

Duckyls Farm Centre, Selsfield Road
East Grinstead, RH19 4QY

Design and Access Statement

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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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This document is prepared by GML Architects on behalf of the Diagrama Foundation in support of proposals to add 2 no. agricultural buildings to the Duckyls Farm Centre, East Grinstead, to provide much needed facilities for the use of residents and day care visitors, and to house animals.

DUCKYLS FARM CENTRE

Duckyls Farm Centre is run by the charity Diagrama, which supports people with learning disabilities and autism, providing opportunities for them to live their best life. Currently 10 people with a learning disability reside on site in the care centre, with access to the farm where they have the opportunity to learn new skills, work with animals and alongside nature.



The centre



Diagrama Foundation is a charity that supports vulnerable children and adults to live their best life.

Diagrama achieve this by:

- Finding secure and nurturing families to care for traumatised children through our adoption and fostering services
- Ensuring vulnerable elderly have the opportunity to live life to the full at our nursing and dementia care home, Edensor
- Promoting the development of core skills for adults with learning disabilities at our residential service Cabrini House so that they can lead independent lives, integrated within their community
- Enabling vulnerable people to develop the skills and confidence in their own and shared homes so they can lead independent, fulfilled lives, through our supported living service.

Diagrama have recently been awarded a contract with West Sussex County Council to provide day care services for people within the District who have learning disabilities, physical disabilities, acquired brain injury etc.



Private House, Herts



Club House Design. Herts

GML ARCHITECTS

GML Architects Ltd are based in Central London and were established in 1995.

GML have worked on a number of sites within the green belt including numerous houses, a woodland cemetery in Epping and ARE currently working on designs for a golf club house in Hertfordshire.

The practice's approach to design is about finding solutions that are appropriate to the task, the brief and the site in order to achieve site specific buildings and the spaces between them.

The practice has also worked with the GLA and The Joseph Rowntree Foundation advising on how to achieve lifetime homes standards within high density developments.



Woodland Cemetery Epping Forest

Duckyls Farm is situated on Selsfield Road, West Hoathly.

The overall site area is approximately 90.24 acres/ 36.52 hectares.

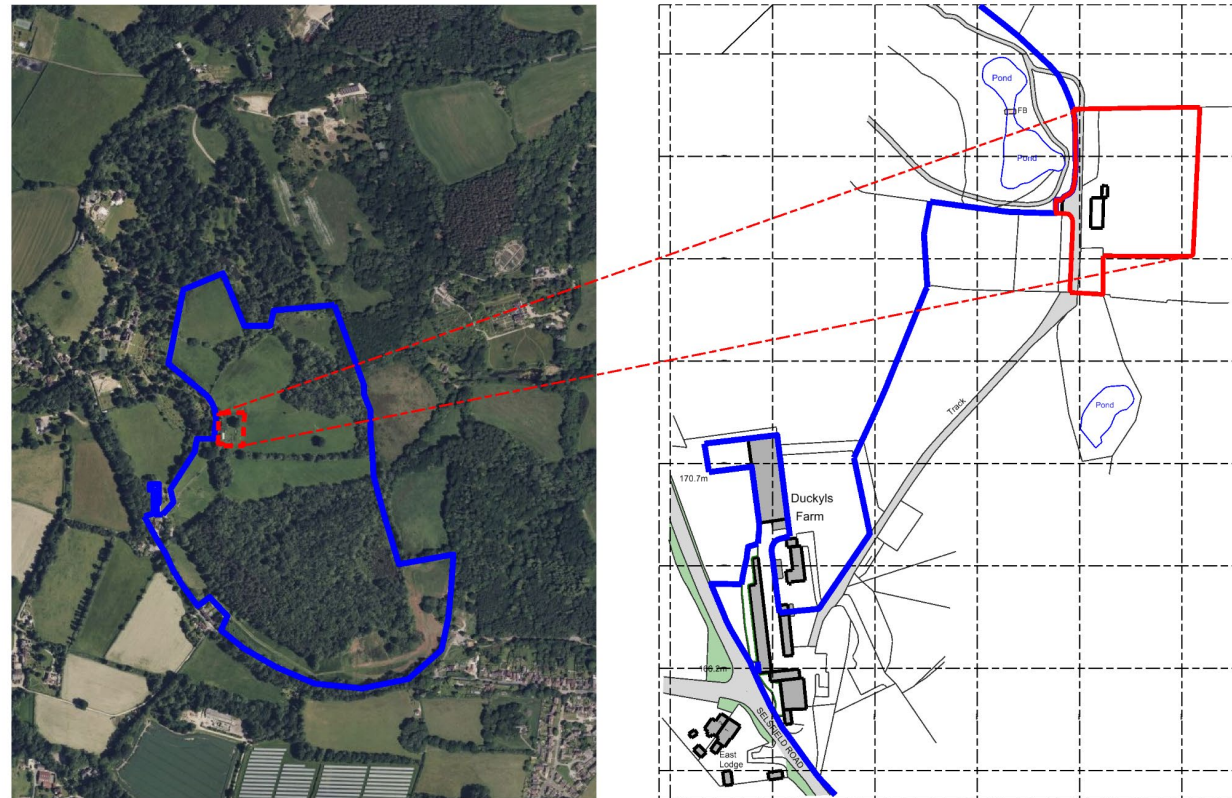
The application site outlined in red is just under an acre in area – 0.4 hectares. Presently a small horticultural area and polytunnels sit on the site.

To the west is a small wooded area which lies outside of the Duckyls Farm site boundary. To the south of the horticultural area is a small copse set around a pond that visually separates this part of the site from the access track linking through to the centre.

The layout of the farm centre is relatively confined, with a group of buildings located close to Selsfield Road. An existing agricultural barn (14.5 x 43m) is located at the northern end of the buildings, in close proximity to the neighbouring residential property at Duckyls Farmhouse, with restricted means to dispose of waste away from the neighbouring property.

A public footpath crosses the site, running along a section of the access track from Selsfield Road and then diverting north eastwards towards Gravetye Manor.

In terms of planning policy, the site lies within the countryside and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).





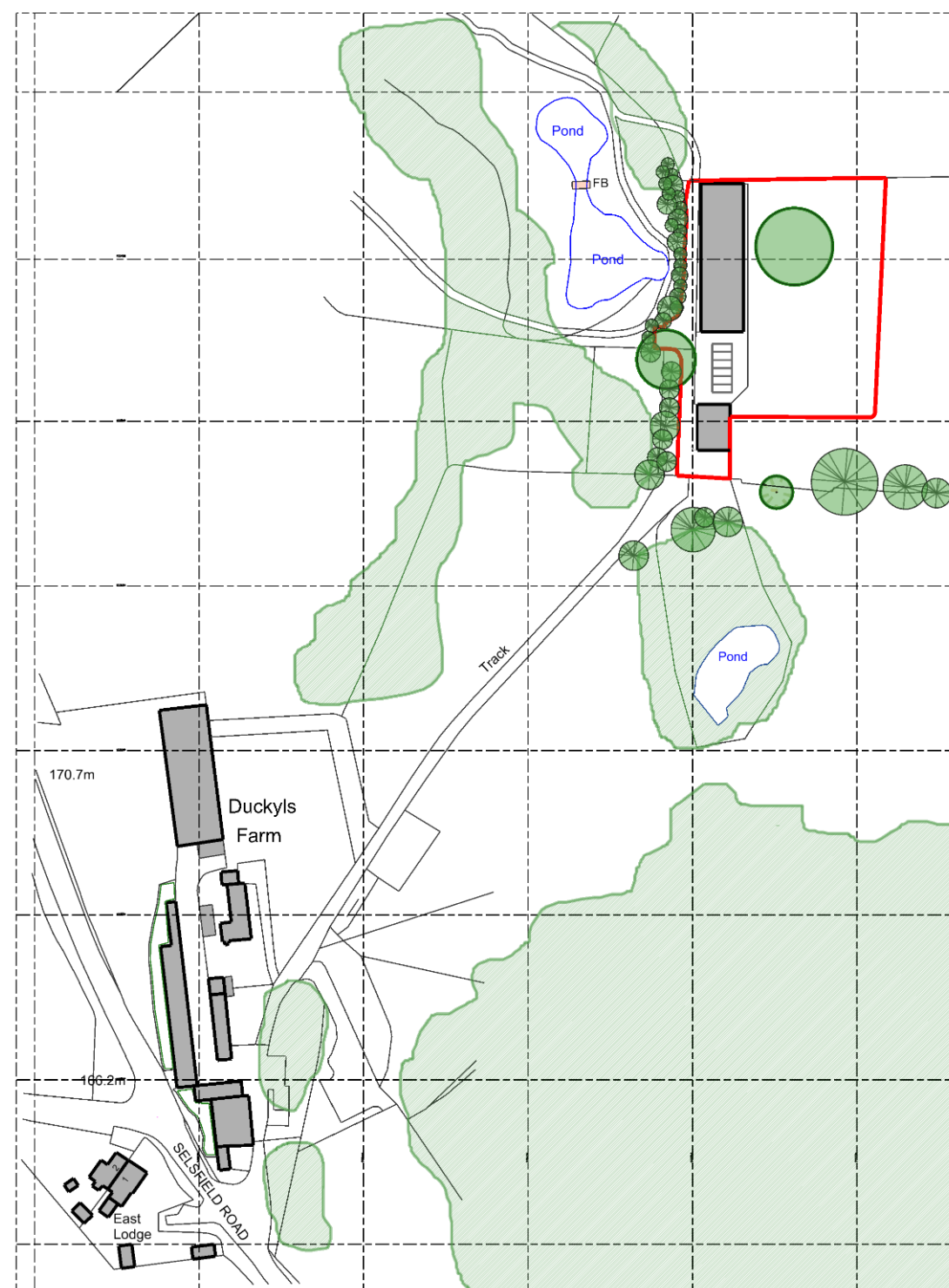
Duckyls Farm Centre supports people with learning disabilities and autism, providing opportunities for them to live their best life.

Currently 10 people reside on site in either the residential service or supported living service, with access to the farm where they have the opportunity to learn new skills, work with animals and alongside nature.

The day centre provision currently allows for 19 other individuals to benefit from these experiences too.



Correspondence with MSDC suggests the farm centre would benefit from a sui generis planning use, being comprised of an agricultural use combined with a residential institution use.



The proposal contained within this document is to add 2 no. agricultural buildings to Centre which will provide much needed facilities for the use of residents and day care visitors, and to house animals.

The proposals are for two new barns positioned at the end of the existing agricultural track that runs from approximately 250m from the centre to an existing polytunnel and horticultural area.

The intention is to erect 2 framed agricultural style buildings with the polytunnel reinstated between the buildings:

It is accepted that during the construction period of the new buildings that it will not be possible to retain the polytunnel in its current position and as such this application also proposes a temporary location for it.

The south of the site it is proposed to erect a 10 x 14 metre wood workshop where people can build bird boxes, hedgehog houses and planters along with a welfare room.

To the north of the site the proposals are for 13 x 45 metre barn which will house animals and hay as well as a classroom, craft room and welfare area with toilets and handwashing facilities

The proposed buildings have been located to take advantage of the sites natural topography.

The proposal would enable Diagrama to provide:

- The necessary levels of handwashing and toilet facilities in line with DEFRA and HSE requirements in a central part of the estate close to where residents and visitors spend their time, therefore avoiding the need to return to the farm sporadically.
- A calming/quiet indoor space for those who may need quiet time.
- space to store hay and animal feed, agricultural equipment, tools and PPE close to where they are needed.
- A permanent craft workshop
- Animal housing when required (the existing buildings are not suitable)
- Indoor space for use during inclement weather to ensure learning can continue.
- Tea and coffee facilities
- The proposed building would allow for better infection control when farming as individuals with special needs are harder to keep safe and encourage cleanliness. When working with animals and on the land, this becomes even higher risk without nearby washing facilities.

PRE-APPLICATION 1

An initial pre-app was submitted to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) on 16 April 2024 and a meeting held at site with Deborah Lynn from MSDC on the 21st May.

Further to the meeting a detailed response from Deborah Lynn was received that is generally supportive of the principle of development at the site and that set out the key considerations likely to determine development when assessing any proposals for the site, together with a list of technical reports that will be required to support a detailed application.

Four key considerations were set out as follows:

the principle of development

design and impact on the character of the area

impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

impact on trees and biodiversity net gain.

These issues are considered in the following section.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The MSDC pre-app response suggests that: the farm centre would benefit from a sui generis planning use, being comprised of an agricultural use combined with a residential institution use; that the key in principle policies in the District Plan concerning the principle of development will be DP12, DP16 and DP25 and sets out an informal opinion that In view of these policies development would be considered acceptable in principle, subject to impact upon the character of the area and other policy considerations.

Policy DP12 of the District Plan seeks to protect the countryside and states in part that:

- *‘The countryside will be protected in recognition of its intrinsic character and beauty. Development will be permitted in the countryside, defined as the area outside of built-up area boundaries on the Policies Map, provided it maintains or where possible enhances the quality of the rural and landscape character of the District, and:*
- *• it is necessary for the purposes of agriculture; or*
- *• it is supported by a specific policy reference either elsewhere in the Plan, a Development Plan Document or relevant Neighbourhood Plan.*
- *Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.’*

Policy DP16 of the District Plan relates to the High Weald AONB and advises that *‘small scale proposals which support the economy and social well-being of the AONB that are compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty will be supported.’*

District Plan policy DP25 concerns community facilities and local services and advises that *‘the provision or improvement or community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.’*

NOTE inset text above taken from MSDC response of June 6th, 2024.

PRE-APPLICATION 2 DM/25/0716

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Following the largely positive reception for the principle of development and the submission of the pre-application a site visit with Hamish Evans was undertaken on 8th April 2025 with a written response received on

Mr Evans response to this meeting was that:

I consider that the farm centre would benefit from a sui generis planning use, being comprised of an agricultural use combined with a residential institution use.

The main issues to consider when assessing the proposals are:

The principle of development

Design and impact on the character of the area

Impact on the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Impact on trees and biodiversity net gain.

These issues are considered in the following section.

In terms of principle of development Mr Evans states

I consider that the farm centre would benefit from a sui generis planning use, being comprised of an agricultural use combined with a residential institution use.

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- *Agricultural land of Grade 3a and above will be protected from non-agricultural development proposals. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, detailed field surveys should be undertaken and proposals should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.’*

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District Plan policy DP25 concerns community facilities and local services and advises that *‘the provision or improvement of community facilities and local services that contribute to creating sustainable communities will be supported.’*

Mr Evans concludes this section as follows

In view of the above policies, my informal opinion is that the development would be considered acceptable in principle, subject to impact upon the character of the area and other policy considerations.

NOTE inset text above taken from MSDC response of 23rd April 2025

The MSDC email of 23.04.25 helpfully sets out the relevant sections of the District Plan and High Weald AONB.

‘in addition to District Plan Policy DP12 which seeks to seek to protect the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside, policy DP16 is relevant, stating that:

Development within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as shown on the Policies Maps, will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty and has regard to the High Weald AONB Management Plan, in particular;

- the identified landscape features or components of natural beauty and to their setting;*
- the traditional interaction of people with nature, and appropriate land management;*
- character and local distinctiveness, settlement pattern, sense of place and setting of the AONB; and*
- the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage.’*

The proposed barn at 45 metres long and 13 metres wide is sizeable in footprint, however the MSDC email of 06.06.24 notes the proposed scale to be “*of a similar size and scale to the existing agricultural barn on site. Agricultural buildings are not an uncommon sight in rural areas, however care should be taken to ensure that the buildings are of an appropriate scale to their surroundings, such that they do not appear visually prominent within the landscape.*”

The proposals, whilst sited some distance from the existing group of buildings are situated to sit behind wooded areas in order to appear relatively contained within the landscape and to minimise any visual impact from the public footpath to the south and Selsfield Road

Policy DP26 relates to character and design and states in part that:

‘All development and surrounding spaces, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings and replacement dwellings, will be well designed and reflect the distinctive character of the towns and villages while being sensitive to the countryside. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that development:

- is of high quality design and layout and includes appropriate landscaping and greenspace;*
- creates a sense of place while addressing the character and scale of the surrounding buildings and landscape;*
- protects open spaces, trees and gardens that contribute to the character of the area;’*

When considering new buildings in countryside locations, the Council generally encourages that buildings are sited close to existing buildings in order to minimise visual impact within the locality. However, due to the constrained layout and topography of the site, there is limited room to accommodate new buildings close to existing buildings at the farm centre.

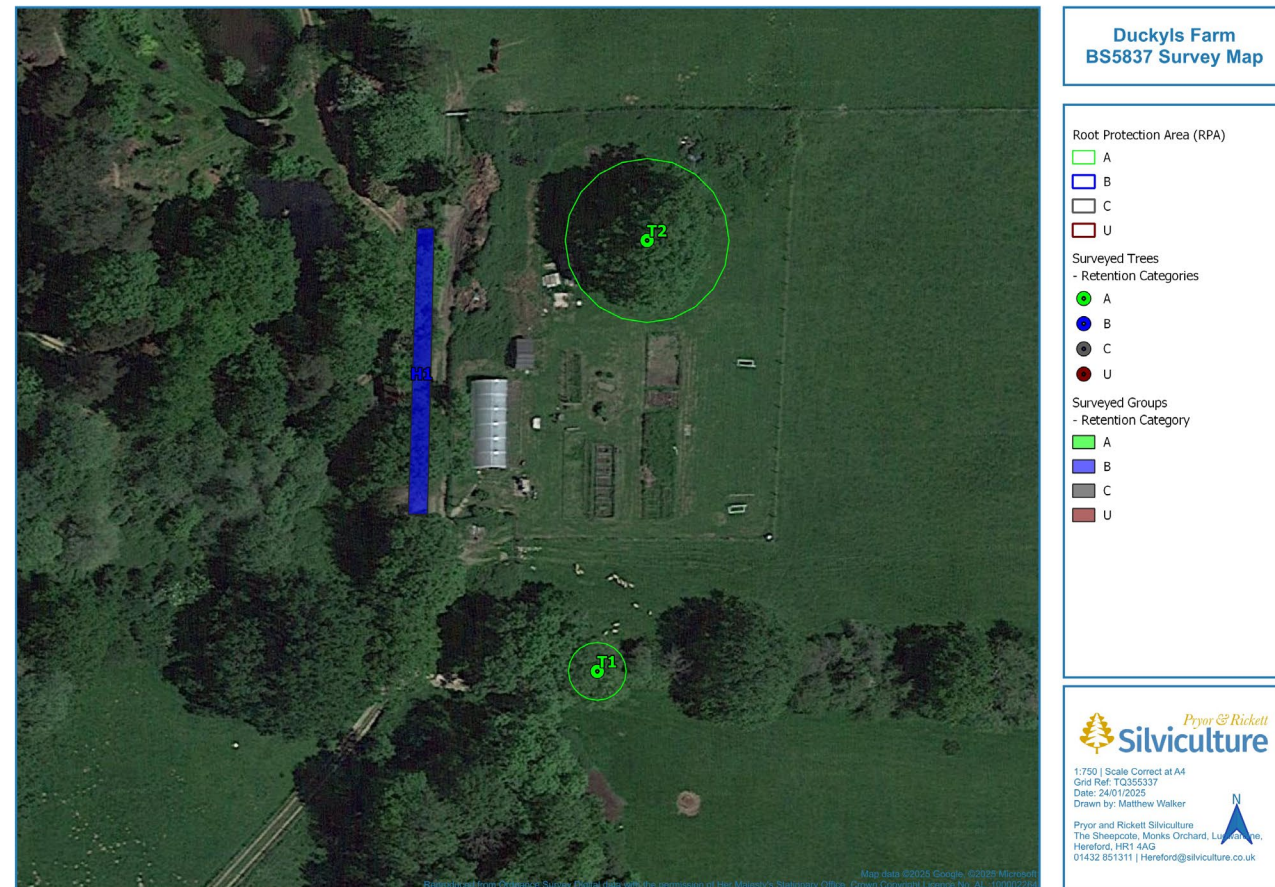
Whilst the proposed buildings would be sited some distance from the existing group of buildings, in a relatively open position, due to the topography of surrounding land and established trees and woodland, it is considered that the buildings would appear relatively contained within the landscape.

The proposed smaller building of the two would be relatively modest in its scale. The proposed barn at 45 metres long and 13 metres wide is sizeable in footprint, however seems to be of a similar size and scale to the existing agricultural barn on site. Agricultural buildings are not an uncommon sight in rural areas.

Following our meeting and the view points that have been provided it appears that the proposed buildings would be relatively well-screened from wider views and they would not appear visually prominent within the landscape.

The proposals have regard to the AONB Colour Study with a palette of dark grey/ green metal cladding, grey highlighting and rusted steel colour framing to window openings – as in the High Weald guidance on the use of colour in development document. Indicative materials are shown on drawings 5117/PRE/05





Trees

This application is accompanied by a tree survey carried out by Adam Sharman of Euroforest Silviculture and based on BS 5837 and a site survey by Matrix Surveyors commissioned by Diagrama.

The survey includes root protection zones to those trees that bound the proposals site area – and inform the positioning of the proposed structures.

Biodiversity

The proposals are set out to avoid loss or disturbance of existing trees and any adverse impact to existing biodiversity.

The accompanying Biodiversity Gain Plan and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal both compiled by Greenspace Ecological Solutions.

The BGN indicates the location of a proposed native hedgerow and new trees

The PEA recommends a number of ecological enhancements including bird and bat boxes in addition to the provisions included in the BNG report.

DESIGN AND IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA



The character of the area beyond the existing collection of buildings is of open countryside punctuated by large areas of woodland.

Views towards the site from public areas limited to the site entry from Selsfield Road and from the public footpath that cuts across the site north eastwards from the bottom of the access track.

Views towards the site from Selsfield Road are obscured by trees along the access road into the site. Views from the Duckyls Farm Centre are obscured by the small copse of trees to the south of the site.

The scale of the two structures is characteristic of agricultural buildings and barns within the wider area – and indeed the original farm itself which includes a shed with a footprint of 14.5 x 43m with shallow pitch roof and clad in corrugated cement board, metal and timber above blockwork – as far as we can tell the colour palette will have been stained timber with elements of dark green metal.

Photos taken at intervals from the public footpath towards the site indicate that the proposed new structures would be obscured by trees along the edge of the fields to the north and the copse to the site of the proposals.

The accompanying Landscape Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Enviropass concludes that the proposed developments will not give rise to any significant adverse landscape or visual effects. Therefore, we found no reason why the site should not be released for the educational and agricultural buildings development proposed.



DESIGN AND IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

Design and Materials

The proposals are designed to reflect the agricultural nature of the site, the barn typology is typical of agricultural buildings within the AONB

The northern barn benefits from a taller eaves height to allow for the use of agricultural machinery to store and stack animal feed as well as allowing to office use on first floor over the classroom.

Materials have been selected from the palettes published in High Weald AONB Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development in particular the Western High Weald Woodland and Heath Sub Palette.

The selected colours address:

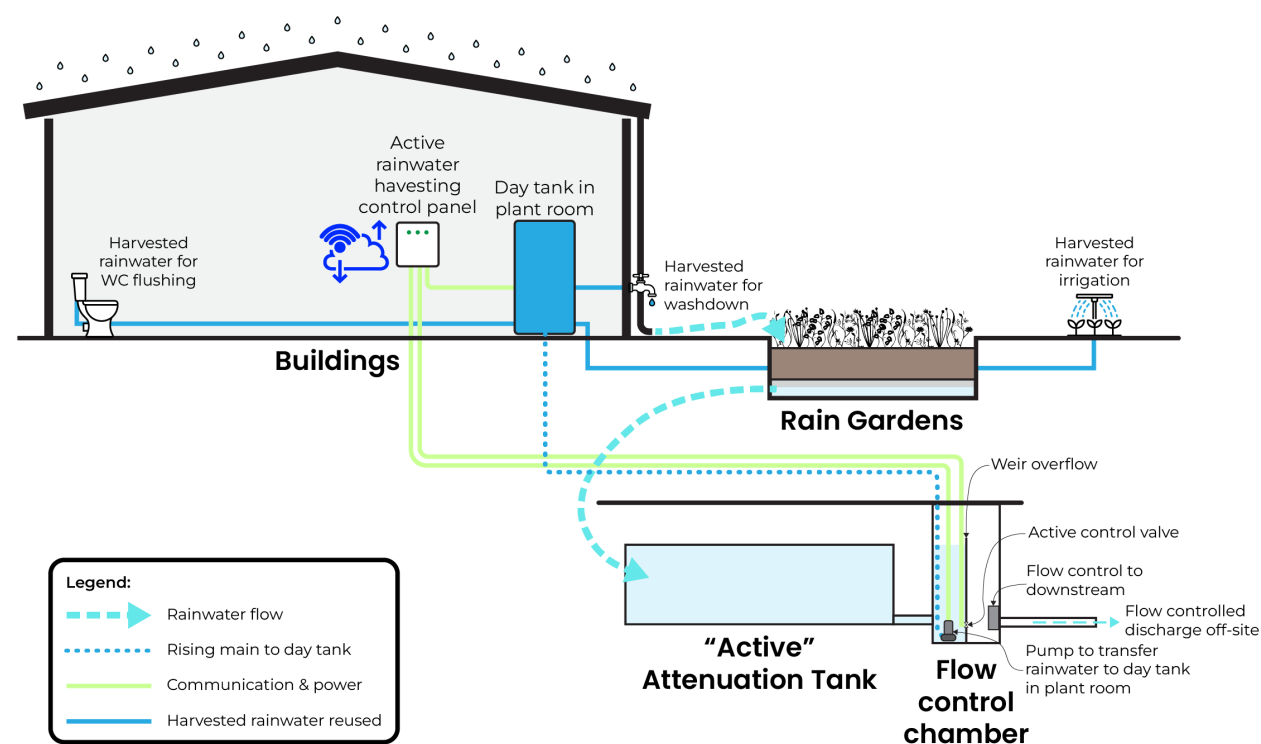
Integration – Referencing the historic barn on site and the wider copses and woodlands

Contrast – referencing the existing concrete within the buildings

Contrast – Timber window frames accentuate the natural timber finish

The buildings would be set against a backdrop of dense woodland and the use of green cladding would ensure they are relatively discreet elements in the landscape.





Sustainable Drainage, Foul Water, Drainage and Flooding

The application is supported by a sustainable drainage strategy complied by EGY which demonstrates that the proposed development can be delivered in a manner that is both environmentally responsible and fully compliant with national, regional, and local planning policy.

The strategy provides a robust and proportionate response to the drainage needs of the site. It enhances resilience to climate change, safeguards local watercourses, and contributes positively to the wider environmental setting. On this basis, it is concluded that surface water arising from the proposed development can be managed effectively without increasing flood risk either on-site or elsewhere within the catchment.

Foul Drainage is proposed as:

Domestic – Klargester BioTec+5 or similar

Farm/Barns - a dedicated and separate drainage network will capture and convey all contaminated flows to a below-ground sealed holding tank. The system has been sized based on the proposed livestock numbers (20 pigs, 10 sheep, and 5 horses), with allowances for washwater and freeboard, resulting in a storage volume of approximately 55–60 m³.

Flood Risk Assessment

The flood risk assessment produced by Innervision Design concludes that :

- There is no apparent flood risk to the proposed development on the site.
- The use of SuDS will form part of the surface water drainage provision for this proposal, hence will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Sustainability

The report produced by Base Energy recommends that Solar PV and Air Source Heat Pumps are the most appropriate renewable energy technology for the site



The requirements for Centre are broken into two separate structures as follows:

WOOD WORKSHOP AND WELFARE (10 x 14m)

Toilets (in separate blocks)

Canteen/Welfare facilities for residents and day care users and visitors,

Woodworking

ANIMAL AND OPERATIONAL BARN (13 X 45m)

Washroom

Operational Offices

Animal Pens

Feed and Hay Storage.

Classroom.

The adjacent plan shows the wood working barn situated to the south of the existing poly tunnel on site and the animal and operational barn to the north.

It is proposed to provide permeable surfaces between and around the barns to improve accessibility for users

The accompanying drawings show the setting out plans, sections and elevations for the barns – the woodworking and welfare barn is situated closest to the public footpath to the south and has its eaves shown at 2.5m. The northern barn which is proposed to house animals and includes a mezzanine has eaves shown at 4.7m.



- The proposals to add two new structures at Duckyls Farm offer the opportunity to add to and extend the facilities for residents and day care users and visitors.
- The proposals have been developed to positively respond to comments from MSDC in relation to their siting and design as set out within the Design and Access Statement.
- We believe the proposals will provide a number of significant benefits to the site and immediate area as follows:
 - Improved access to the polytunnel and horticultural area for those with mobility issues.
 - Delivery of new training opportunities
 - Provision of new vocational learning opportunities for residents and users
 - Provision for the centre to safely store materials and machinery
 - Provision of high quality new agricultural style buildings in line with the aspirations of the High Weald AONB management policies
 - The new layout will respond positively to the existing landscape
 - Due to their location the new buildings are screened from the AONB/Footpath by existing wooded and copse areas and so sit comfortably within the landscape.
 - The proposals offer up strategies for Biodiversity Net Gain and new tree planting.

The application site is situated within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is a clear need for additional agricultural/care services buildings in the location proposed. The buildings would be set against a backdrop of dense woodland and the use of green cladding would ensure they are relatively discreet elements in the landscape. As such the proposed buildings would not have an adverse impact on the landscape quality of the AONB and the proposal accords with Policies DP16 and DP26, and the aims of The High Weald Management Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

As outlined in the preceding Sections, and the supporting reports, the proposal takes on board the need to adequately protect trees and biodiversity and would incorporate sustainable construction methods.

For the reasons set out above the proposal responds to pre-application advice provided by the Council and accords with development plan policy.