

~ OAKLANDS STUD ~

FOREST GRANGE, WEST SUSSEX, RH13 6HX

Conversion of stable block to residential unit and removal of pole barn.

HERITAGE STATEMENT INCORPORATING DESIGN ACCESS STATEMENT



Prepared by Roberto Prieto-Labrador MA, PCIfA ~ Reviewed by Ben Kirk MSc, IHBC

November 2025



ABOUT MANORWOOD

Manorwood is a small team of historic building professionals with varied skills across different areas of the historic environment.

This report has been prepared by Senior Historic Buildings Consultant and Researcher Roberto Prieto-Labrador and reviewed by Director Ben Kirk

Roberto holds a MA in English Building History, awarded with Distinction by the University of York. His field of expertise is domestic vernacular architecture, specialised in material culture and domestic life during the late medieval and early modern periods.

Roberto is a Practitioner member of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (PCIfA), as well as an Affiliate member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC). He is also a member of the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), the Domestic Buildings Research Group (DBRG) and the Wealden Buildings Study Group (WBSG).

As a Senior Historic Buildings Consultant and Researcher at Manorwood, Roberto is responsible for in depth research into building records, mapping, and physical evidence to help inform proposals and for preparing Heritage Statements and Statements of Significance to support applications for alteration or redevelopment of historic buildings and areas, as well as surveying and recording historic buildings.

Ben holds an MSc in Timber Building Conservation, completed at the Weald and Downland Museum, and validated by Bournemouth University, and is a full member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and a recognised Historic Environment Service provider under the well-established HESPR scheme.

Ben is a member of various groups including the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), The Domestic Buildings Research Group (DBRG), and the Wealden Buildings Study Group (WBSG).

Ben has been actively working in the historic environment industry for 15 years on numerous heritage asset projects which include surveying of historic buildings (both domestic and agricultural), preparation of schedules of works and detailing of repairs. Ben oversees numerous applications for Planning permission and Listed Building Consent and has built solid working relationships with Conservation Officers at a number of Authorities across the South East.

As a company Director at Manorwood, Ben has overseen works to historic buildings carried out by a skilled network of sub-contractors including the timber restoration at Charleston Farm barns in Firle and the re-erection of historic buildings at the Weald and Downland Living Museum near Chichester, both which received awards from the Sussex Heritage Trust.

As a company Manorwood have provided various historic environment services to a number of Country Estates across the South East including the Lydhurst Estate, the Borde Hill Estate, the West Dean Estate and a number of projects on the Wiston Estate where Manorwood continue to provide consultancy advice on redevelopment and reuse of various areas.

Most recently Manorwood completed the sensitive restoration and conversion of the magnificent 15th century barn for Nyetimber Vineyards in West Sussex.

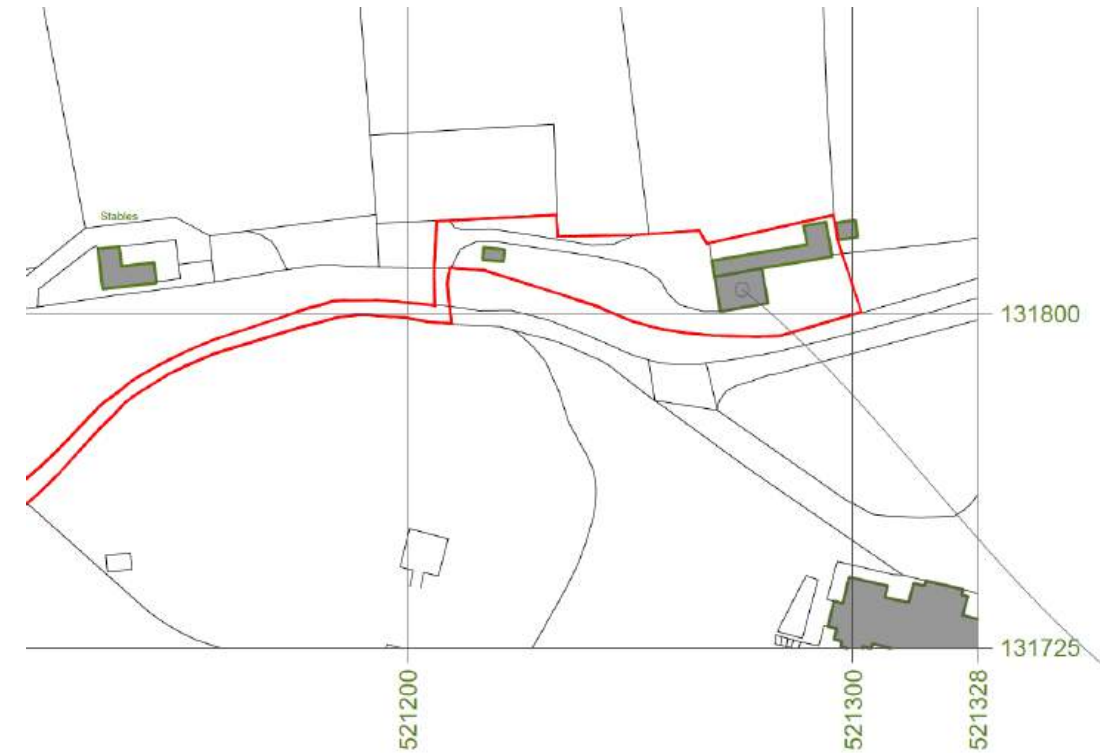


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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Roberto Prieto-Labrador MA, PCIfA on behalf of Manorwood to accompany an application relating to a proposal at Oaklands Stud, Colgate.
- 1.2 Oaklands Stud comprises an open field surrounded by mature trees and dense vegetation on the north side of Forest Grange, approximately half a mile to the centre of Cowfold.
- 1.3 The site comprises an equestrian stables block and pole barn (granted permission under CG/33/94), sand school (granted permission under CG/15/00) and small open fields and paddocks to the north, east and west.
- 1.4 An area of ancient woodland (St. Leonards Forest) is located immediately to the north of the application site which falls under the Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB5) for High Weald.
- 1.5 The proposed site is opposite to the property known as Forest Grange Manor which includes a Grade II listed country house (Forest Grange) built in 1913. The proposed site, therefore, is considered to be within the wider setting of the Listed Building.
- 1.6 In February 2022, pre application advice was sought under reference PE/22/0050 for the conversion of part of the stable block and pole barn into a 2-bedroom dwelling whilst retaining 2 stables on the east elevation.
- 1.7 In June 2022 Horsham District Council provided written advice considering that ‘the proposal would result in a formal and suburban arrangement that would fail to protect, conserve, and/or enhance the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area or the settlement pattern of the locality.’
- 1.8 In March 2025 an application was submitted under reference DC/25/0462 seeking planning permission for the conversion and extension of the existing stables and pole barn to form a four-bedroom dwelling.
- 1.9 In July 2025 the application was refused. The proposal was judged to constitute unjustified new residential development in the open countryside, contrary to the spatial strategy of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF). Its design, scale, and domestic appearance were considered to introduce a suburbanising effect that would harm the rural setting of the High Weald National Landscape. Furthermore, the absence of a tree survey and arboricultural impact assessment prevented the Local Planning Authority from assessing potential impacts on protected and ancient trees.
- 1.10 This report accompanies a new application for the conversion of the existing stable block into a 2-bedroom residential dwelling following the removal of the pole barn. The proposed scheme is a revised version of the previously proposed under application DC/25/0462 and pre-application PE/22/0050 seeking to address the concerns expressed by the Local Planning Authority’s Conservation Officer in their written comments and advice.



Location of the proposed site.

- 1.11 Historic mapping has also been consulted to help understand the development of the site as its immediate environs, as well as its wider setting. The maps are included in section 4 of this report.
- 1.12 This Heritage Statement includes a Significance Assessment, which identifies the relative heritage value of the identified heritage assets and an Impact Assessment which considers the potential impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage assets identified, including the contribution made by their setting. This approach to impact-assessment is required in order to satisfy the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Planning Authority.

2 HERITAGE ASSETS AND DESIGNATIONS

- 2.1 The proposed site sits within the wider setting of Forest Grange, which is a statutory listed building designated in February 1992. The listing reads:

FOREST GRANGE

Location Colgate, West Sussex, RH13 6HX

District Horsham (District Authority)

Date Listed 24th February 1992

List Entry No 1027498

Grade II

Description Large house later private school. Built in 1913 and probably also designed by J P McGraw a civil engineer. Jacobean style. Built of red brick in English bond with Bath stone dressings, Horsham stone slab roof and clustered brick chimney stacks. An asymmetrical building roughly L-shaped of 2 storeys and attics with irregular fenestration. Entrance front has central and right end projecting gables with kneelers and ball finials. 3 clustered brick chimney stacks and 4 flat roofed dormers. Other windows are mullioned with ground floor mullioned and transomed 3-light window in right end gable. Central gable has 4 centred arched doorway with side lights and above stone panel with shield held by dragons of Saint Leonards's Forest. L-wing is service wing and has 2 projecting gables to left end, 2 flat roofed dormers and mullioned windows. Garden front has 3 projecting gables, each with 2 storey 11 light canted bay with mullioned windows to first floor and mullioned and transomed windows to ground floor and 4 other windows, mainly 3 light mullions to first floor and 3 light mullioned and transomed windows to ground floor but 2 storey 4-light oriel to right of central gable. Between left and central gable is a large external brick chimney stack with clustered brick stacks. Attached to the right-hand end is a 1 storey outbuilding, mainly weatherboarded on brick plinth with Horsham slab roof and continuous casements. Great Hall is panelled throughout in oak plank and muntin panelling. 2 spine beams and ceiling joists have run out stops. Fireplace has deep wooden cornices and 2 Atlantes, probably reused C17 figures. Former Library has panelling up to ceiling height and wooden bolection-moulded fireplace. Dining Room is in the Adam style with fluted pilasters, plastered ceiling and wall panels and wooden fireplace with panel of 6 cupids and frieze of tripods, urns and swags. Staircase Hall has Oak Imperial staircase with strapwork embellished balusters and end piers. Large Dining Room has



Location of the stables to be converted with respect to the Grade II Listed Forest Grange.

panelled walls/oval ceiling of early Georgian style and panels with plaster cherubs and stone 4 centred fireplace. Principal bedroom has built-in walnut furniture. Bathrooms have old baths and tiled surrounds. Some bedrooms have wooden fireplaces with tiled surrounds..

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTIFICATION AREA (ANA) AND CONSERVATION AREAS

- 2.2 The development site is not located within the boundaries of any Archaeological Notification Area (ANA) or Conservation Area.

3 PROPOSALS

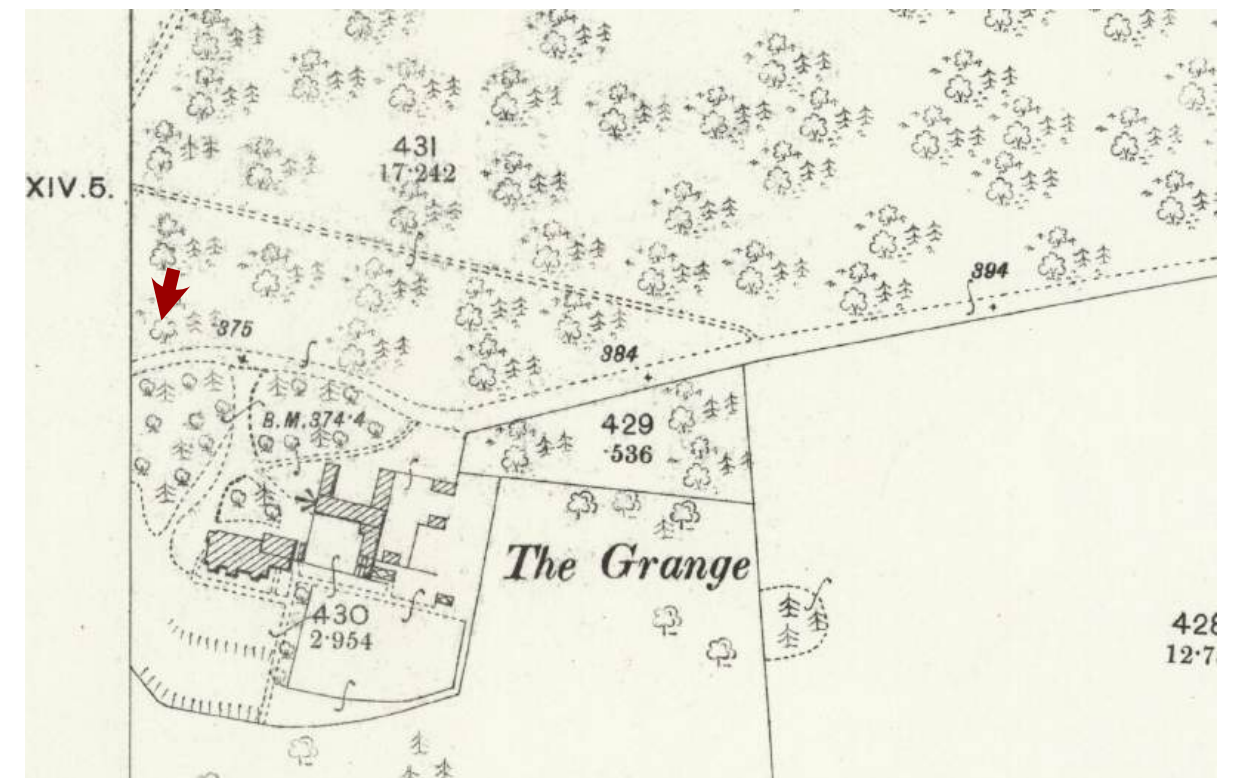
- 3.1 The proposal is the conversion of the existing modern stable block into a 2-bedroom residential dwelling following the removal of the existing pole barn.
- 3.2 The conversion will retain the stable block's existing form and materials with only new windows inserted into the existing openings to make the building capable of working as a residential dwelling.
- 3.3 Further details of the nature and extent of the proposed development are found in the accompanying plans, which should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 3.4 The works and their potential impact are discussed further in section 5 of this report.

4 HISTORIC CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

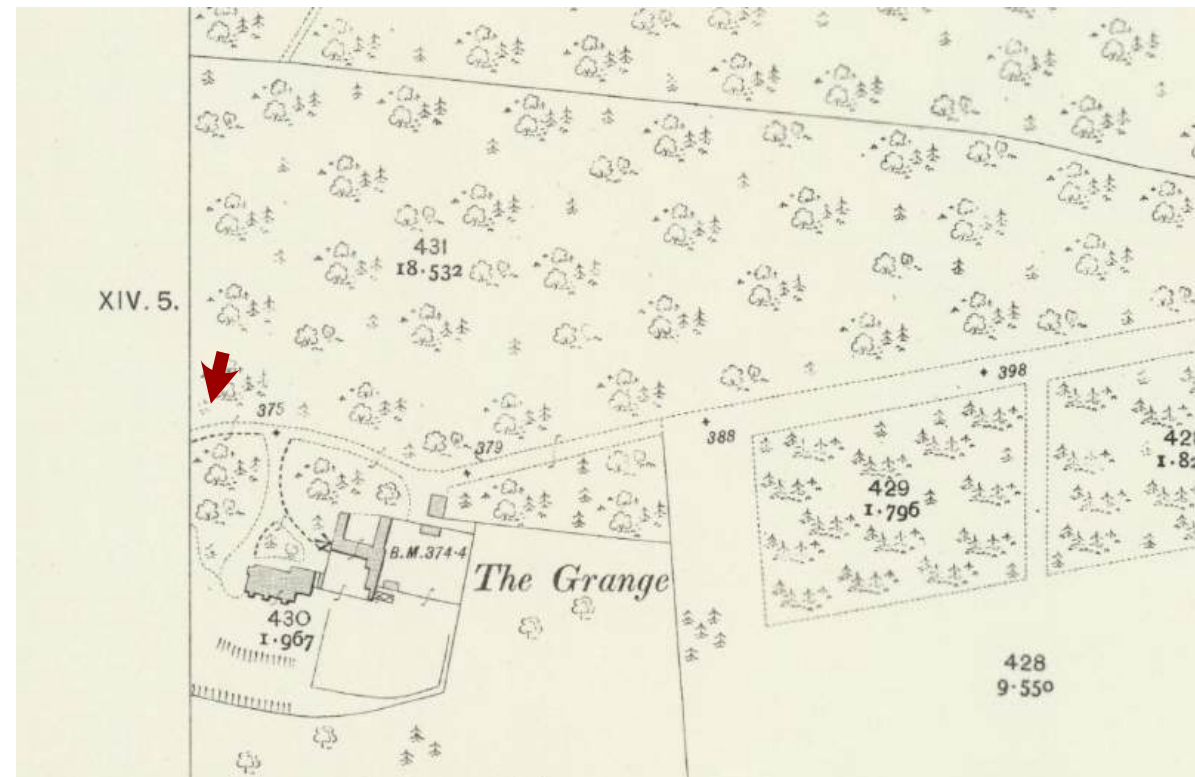
- 4.1 This section appraises the historic context of the proposed site and its significance:
- 4.2 Oaklands Stud comprises an equestrian stables block and pole barn (granted permission under CG/33/94), a sand school (granted permission under CG/15/00), and small open fields and paddocks to the north, east, and west.
- 4.3 Historic maps indicate that the site was originally heavily wooded and formed part of St Leonard's Forest.
- 4.4 By the mid-19th century, a farmstead with a large farmhouse or country house, known as The Grange, was located on the site of the present-day Forest Grange. No records establishing the origins or estimated construction date of this settlement have been found during the preparation of this report. However, it appears to have been built before 1870, as it is first recorded in the 1871 census return.
- 4.5 In 1913, this building was replaced by a larger, L-shaped Jacobean-style house designed by the civil engineer J. P. McGraw. Originally constructed as a single residential dwelling, it was later converted into a private school under the name St Leonard's Forest School.
- 4.6 The proposed site remained part of St Leonard's Forest until the mid-20th century, when it was cleared and converted into a lawned field, possibly for use in association with the school.
- 4.7 Following the school's closure, the building was converted back into a residential dwelling, albeit subdivided into smaller units. The existing buildings within the proposed site were constructed in the late 20th or early 21st century.
- 4.8 Although the proposed site has undergone significant changes, transitioning from its original wooded state as part of St Leonard's Forest to its current form as a field, it retains its rural character and remains partially surrounded by St Leonard's Forest.



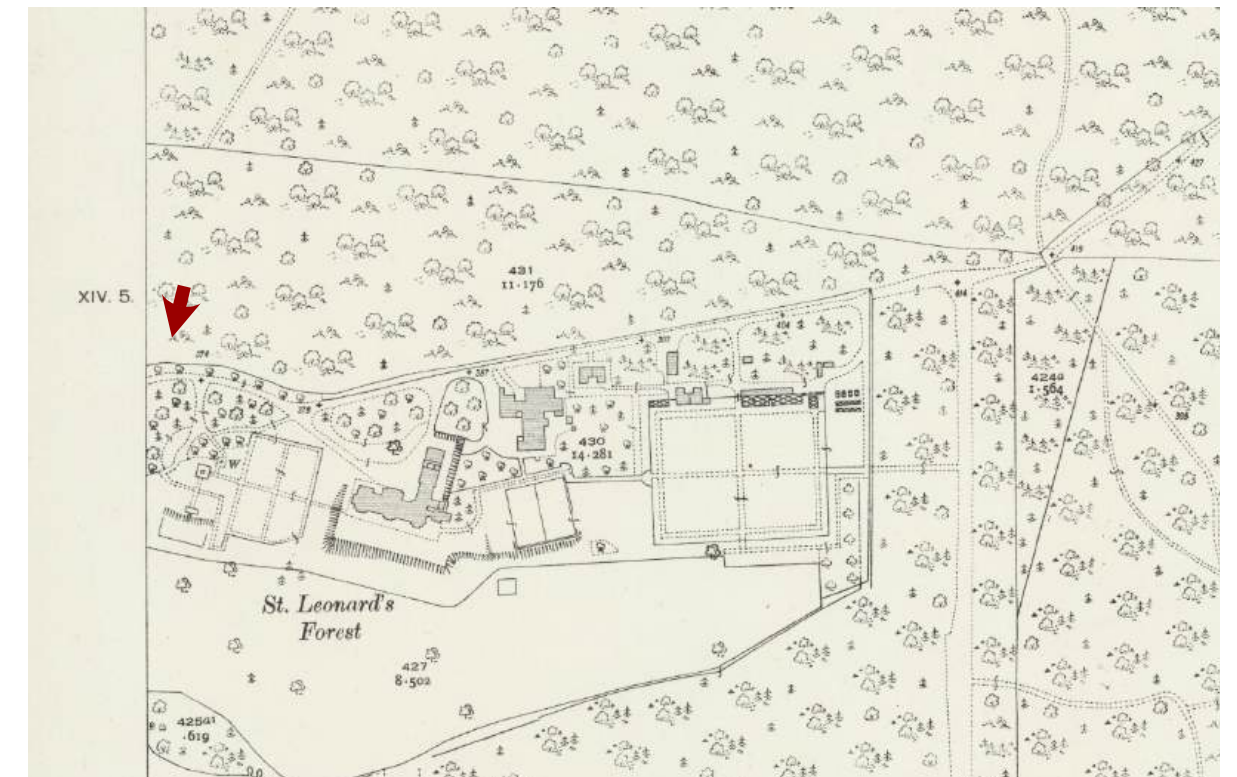
Detail of Ordnance Survey showing the location of the proposed site, 1874 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing the location of the proposed site, 1896 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing the location of the proposed site, 1909 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing the location of the proposed site, 1932 (National Library of Scotland).



Detail of Ordnance Survey showing the location of the proposed site, 1962 (National Library of Scotland).



Satellite view of the proposed site, 2025 (Google Earth).

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This section appraises the impact of the revised scheme on the wider setting of the Grade II listed Forest Grange and demonstrates how the amended proposals address the concerns raised by Horsham District Council in its refusal of application DC/25/0462.

CONVERSION OF EXISTING STABLES AND REMOVAL OF POLE BARN

- 5.2 The revised proposal seeks the conversion of the existing stable block to form a modest two-bedroom dwelling. Crucially, no increase in footprint, height, or massing is proposed. This directly responds to the Council's concern that the previous scheme introduced excessive built form and a level of enclosure that amounted to a perceived "two-storey volume" incompatible with the rural context.
- 5.3 As noted in Section 4, the stable block and pole barn occupy land historically associated with Forest Grange only from the mid-20th century onwards; prior to this the land formed part of St Leonard's Forest. Although the historical relationship is limited, the site nonetheless retains a distinctly rural, wooded setting that contributes to the wider character of Forest Grange. To respect this context, the revised scheme adopts a traditional, non-domestic design approach to ensure any residential conversion remains visually recessive and rural in appearance.
- 5.4 A significant improvement over the refused scheme is the complete removal of the modern pole barn, previously identified by the LPA as contributing to bulk and suburbanisation. As the tallest and most visually assertive structure on the site, its demolition results in a substantial reduction in built form, improving the openness of the landscape and reducing visual presence when viewed from Forest Road. Given its modern construction, its loss causes no harm to the significance or setting of the listed building.

Design and Materials

- 5.5 In direct response to the Council's previous concerns regarding "contemporary, domestic-style materials" and "suburbanising impacts," the revised scheme retains the existing agricultural fabric of the stable block. The dark stained timber cladding and corrugated roof covering, both typical of rural outbuildings, will be preserved. This avoids the introduction of standing seam metal, Crittall style glazing or other domestic finishes which the Council previously considered inappropriate.
- 5.6 Similarly, no alterations are proposed to the established fenestration pattern, addressing the Council's comments regarding overly domestic openings and excessive glazing. Stable doors will remain in situ and will be fixed at their lower half, incorporating simple timber-framed windows above. Existing small windows and the large opening on the west elevation will be fitted with matching timber framed windows and sliding doors, ensuring a consistent agricultural character.
- 5.7 The south elevation, which faces Forest Grange across Forest Road, will remain entirely blank. This retains the stable block's traditional agricultural form and prevents any sense of domestic frontage or light spill toward the listed building. This directly responds to the Council's concern about the suburban character and domestic activity that the previous proposals would have introduced.



Stable block to be converted.



Stable block to be converted.

Impact on the Setting of Forest Grange (Grade II Listed)

- 5.8 The revised scheme represents a clear improvement in relation to the setting of Forest Grange. The development remains on the north side of Forest Road while the listed building is located on the south side and set further back behind mature trees. The form and scale of the converted building, now strictly limited to the existing envelope, ensures that the development will not compete visually with the architectural presence of Forest Grange.
- 5.9 Dense vegetation and mature trees along Forest Road prevent direct views between the stable block and the listed building. In the event of any partial visibility, the converted stable will read as a simple low key agricultural structure, which is entirely appropriate in the setting of a 19th century country house. This directly addresses the Council's concern that the earlier design risked appearing domestic and suburban to a degree that would harm the rural character of the landscape.
- 5.10 By reducing built form, removing the most intrusive structure (the pole barn), retaining the agricultural appearance of the stable block, and avoiding any visual competition with the listed building, the revised proposals preserve the contribution the site makes to the setting of Forest Grange. The scheme now accords with HDPF Policies 32, 33, and 34, and with NPPF paragraph 208 (2024), which requires development to conserve heritage assets and their settings.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposed scheme is based on a clear and well evidenced understanding of the character of the site and of Forest Grange, including their historic development and significance. The assessment has been informed by detailed site visits and desk based research.
- 6.2 The design adopts a traditional approach that respects the existing agricultural form of the stable block. By retaining established materials and proportions, and avoiding domestic features, the scheme ensures that the converted building sits comfortably within its rural surroundings and within the wider setting of the listed building.
- 6.3 The removal of the pole barn and the absence of any increase in footprint or height directly address the Local Planning Authority's previous concerns regarding excessive mass, suburban character and landscape impact.
- 6.4 The stable block is located at a considerable distance from Forest Grange, and dense vegetation and mature trees provide continuous screening. As a result, the conversion will not give rise to any adverse effect on the setting of the Grade II listed building.
- 6.5 Taken as a whole, the revised proposal preserves the rural character of the site, avoids visual competition with Forest Grange and does not result in harm to the special interest or setting of the listed building.
- 6.6 The proposal is therefore consistent with the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, with the National Planning Policy Framework, and with the policies of the Horsham District Planning Framework.

APPENDIX: LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

The primary legislation relating to Listed Buildings and their settings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Section 16(2) states “In considering whether to grant Listed Building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

Section 66(1) reads: “In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a Listed Building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

In relation to development within Conservation Areas, Section 72(1) reads: *“Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”*

Policy relating to the historic environment is set out at national level within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Policy relating to the historic environment is set out at local level within the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

Chapter 16 (Paragraphs 202 to 221) of the NPPF updated and adopted in December 2024 constitute the Government’s national guidance and policy regarding development relating to the historic environment.

The NPPF is a material consideration and states that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local framework unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment with much emphasis on “significance”, defined in Annex 2 as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site’s Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.”

Setting is defined in Annex 2 as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

Annex 2 defines Conservation (for heritage policy) as:

“The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”

This definition is important as it distinguishes conservation from preservation and puts an emphasis on proactively managing change rather than reactively resisting it.

LOCAL POLICY – HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

The site lies within the boundary of the Horsham District Council Authority. The Horsham District Planning Framework – Horsham District’s Local Plan is the overarching planning document for Horsham district outside the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and replaces the Core Strategy and General Development Control Policies documents which were adopted in 2007. This document was adopted in November 2015 and sets out the planning strategy for the years up to 2031.

The following policies of the HDPF are considered relevant to this application:

Policy 32 – The Quality of New Development

High quality and inclusive design for all development in the district will be required based on a clear understanding of the local, physical, social, economic, environmental and policy context for development. In particular, development will be expected to:

1. Provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe and adaptable environment;
2. Complement locally distinctive characters and heritage of the district;
3. Contribute a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings and the historic landscape in which they sit;
4. Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses; and
5. Help secure a framework of high quality open spaces which meets the identified needs of the community.

Policy 33 – Development Principles

In order to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment developments shall be required to:

1. Make efficient use of land, and prioritise the use of previously developed land and buildings whilst respecting any constraints that exist;
2. Ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land, for example through overlooking or noise, whilst having regard to the sensitivities of surrounding development;

APPENDIX: LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

3. Ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout and where relevant relates sympathetically with the built surroundings, landscape, open spaces and routes within and adjoining the site, including any impact on the skyline and important views;
4. Are locally distinctive in character, respect the character of the surrounding area (including its overall setting, townscape features, views and green corridors) and, where available and applicable, take account of the recommendations/policies of the relevant Design Statements and Character Assessments;
5. Use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; and includes the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate;
6. Presume in favour of the retention of existing important landscape and natural features, for example trees, hedges, banks and watercourses. Development must relate sympathetically to the local landscape and justify and mitigate against any losses that may occur through the development; and,
7. Ensure buildings and spaces are orientated to gain maximum benefit from sunlight and passive solar energy, unless this conflicts with the character of the surrounding townscape, landscape or topography where it is of good quality.
7. Retain and improves the setting of heritage assets, including views, public rights of way, trees and landscape features, including historic public realm features; and
8. Ensure appropriate archaeological research, investigation, recording and reporting of both above and below-ground archaeology, and retention where required, with any assessment provided as appropriate.

Policy 34 – Cultural and Heritage Assets

The Council recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and as such the Council will sustain and enhance its historic environment through positive management of development affecting heritage assets. Applications for such development will be required to:

1. Make reference to the significance of the asset, including drawing from research and documentation such as the West Sussex Historic Environment Record;
2. Reflect the current best practice guidance produced by English Heritage and Conservation Area Character Statements;
3. Reinforce the special character of the district's historic environment through appropriate siting, scale, form and design; including the use of traditional materials and techniques;
4. Make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area, and ensuring that development in conservation areas is consistent with the special character of those areas;
5. Preserve, and ensure clear legibility of, locally distinctive vernacular building forms and their settings, features, fabric and materials;
6. Secure the viable and sustainable future of heritage assets through continued preservation by uses that are consistent with the significance of the heritage asset;



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