Albourne, BN6 9DE

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Manorwood have been instructed to prepare a planning application and listed building consent for our client, Riverdale Developments Limited.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 The site has not functioned as a working farmstead for many years, and the proposal seeks to undertake the sensitive repair, conversion and extension of the existing Grade II Listed 17th century barn to a single dwelling, and the restoration and conversion of the late 18th century stable building to an annexe. The proposed outbuildings will predominantly replace the modern farm buildings within the site and have been sensitively designed in keeping with the historic farmstead character.
- 1.4 This Planning, Design & Access Statement will provide an assessment of the proposed development in relation to the main planning matters to be considered in the context of national and local planning policy requirements.
- 1.5 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Heritage Statement, prepared by Roberto Prieto-Labrador MR, PCIfA, of Manorwood. This includes a Significance Assessment identifying the significance of the heritage assets and an Impact Assessment which considers the potential impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage assets and their settings.

2. Site Description

- 2.1 The application site measures 0.66 ha and is accessed from the western side of Henfield Road (B2116).
- 2.2 The site is located within the rural village of Albourne and in the western extremity of the Mid Sussex District Council's jurisdiction. The boundary with the neighbouring Local Planning Authority, Horsham District Council, is situated 1.13km to the west of the site.

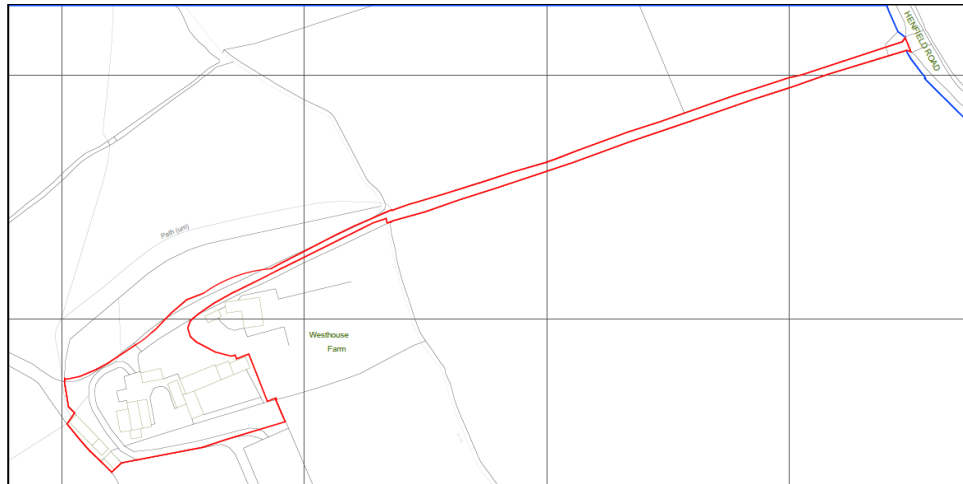


Figure 1: Location of site

- 2.3 Westhouse Farm House and the Barn are Grade II Listed Buildings of 17th century origin and have separate Historic England listing descriptions as shown below.

Westhouse Farm House

'Late C18 or early C19. Two storeys. Three windows. Red bricks. Tiled roof. Glazing bars intact. Doorway with projecting cornice and panel over this and door of 6 fielded panels.'

Barn south of Westhouse Farm House

'C18 Faced with weather-boarding. Hipped tiled roof'

- 2.4 The stables to the north-west of the listed barn is not a statutory listed building in its own right. It is however clear that the stables were constructed before 1948 and in associated use and ownership to the grade II Listed barn and farmhouse and their setting. The stable building is therefore considered to be curtilage listed.



Figure 2: Layout of heritage assets within site

- 2.5 Within proximity to the barn there are a cluster of modern 20th century outbuildings which were formerly within agricultural use in connection with the farm but are now used for domestic storage in conjunction with the main farm house.
- 2.6 Both the main farmhouse and barn are accessed via a shared access driveway which runs on an east to west axis from the vehicular crossover onto Henfield Road.
- 2.7 There are a series of public footpaths within the vicinity of the site, including a PROW (ALB-13-1AL) that runs parallel with the access drive to the site from Henfield Road. This footpath intersects with a number of other PROWs close to the western end of the site which provide pedestrian links to the north, south and west.

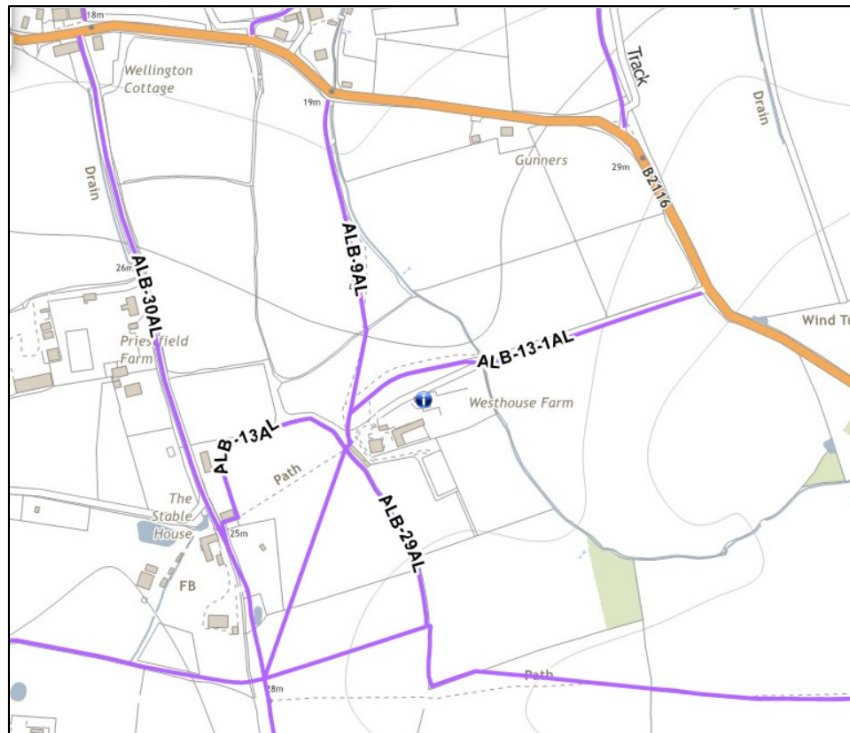


Figure 3: Map showing public footpaths within vicinity of site (WSCC PROW Map)

- 2.8 The surrounding area is semi-rural in character with a mixture of residential properties, small commercial premises and equestrian uses accessed from Henfield Road.
- 2.9 To site is located outside any settlement boundary and therefore within the area of countryside in local planning policy terms. Other than the listed designations, the site is relatively unconstrained.

3. Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 The table below shows the planning history relating to the site which is discussed in further detail below.

Planning Reference	Proposal	Decision
AE/008/99	Low level lighting of sand school	Refused 11.06.1999
AE/019/93	Sand school	Approved 28.10.1993
AE/005/74	Stable and garage	Approved 29.07.1974

4. Pre-Application Planning Advice

- 4.1 A pre-application planning enquiry (Ref: DM/25/1043) relating to this proposal was submitted to the Council in April 2025 with the written advice received in July 2025.
- 4.2 This application is accompanied by an updated Heritage Statement which has been comprehensively revised following pre-application discussions and detailed feedback received from Mid Sussex District Council's Conservation Officer. The application incorporates updated measured drawings, a full interpretative analysis of the farm buildings and their evolution and detailed analysis on optimal viable use.
- 4.3 The scheme as submitted has been revised, following the pre-application advice received. The proposed replacement extensions to the barn have been reduced and simplified, each replacing an unsympathetic modern structure on broadly the same footprint. The internal layout now retains the main barn as a largely open threshing volume; and the number and position of new openings and rooflights have been rationalised to avoid over-domestication of the elevations and roofscape.
- 4.4 The new stables and games room have been carefully scaled and aligned to follow the historic grain of the western yard and to read as secondary agricultural structures.
- 4.5 The design of the scheme has also been carefully considered in response to the Conservation Officer's pre-application comments regarding subdivision and residential domestication.
- 4.6 This scheme has been heritage and landscape led and specifically designed with integrated storage and bike/bin facilities. This is to avoid the need for further applications for additional outbuildings and extensions to the barn in the future, which could harm the historic farmstead setting and significance of the listed buildings on the site.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 The application covers a number of proposals which are described in further detail in the headed sections below.

Barn Conversion, Extension & Restoration

- 5.2 The proposal seeks to restore, convert and extend the Grade II listed barn to a four bedroom dwelling house. The proposal would demolish the existing modern additions attached to the barn, comprising the timber garage and store to the east and the large corrugated sheeted lean-to attached to the south and west of the barn.
- 5.3 The habitable accommodation would predominantly be located at the ground floor level with a half mezzanine floor installed with the upper part of the barn to create an upstairs lounge. The remainder of the barn will remain open with a vaulted ceiling.
- 5.4 Single storey extensions are proposed to the eastern and western ends of the barn. The single storey extension at the eastern end would incorporate a GEA of 57.69sq.m, a hipped roof with an eaves height of 2.5m and a ridge height of 5.25m.
- 5.5 The extension at the western end of the barn would extend to the south and incorporate a GEA of 62.65sq.m. The western extension to the barn would have an eaves height of 2.5m and a ridge height of 4.25m.
- 5.6 Both extensions to the barn would be finished in timber horizontal boarding with clay roof tiles to complement the materials on the existing barn. The proposal has utilised the existing window and door openings within the barn and only introduced windows and roof lights where they would not harm the rural character of the barn.
- 5.7 Insulation will be installed within the barn to facilitate conversion to residential use, details of how this will be achieved is shown on the detailed section drawing and detailed within the Heritage Statement. The existing clay roof tiles on the barn will be cleaned and reused where possible. Any damaged tiles will be replaced with reclaimed clay tiles. Cast iron or aluminium rainwater goods are also proposed.

Conversion of Former Stable Building

- 5.8 The former stable building will be converted to ancillary accommodation in association with the converted barn. This will incorporate one bedroom, a lounge area and bathroom, kitchen and dining facilities will be provided in the main barn.
- 5.9 Internally the proposed conversion will retain the existing three bay layout of the stables. The existing stable door openings will also be retained and replaced with timber doors.

Outbuildings

- 5.10 The proposal includes the demolition of the remaining modern outbuildings at the western end of the site, comprising buildings 2-6 on drawing 2412WE_001. Three new buildings would be constructed in similar locations to the existing outbuildings, and these would comprise a replacement stable building, games room outbuilding and storage outbuilding.
- 5.11 The stable building would incorporate four stables, a tack and feed room and store. The building would incorporate a GEA of 153sq.m. The building has been designed as a traditional stable with pitched

overhang roof which would measure 2m to the eaves and 4.5m to the ridge. The building would be clad in timber horizontal boarding with clay roof tiles.

- 5.12 The games room and office outbuilding would comprise a single storey building which would incorporate a GEA of 53sq.m. The building would have a hipped roof, an eaves height of 2.23m and a ridge height of 3.94m.
- 5.13 The storage outbuilding would comprise a modest open sided building with a floor area of 7.8sqm. This would provide storage for bicycles and refuse and recycling bins. The structure would be clad in timber with a clay tiled roof measuring 3.25m to the ridge.
- 5.14 The proposal involves limited landscaping works to avoid any unwelcome sense of separation between the farmhouse and farmstead through new access arrangements and boundary treatments. Existing areas of modern hardstanding and new areas of hardstanding will be surfaced in materials that are sympathetic to the rural setting, likely to comprise compacted shingle or self-binding gravel.

6. Planning Policy

- 6.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 and Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 2: Achieving Sustainable Development
- 4: Decision Making
- 12: Achieving Well Designed Places
- 15: Conserving the Natural Environment
- 16: Conserving the Historic Environment

Local Planning Policy

- 6.2 The statutory development plan documents relevant to these applications comprise:

- Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018)
- West Sussex Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2018) Partial Review (2021)

The planning policies relevant to these applications include:

- DP1: Sustainable Economic Development
- DP4: Housing
- DP6: Settlement Hierarchy
- DP12: Protection and Enhancement of the Countryside
- DP15: New Homes in the Countryside
- DP21: Transport
- DP26: Character and Design
- DP27: Dwelling Space Standards
- DP28: Accessibility
- DP34: Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets
- DP37: Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
- DP38: Biodiversity
- DP39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- DP41: Flood Risk and Drainage
- DP42: Water Infrastructure and the Water Environment

Local Plan Review

- 6.3 The Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039 was submitted for Examination on 8th July 2024. Following the initial Examination Hearing sessions, the Planning Inspectorate advised in the Stage 1 findings that they were minded to fail the Council's Local Plan on its lack of ability to demonstrate the Duty to Cooperate.
- 6.4 Following the Minister of State's letter to the Planning Inspectorate on 9th October 2025, advising that Inspectors exercise a degree of flexibility, particularly in relation to the Duty to Cooperate, the Planning Inspectorate wrote to Mid Sussex District Council to advise them they would be willing to re-open the hearing sessions to consider the issue. A further hearing session is anticipated to be held in early 2026.

- 6.5 Given the uncertainty on how the Council's Local Plan Examination will progress, this proposal has considered the on the basis of the adopted Local Plan policies. However, it is noted that policy DPC3 (New Homes in the Countryside) within the Local Plan Review is broadly consistent with policy DP15 (New Homes in the Countryside) of the adopted Local Plan in respect of the re-use of rural buildings for residential use.

Albourne Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031 (2016)

- ALC1 – Countryside – Conserving and Enhancing Character
- ALH1 – Housing – Housing Development
- ALH2 – Housing – Proposed Housing Sites

Other Relevant Documents

- Mid Sussex Design Guide
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards

7. Planning Considerations

- 7.1 This section sets out the merits of the proposal and its compliance with national and local planning policy.

8. Principle of Development

- 8.1 The application site is located outside any built up area boundary, and therefore any proposals are assessed against the countryside policies set out within the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) settlement.
- 8.2 Policy DP15 of allows for some exceptional forms of development within the countryside and this includes the re-use of rural buildings for residential use. This is on the basis that the agricultural building has not been recently constructed and has not been used for its original purpose. Conversion proposals are also required to either secure the future of a heritage asset, or lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting, whilst also maintaining the rural landscape character.
- 8.3 The proposal comprises the conversion of a Grade II Listed 17th century barn and the conversion of a 18th century former stable building to residential use. Both buildings are no longer used for rural purposes following the cessation of the working farmstead.
- 8.4 The barn and former stable building have significant value as a group of historic farmstead buildings located adjacent to the listed farmhouse. They are both attractive historic buildings which have architectural, artistic and historic significance and are worthy of retention and future preservation.
- 8.5 The current use of storage has led to both buildings being underutilised. This proposal seeks to re-use both buildings for separate residential use, providing them with a viable use to ensure the restoration and long-term preservation of the heritage assets.
- 8.6 The proposed re-use of the buildings for residential use would provide for their repair, conservation and sensitive conversion which would secure the future of the heritage assets and comply with the requirements of policy DP15. Further discussion relating to optimum viable use of the barn in heritage terms is discussed in detail in the supporting Heritage Statement and within the following heritage section of this assessment.

9. Heritage

- 9.1 There is a duty for decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses (Sections 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). This requirement is reinforced in Chapter 16 of the NPPF which sets the national agenda for ‘conserving and enhancing the historic environment.’
- 9.2 Policy DP34 requires development to protect listed buildings and their settings by ensuring a thorough understanding of the significance of the listed building and its setting has been demonstrated. In particular, conversion of a listed building are required to retain their significance and character whilst ensuring the building remains in a viable use.
- 9.3 The application is supporting by a Heritage Statement (HS) prepared by Roberto Prieto-Labrador MR, PCIfA, of Manorwood. This includes a Significance Assessment, Impact Assessment, a full interpretative analysis of the farm buildings and their evolution, and a detailed analysis on optimal viable use for the barn.

Significance

The Barn

- 9.4 The main Grade II Listed barn originated as a late 17th century 5 bay threshing barn of a type characteristic of the post-medieval Low Weald. The map regression analysis shown on pages 7-9 of the HS shows that the barn had ancillary ranges to the eastern and western sides of the barn in the 18th or early 19th century which indicate that the barn formed the principal element in a more complex working and working farmyard arrangement.
- 9.5 During the 19th and 20th century the barn was adapted to include a mezzanine floor, and structural strengthening which reflect a shift in farming practices from an arable barn to a flexible farm use used for livestock and storing hay.
- 9.6 The barn is of considerable archaeological and architectural significance as a largely intact late 17th century timber framed agricultural building retaining its primary structural skeleton, including jowled posts, substantial tie beams, tension braces, mid rails, struts and principal rafters. The later sling braces, mezzanine structures and softwood repairs offer further evidential value by illustrating successive phases of adaptation and maintenance.
- 9.7 The barn also has historical significance in relation to its clear legible record of agricultural development in the wider Low Weald and the importance of arable cultivation in the 17th century and shift to more mixed farming.
- 9.8 The barn has group value in the former farmyard, with its relationship to the farmhouse and its former flanking ranges.

The Stables

- 9.9 The stable building located to the north-west of the listed barn is a 3 bay, single storey structure which is constructed in a characteristic late 18th century manner using a combination of rubble and knapped flint with red brick quoins and dressings.
- 9.10 The building analysis shows that a programme of alteration took place in the mid to late 20th century, which included the insertion of three breeze block partitions to replace timber partitions, machine cut replacement timber doors, projected eaves canopy to the south elevation and an original doorway on the western elevation was blocked with brickwork.

- 9.11 The stable building holds archaeological, architectural and historic significance. The stables is as a representative and increasingly scarce example of a late 18th century brick and flint stable range within a traditional Low Weald farmstead. The building forms an integral part of the historic farmstead and enhances the group value of the site.

Setting

- 9.12 The setting of Westhouse Farm is predominantly rural, retaining key characteristics of its historic development. The relationship between the farmhouse and its associated agricultural buildings to the west remains strong and this is apparent when viewed from the surrounding fields.
- 9.13 The existing late 20th century outbuildings within the farmstead have a neutral to slightly negative impact on the setting of the listed buildings, however they do not overwhelm or prevent understanding of the historic grouping.
- 9.14 The setting therefore continues to make a positive and integral contribution to the significance of Westhouse Farm as a historic farmstead.

Optimal Viable Use

- 9.15 Paragraph 210 of the NPPF states that in determining applications, *“Local Planning Authorities should take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them into viable uses consistent with their conservation.”*
- 9.16 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that *“where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”.*
- 9.17 In accordance with the NPPF guidance and the pre-application advice received, a SWOT analysis is shown on page 20 of the HS which identifies potential alternative uses for the barn, and a detailed assessment relating to which uses are viable and least likely to cause harm to the significance of the heritage asset.
- 9.18 The ‘do nothing’ option was rejected as this would harm the long term preservation of the listed barn. The reversion of the building agricultural use was not considered viable in a modern context and would not deliver the long term investment needed to preserve the barn.
- 9.19 A commercial workshop use was considered viable but given the rural location and market conditions this was considered uncertain. The harm to the barn’s character and significance was also considered to be higher with a commercial use.
- 9.20 The holiday let use represented risks to the spatial and material character of the barn and would likely result in more vehicular activity and movements that could be harmful to the rural setting of the heritage asset.
- 9.21 The main uses that were considered viable were continuation of ancillary residential use to Westhouse Farmhouse or use as a separate Class C3 residential dwelling. When considering these two uses, it is concluded that whilst the ancillary residential use of the barn would offer a good conservation outcome, it would not provide a robust long-term funding mechanism for repairs or running costs. This option was therefore rejected.
- 9.22 The optimum viable use of the barn was therefore considered to be as a single dwelling house which would deliver the best balance between viability, conservation and minimal harm. The proposed scheme would enable the open threshing volume to be largely retained, the new accommodation is contained within subordinate extensions, and unsympathetic modern buildings to be removed.

- 9.23 This proposed residential use would secure the long term conservation of the heritage asset through a use that requires only modest and carefully controlled change to their fabric, plan form and setting in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and local planning policy.

Heritage Impact of Proposals

The Barn

- 9.24 In response to the pre-application comments received, the proposed barn conversion seeks to preserve the open character of the barn, through minimal subdivision, avoidance of an overly domesticated appearance, particularly in relation to fenestration and the extent of the proposed extensions. The proposals have maintained the barn's identity as a large, simple agricultural volume with clear legibility of its timber frame, whilst accommodating the minimum necessary domestic functions.
- 9.25 The historic map regression within the HS confirms that the barn historically sat between two lower ancillary structures on its west and east sides. The Conservation Officer acknowledged this in the pre-application response but raised concerns with the eastern wing in relation to the scale of the extension and its over-domestication.
- 9.26 In response to the pre-application advice received, the depth and massing of the extensions have been reduced to ensure that they closely follow the footprint and alignment of the existing modern outbuildings.
- 9.27 The removal of the existing unsightly modern buildings on both sides of the barn and their replacement with single-storey, well-detailed ranges of appropriate scale is considered to result in a net heritage benefit: it restores the historic sense of flanking structures to the barn, whilst avoiding the overly large, two-sided composition previously proposed.
- 9.28 Detailed information relating to the sensitive repair of the timber frame, cladding, roof alterations, fenestration, and insulation strategy is provided on pages 24-26 of the HS.

Stables

- 9.29 The proposed conversion of the stables to ancillary accommodation will require limited external changes to the building. In response to the pre-application advice received, the amount of new partitioning has been reduced to the minimum necessary, and the WC is now planned more logically to avoid unnecessary double circulation through the bathroom.
- 9.30 The overall impact of the stables conversion is judged to be neutral to positive, with the works securing the building's repair and continued use, reinstating its historic roof profile and maintaining the legibility of its stall based plan form whilst introducing only modest, reversible alterations.

Removal and Replacement of Modern Buildings

- 9.31 The removal of the late 20th century outbuilding at the western end of the site have no architectural or historic merit, and their materials, form and associated paraphernalia currently detract from the legibility and rural character of the historic farmstead.
- 9.32 In their place, the scheme introduces a new six-bay stable building and a small outbuilding designed as a traditional cart-shed-type games room/gym, broadly occupying the footprints and alignment of the structures they replace. This approach respects the established grain of development and ensures that new build does not intrude into previously undeveloped parts of the landscape.

- 9.33 The new stables will be constructed with timber-clad walls combined with areas masonry and roofed in handmade plain clay tiles, reflecting the vernacular of the site. The games room will be of brick with and timber-framed open front with glazed infill to the yard elevation, echoing historic cart shed precedents evident on historic mapping. Both buildings are deliberately modest in height and breadth, ensuring that they remain subordinated to the listed farmhouse and converted barn.
- 9.34 The cycle and bin store is a modest building that will remain in keeping in terms of scale, design and use of vernacular materials within the historic farmstead. This will also assist in not needing any future ancillary storage sheds or structures to contain such ancillary residential amenities such as bikes and bins as they have already been designed into the scheme. This will avoid any future over-domestication of the historic farmstead which would affect its setting.
- 9.35 The impact on the setting of the listed farmhouse and curtilage-listed barn is therefore considered positive with harmful modern elements removed, associated clutter reduced, and the replacement buildings reinforcing rather than competing with the historic group.

Landscaping

- 9.36 The proposal involves limited landscaping works to avoid any unwelcome sense of separation between the farmhouse and farmstead through new access arrangements and boundary treatments. Existing areas of modern hardstanding and new areas of hardstanding will be surfaced in materials that are sympathetic to the rural setting, likely to comprise compacted shingle or self-binding gravel.
- 9.37 Overall, the landscape and access works are assessed as neutral to beneficial in heritage terms. They maintain the legibility of the historic farmstead as a coherent group centred on a shared access and yard, avoid the harmful separation previously highlighted by the Conservation Officer at the pre-application stage.

Conclusion on Heritage Impacts

- 9.38 It can be concluded that the proposed development represents a conservation-led, heritage-informed scheme that directly addresses the issues raised at pre-application stage. The revised works secure the long-term viable use of the historic barn and former stables, remove intrusive modern structures, and respect the wider rural landscape character. Internal subdivision within the barn has been minimised; new extensions are limited in extent, clearly subordinate, and historically justifiable; and the fenestration strategy now privileges existing openings and a simple agricultural character.
- 9.39 In accordance with the NPPF (2024) and policy DP34 of the MSDP, the proposals will result in no more than a low level of less than substantial harm to the heritage assets, confined to localised loss of fabric for new openings and the introduction of a modest new ancillary range. This harm is outweighed by the substantial public benefits of securing the optimum viable use of redundant historic buildings and enhancing the setting of the listed farmhouse by removing harmful modern structures.
- 9.40 On balance, the impact of the scheme on the significance and setting of Westhouse Farm's heritage assets is therefore assessed as positive, representing good practice in the adaptive reuse of traditional farm buildings and aligning with national policy objectives for the sustainable conservation of the historic environment.

10. Landscape & Design

- 10.1 Policy DP12 of the MSDP seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy DP26 requires all development, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings to be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of towns and villages, whilst being sensitive to the countryside.
- 10.2 Principle DG53 of the Mid Sussex Design Guide (MDDG) provides advice relating to the conversion of traditional buildings with heritage value. This includes avoidance of conspicuous domestic features, retention of original internal wall divisions, introduction of new floors kept to a minimum, extensions should avoid dominating or detracting from the original character of the building and existing buildings should be re-used where possible.
- 10.3 The pre-application advice received discusses the importance of a well-designed scheme which addresses the subdivision of the barn and outbuildings to separate residential use and avoids inevitable pressure for domesticating features such as bike stores, bin sheds etc. This scheme has been led by heritage and landscape considerations and carefully designed in response to the pre-application advice received, so as to avoid the need for further applications which seek additional outbuildings and extensions to the barn in the future.
- 10.4 The proposal seeks to provide three replacement outbuildings in similar positions to the 20th century buildings to be demolished. These will include a modest bin and bike store, a games room outbuilding and replacement stables. Two single storey extensions will also replace the existing additions to the eastern and western sides of the barn to facilitate its conversion to separate residential use.
- 10.5 The existing modern barn additions and outbuildings have formed part of the former farmstead setting and landscape setting for many decades and are in differing states of repair, see **Figures 4 and 5**. The existing extensions to the barn comprise a large corrugated sheeted open lean-to and stables to the west and a domestic timber shed which detract from the character and appearance of the existing barn. The replacement of the existing extensions to the barn and outbuildings within its setting will provide the opportunity to enhance the existing appearance of the site within the historic rural landscape.



Figure 4: Existing extension to west of barn



Figure 5: Existing timber outbuilding to west of barn

- 10.6 The barn extensions will comprise smaller single storey sympathetic additions to the existing to the main barn, which will be finished in traditional timber cladding and clay roof tiles. The outbuildings have been designed as traditional vernacular rural buildings within the farmstead.



Figure 6: Proposed north elevation, shows proposed extensions to east and west of barn

- 10.7 The proposed barn conversion will preserve the existing rural character of the barn through sensitive conversion, traditional methods of repair and use of vernacular materials. The insertion of new walls within the barn retains the existing internal barn subdivision. The double height layout of the barn will be retained with the insertion of the half mezzanine floor not compromising the predominantly open character of the barn with vaulted ceiling and exposed roof timbers.
- 10.8 New window and door openings have been kept to a minimum and existing openings reused wherever possible to avoid over domestic features in compliance with the advice in the Design Guide. Fenestration will be slim-framed metal windows and doors with agricultural character, avoiding traditional sash or casement patterns that would read as overtly domestic in character.
- 10.9 The 18th century stable building to be converted to ancillary accommodation will retain its internal three bay subdivision. Limited external changes to the building are required to facilitate its conversion and therefore the building's rural layout, character and appearance will be retained.

- 10.10 The development will be visible from public right of ways which run alongside the access track and connected with multiple public right of ways adjacent to the western end of the site. Whilst there will be an element of change as a result of the separate residential use, the development has been designed to remain sympathetic to the farmstead character of the landscape and will not therefore harm the rural appearance of the area. The proposal therefore complies with policy DP12 in relation to protection of the intrinsic rural character of the countryside.
- 10.11 The proposed scheme will therefore preserve and enhance the rural character of the existing buildings and the new will respond sensitively to the surrounding historic and rural landscape in accordance with the requirements of policies DP12 and DP26 of the MSDF and the MSDG.

11. Ecology

- 11.1 Policy DP38 requires protection of existing biodiversity and appropriate measures taken to avoid and reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and species. Proposals should also protect special characteristics of internationally designated sites.
- 11.2 This application is supported by a detailed Ecological Impact Assessment, which includes details of the Bat Roost Assessment and a Bat Emergence Surveys undertaken. The bat roost assessment identified the barn as having the highest potential for roosting bats owing to its large interior void and gaps within the roof of the barn. The remaining buildings have a mix of moderate, low and negligible potential for roosting bats.
- 11.3 Six bat emergence surveys have been conducted on the buildings between May to July 2025. Only one Soprano Pipistrelle bat was recorded to have emerged from the main barn. The Ecology Report details that this is considered to be a non-breeding day roost.
- 11.4 The surrounding trees were inspected for foraging and community bats and were considered to have low potential.
- 11.5 As the proposed conversion works will have an impact on a non-breeding day roost, an EPS License will need to be sought from Natural England. To inform the EPS License mitigation has been incorporated within section 6.0 of the Ecology Report. Mitigation for bat include appropriate timing of works, the construction of a large multi-chamber bat box, works overseen by a licensed ecologist, and a bat sensitive lighting scheme.
- 11.6 The Ecology Report confirms that whilst there could be potential Great Crested Newts (GCN), badgers, nesting birds, reptiles and hedgehogs to be present, through mitigation, compensation and enhancement will suitably mitigate against any potential impacts to these species.
- 11.7 The proposal will not cause any harm to protected species and includes enhancements to support protected species in line national and local planning policy requirements.

12. Biodiversity Net Gain

- 12.1 The Environment Act 2021 and other secondary legislation requires a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be achieved on all developments. Policy DP38 of the District Plan pre-dates the statutory legislation for states that the Council will maximise opportunities to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.
- 12.2 A BNG Report and BNG Metric has been submitted in support of this application. The BNG Report confirms that the BNG baseline of the site is 1.20 habitat units, 2.0 hedgerow units and 0.05 watercourse units.
- 12.3 The BNG Assessment concludes that the once all retention and habitat creation measures are taken into account, the scheme would result in a net increase of 0.20 habitat units and a 16.55% biodiversity net gain in habitat units across the site. The development would result in an increase of 0.21 hedgerow units and an increase of 10.33% biodiversity net gain increase in hedgerow units across the site.
- 12.4 The calculation has achieved a 0% gain in watercourse units. This is due to there being no adverse impacts on the condition of the existing culvert/stream. The culvert cannot be improved as it is required for the driveway access and there is not scope to enhance the stream within the site area.
- 12.5 The BNG Report provides an outline Habitat Management prescriptions as detailed in section 5.0 of the report.
- 12.6 The development has been designed to maximise onsite opportunities to enhance biodiversity net gain, significantly exceeds the statutory 10% BNG requirement and accords with the local plan policy requirement set out in policy DP38 of the District Plan.

13. Trees

- 13.1 Policy DP37 of the MSDP advises that development which leads to the loss of trees, woodland or hedgerows that harms visual amenity or the character of the area will not normally be permitted. Trees should therefore be protected and enhanced by development in accordance with this policy.
- 13.2 This application is supported by a Tree Survey and Arboricultural Method Statement. Four trees and a small section of a group of trees are proposed to be felled. The individual trees are Ash trees and Tree Group 6 comprises Blackthorn, these have all been surveyed as having low landscape value and fall within Category C. One of the Ash trees is also dead.
- 13.3 Tree protection and ground protection measures are proposed to ensure the health of existing trees within and adjacent to the site as detailed in the Arboricultural Method Statement. These measures will ensure that important trees within and adjacent to the site are protected in accordance with policy DP37 of the MSDP.

14. Amenity

- 14.1 Policy DP26 of the requires development to be designed not to cause significant harm to the amenities of existing nearby residents and future occupants of new dwelling, including taking into account of the impact on privacy, outlook, daylight, sunlight, noise and pollution.
- 14.2 Policy DP27 requires all new dwellings, including those created through conversion of existing buildings, to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards.
- 14.3 The closest neighbouring property to the development would comprise the host dwelling, Westhouse Farm. The proposed extended barn and the main farm house would be located 12.8m from each other at the closest point.
- 14.4 Due to the position of the farmhouse, which is situated further north than the barn, the eastern end of the extension to the barn would face the rear garden of the farm house. The proposed single storey extension to the west of the barn has been designed to incorporate no windows at the eastern end to avoid any overlooking between the two properties.
- 14.5 There is also existing trees and planting along the western boundary of the farmhouse which would provide some screening between the two neighbouring rear gardens.
- 14.6 The proposed extensions and outbuildings are all single storey and would no overshadowing or loss of light to the neighbouring farm house. The proposal would therefore ensure no harm to the amenities of the occupiers of the proposed dwelling or the neighbouring farmhouse in compliance with policy DP26 of the MSDP.
- 14.7 The Nationally Described Space Standards 2015 requires a 4 bedroom (8 persons) dwelling to have a minimum GIA of 124sq.m and built in storage of 3sq.m. The proposed barn incorporates a floor area of 200sq.m which exceeds the space standards. The proposed converted stable building and games room also provide additional habitable space to be used in conjunction with the converted barn. The proposed dwelling would therefore meet the nationally described space standards.

15. Transport & Access

- 15.1 Policy DP21 of the MSDP requires development proposals to take into account safe and convenient access for walking, cycling, vehicles and public transport. Schemes should also provide adequate car parking for the proposed development.
- 15.2 Policy DP22 requires development to protect public right of ways, national cycle routes, and recreational routes, ensuring safe and convenient links to these public routes.
- 15.3 The proposal will utilise the existing vehicular access to the site from Henfield Road. This existing access arrange will be shared to serve the existing farmhouse and the converted barn. Existing visibility at the access onto Henfield Road is good owing to the field access adjacent to the vehicular access. The proposed development will therefore be served by a safe means of access onto the public highway.
- 15.4 The proposal would comprise the creation of one additional dwelling which would not cause a significant increase in traffic to and from the site that would be harmful to the rural character of the area.
- 15.5 The West Sussex Parking Demand for new development requires 2.7 vehicle parking spaces and 2 cycle parking spaces for a 4 bedroom dwelling in this location. The proposed drawings show that there would be adequate vehicle parking provision within the site to meet this demand. Details of any electric vehicle charging points can be secured by planning condition.
- 15.6 A bike store is provided as part of the scheme which will provide secure and sheltered parking for three cycles. The proposal would therefore provide sufficient vehicle and cycle parking to serve the development.

16. Conclusion

- 16.1 It can be concluded that the principle of this proposed development which comprises the conversion and extension of the 17th century Grade II Listed barn to a dwelling house and conversion of the 18th century stable building to ancillary accommodation along with ancillary outbuildings is acceptable in principle.
- 16.2 The proposed development has been heritage and landscape led and has directly responded to the issues raised at pre-application stage. The proposal secures the long-term viable use of the historic barn and former stables, remove intrusive modern structures, and respect the wider rural landscape character. Internal subdivision within the barn has been minimised; new extensions are limited in extent, clearly subordinate, and historically justifiable; and the fenestration strategy now privileges existing openings and a simple agricultural character.
- 16.3 On balance, the impact of the scheme on the significance and setting of Westhouse Farm's heritage assets is therefore assessed as positive, representing good practice in the adaptive reuse of traditional farm buildings and aligning with national policy objectives for the sustainable conservation of the historic environment.
- 16.4 The proposed development would provide significant gains in biodiversity on the site and would also not result in harm to the rural character of the area, ecology, trees, highway safety or neighbour amenity.