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Heritage Report

The Stables, Holders, Furners Lane, Henfield, BN5 9HX

Statement prepared by Chilcroft Heritage Planning
November 2025



Corporate members of:
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Historic Houses Association
The Georgian Group



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1) INTRODUCTION

- 1.1) I am Haig Dalton, founder of Chilcroft Heritage Planning, an established independent heritage consultancy since 2006. Formerly, I was a local planning authority officer within development control departments. I have worked on a wide range of projects, predominantly (but not exclusively) for private sector clients.
- 1.2) I hold a masters degree in Historic Building Conservation (MSc); a postgraduate qualification in Architectural History from the University of Oxford (Oxon); I am an Affiliate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).
- 1.3) Over the last 20 years I have specialised in the historic environment, both in terms of understanding and analysing physical fabric, and in terms of policy application, specifically by assessing impacts, providing advice and supporting development proposals. My experience includes a diverse range of cases relating to the assessment of physical changes to, and development affecting all manner of heritage assets, and their settings.
- 1.4) I have undertaken numerous impact assessments where I have considered the impacts of new development on the historic environment (dealing with physical impacts, setting, townscape, views and inter-visibility), including dealing with the effects of development on heritage assets in rural contexts.
- 1.5) I have provided expert evidence at appeals, including public inquiries, on behalf of both appellants and local planning authorities.
- 1.6) I understand my role in producing this heritage report; to give objective evidence on matters within my expertise, based on my own independent opinion and uninfluenced by the instructing party, which is co-owned. I confirm that I have stated the facts and matters on which my opinion is based, and that I have not omitted to mention facts or matters that could detract from my conclusions.

- 1.7) I believe that the facts stated within this Heritage Report are true and that the opinions expressed are correct. I have drawn attention to any matters where I consider I lack sufficient information to reach anything other than a provisional conclusion. I have adhered to the standards and duties of the professional bodies I am a member of, and will continue to adhere to those standards.
- 1.8) I was first approached in November 2024, when I was asked to consider the potential for development of the existing site. My assessment was based on several stages/elements, the first of which was an initial case review, including a site visit in December 2024. At my site visit there was still some permeability to the deciduous trees, and I was able to form an impression of the extent of permeability in leafless conditions. I confirm that I am able to act as the applicant's heritage expert following this initial work and a site visit.
- 1.9) As an independent professional, I have formed my own opinions and have come to my own conclusions about the effects of the proposed development.
- 1.10) I have included in my heritage report photos taken on my original site visit. The photos were taken with a compact digital camera and they have not been digitally altered, aside from cropping superfluous areas of sky and/or foreground. This visual assessment is intended to be informative, but it is not intended to be exhaustive.
- 1.11) This statement will describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by the setting, as required by Para.207 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2024). It will assess the significance of the heritage assets by way of Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017) in accordance with their preferred five-step procedure, identify, assess and explore the significance of their setting and consider the applicant's scheme in relation to them.

2) LEGISLATION AND POLICY

- 2.1) Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act place a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.
- 2.2) Section 72 of the Act places similar duty on the decision maker with respect to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, however this does not extend to the setting of conservation areas.
- 2.3) The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** constitutes the Government's current national guidance and policy regarding development in the historic environment. It is a material consideration and includes a succinct policy framework for local planning authorities and decision takers. It relates to planning law by stating that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.4) Paragraph 203 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment with 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."

- 2.5) Annex 2 of the NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset 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."

- 2.6) Paragraph 207 of the NPPF places a duty on the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, providing a proportionate level of detail. The effects of any development on a heritage asset therefore need to be assessed against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interests.
- 2.7) Paragraph 208 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.8) Paragraph 212 states with regard to heritage assets. that great weight should be given to their conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial or less than substantial harm.
- 2.9) Conservation (for heritage policy) is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as:
- “The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.”*
- 2.10) The importance and relevance of this definition is that it does not suggest conservation to be the same as preservation. Indeed, what sets conservation apart is the emphasis on proactively maintaining and managing change and not on a reactive approach to resisting change. In its simplest interpretation conservation could amount to a change that at least sustains the significance of a heritage asset.

- 2.11) Paragraphs 214 to 215 describe two levels of potential harm that can be caused to the significance of designated heritage assets, namely substantial harm and less than substantial harm. These effects are to be weighed in the planning balance according to the guidance set out within the paragraphs, bearing in mind the statutory provisions above. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including grade I and II* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional.
- 2.12) Paragraph 215 deals with cases of less than substantial harm and notes that any such harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Heritage protection and the conservation of heritage assets are recognised as of benefit to the public.
- 2.13) Harm is defined by Historic England as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.14) Paragraph 219 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
- 2.15) **The National Planning Practice Guidance** provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the NPPF. The PPG currently relates to the 2019 version of the NPPF but will be updated in due course to reflect NPPF 2023.
- 2.16) In regards to the setting of heritage assets the PPG notes:

“The setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage.”

2.17) The guidance notes that a thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

2.18) In relation to harm the guidance states:

“Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.”

2.19) Paragraph 020 of the document notes that public benefits can be heritage based and can include:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance and the contribution of its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset; and
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset for the long term.

2.20) The **Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning** Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017) is a document published by Historic England as a second edition in December 2017, replacing the earlier 2015 setting guidance. The document provides for a thorough understanding of the setting of a heritage asset and the relationship of the setting to curtilage, character and context.

2.21) The guidance document notes, in paragraph 18, that the protection of the setting of heritage assets need not prevent change. The document recognises that not all heritage assets are of equal importance and states that the contribution made by their setting to their significance will also vary. Not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without causing harm to the significance of the asset.

2.22) As per earlier Historic England guidance, the document advocates a stepped approach to assessing the impact of change within setting on the significance of heritage assets. This stepped approach is:

Step 1: identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected;

Step 2: assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s);

Step 3: assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance;

Step 4: explore the way to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm; and

Step 5: make and document the decision and monitor outcomes.

2.23) Guidance under Step 2 notes that the asset's physical surroundings and how the asset is experienced (such as views, noise, tranquillity, sense of enclosure etc.) should be taken in to consideration.

2.24) Step 3 is also important in making it clear that a proposed development should not be assessed in terms of its impact on setting; instead it should be assessed in terms of the impacts on significance. That is to say, what matters is not the extent of visibility of the development or change to the setting of an asset, but the extent of change to its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest. In some circumstances, this evaluation may need to extend to cumulative and complex impacts which may have as great an effect on heritage

assets as large-scale development and which may not only be visual. At the very least the assessment should address the key attributes of the development in terms of its location and siting, form and appearance, additional effects and permanence.

- 2.25) Paragraph 39 notes that options for reducing the harm arising from development may include the relocation of elements of a development or changes to its design. It notes that good design may reduce or remove the harm.
- 2.26) **Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** requires great weight to be given to preserving the setting of a heritage asset. In *Jones v Mordue [2015] EWCA Civ 1243* the court confirmed that if the decision-maker has worked through the relevant heritage paragraphs in the NPPF, they will have complied with the s66 duty.
- 2.27) In *Barnwell Manor [2014] EWCA Civ 137* the court confirmed that great weight should be attached to the desirability of preserving the setting of a heritage asset.

3) ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1) The proposed site is situated in a rural environment to the east of Henfield with vehicular access from Furners Lane to the north. To the west of the proposed site sits the dwelling of Holders, which abuts the western boundary of the proposed site.
- 3.2) The proposed site is partly self-contained within existing hedgerows, trees and timber fencing and further landscaping is proposed along the western boundary between Holders and the existing stable block, to provide additional screening between the two.
- 3.3) To the north and east of the proposed site, a number of dwellings share the setting. Bylsborough to the north of Furners Lane dates from the 17th Century together with its associated former curtilage outbuildings and cottages, comprising four Grade II listed buildings. Set back from the frontage of Furners Lane, there is no awareness between them and the proposed site. To the east of the proposed site sits the semi-detached Bilsborough Farm, a Victorian brick built two storey building, present at the time of the 1897 tithe map.
- 3.4) Holders is a Grade II listed building (**List No. 1183096**) and was formerly a smallholding tenanted property. The original cottage dates from the 16th Century and is constructed from a timber frame with curved braces on the first floor, brick infill with a plaster finish and modern casement windows. The dwelling is set over two storeys with the now principal elevation facing east. Historically, a public footpath connected the dwelling with what was originally the principal elevation on the western side, being later changed in the late 20th Century when the building was restored and a large two storey extension added to the north side. This former western access is found on the tithe maps with a rear facing yard and well in what was then the rear of the cottage to the eastern side (**see Fig 1**). The subsequent late 20th Century extension and remodelling has given a formality to the eastern elevation that was not historically the case, with a central porch. The historic curtilage has been enlarged further eastwards giving more space to what is now the frontage of the listed building, providing it with greater opportunity for appreciation (**see Fig 3**).

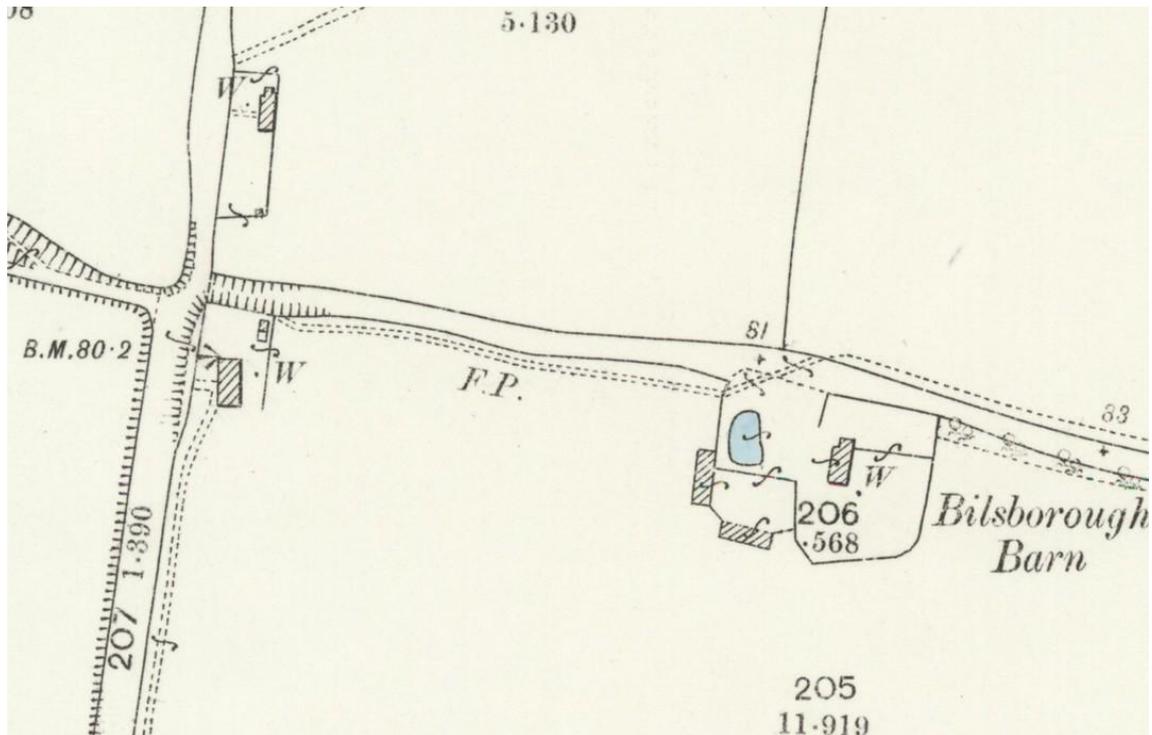


Fig 1: Holders sits directly to the south-east of the junction on Furners Lane with the Victorian Bilsborough Barn further to the east. A footpath historically connected the front of Holders what was then its western elevation. The proposed site forms what was once at the rear of the cottage, altered in the late 20th Century.

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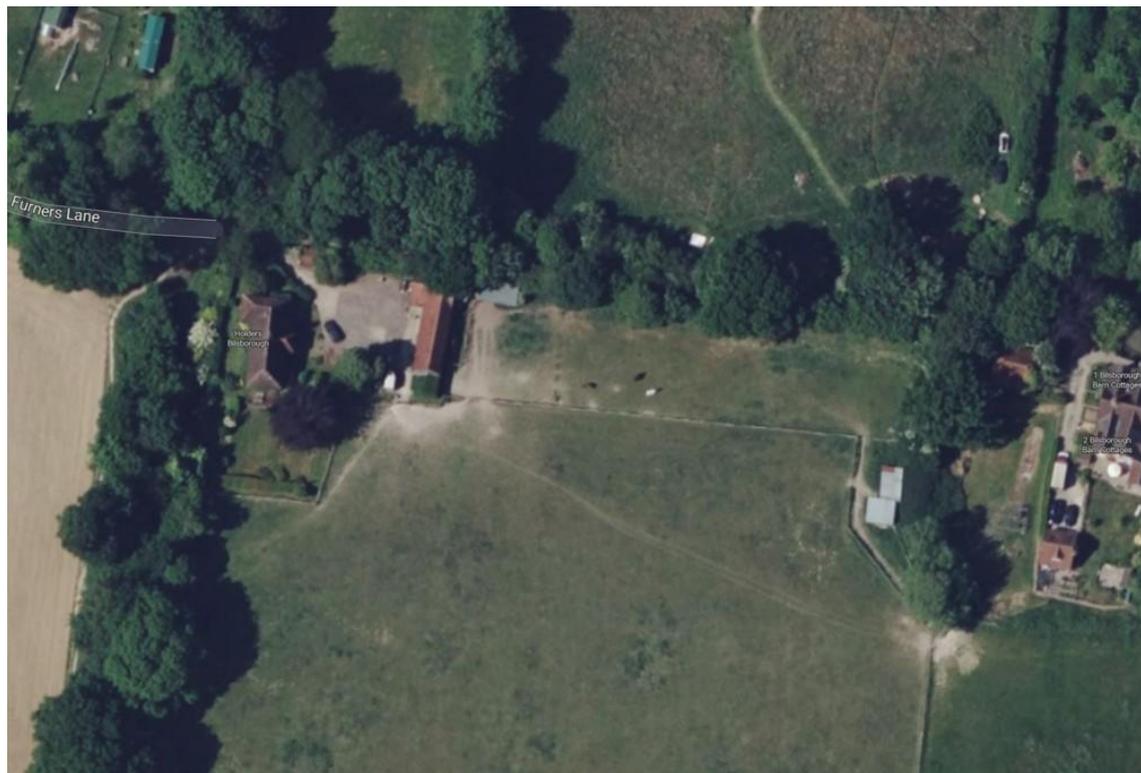


Fig 2: In the late 20th Century, Holders was extended and its principal elevation reversed to face east. The curtilage to the east was enlarged and set back from the cottage, with a substantial stable block placed there.

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- 3.5) The dwelling is accessed via a driveway to the northern side of its curtilage, leading from Furners Lane. Historically when built, Holders was situated alone in the landscape until the 17th Century, without the additional buildings that later evolved around it. From an examination of the tithe maps, the proposed site of the existing stable block remained undeveloped until the 1980's.
- 3.6) Unlike a historic farmstead, the layout of the setting of the former smallholding does not allow for long ranging views over the landscape and wider setting and remains largely insular in nature, as it was historically intended to. Where historically a farmhouse was designed to be at the centre of things and provide a commanding view over its surrounding land and farmstead, the same cannot always be said of a smallholding tenant property, which did not have the same need for this. The former tenant property revolved around functionality, without social trappings or a greater need to work the land. What land there was concentrated to the east and south sides, which remains the case today. Thus the listed building does not depend upon the land beyond for its significance in the same way as a historic farmhouse, for example. The addition of buildings within the setting in later centuries have evolved the setting of the listed building but not altogether harmed it. Historically, the listed building would have been as insular in the landscape as it appears today and despite the subsequent changes, this can still said to be the case.
- 3.7) The significance of Holders is not substantively derived from archaeological or artistic interest, although it does have a degree of aesthetic value. Whilst there is some potential for archaeological interest in the form of evidence of the building's adaptation and use, this is unlikely to be of inherent special interest, or of considerable heritage significance.
- 3.8) The significance of Holders stems primarily from its historic fabric and age. The proposed site is not of historic interest because it was a historically part of a smallholding, but instead because of the listed building's age and its intactness and its role as a link between the past and the present. Nevertheless, as the owner of this land, it is associated with the proposed site. By extension this association with the land beyond the curtilage can therefore be said to contribute to the way in which it is understood.

- 3.9) The dwelling was not internally inspected as part of this report but original or residual historic fabric and features such as chimneypieces, plasterwork, joinery, etc., as well as the plan form, will all contribute to its significance. Overall, the building, which is Grade II listed, has both historic and architectural interest, which encompasses its age, its intactness and fabric, and includes its architectural design, including internal features.
- 3.10) The setting of Holders can essentially be divided into the following three distinct ‘character areas’:
- i. Holders and the context of the dwelling, as experienced from the highway of Furners Lane.
 - ii. The well-defined curtilage, which contains a driveway to the east side and the large expanse of lawn that sits beyond the south elevation of the dwelling overlooking open pasture; the curtilage garage outbuilding abutting the northern boundary and a well-defined expanse of lawn to the western side of the dwelling, bounded by established shrubbery and trees.
 - iii. The land east, including the proposed site and existing stable block, which represents the wider rural context beyond the developed area that immediately surrounds the listed building.
- 3.11) **Furners Lane:** This is the area from where the historic dwelling would have been publicly viewed from and the context of this remains exactly unchanged. Where once the building would have been seen as the only dwelling here, it is now joined by a smattering of others to the north and east sides. The appreciation of the listed building and has been no more visible from the public realm in previous centuries, than it is today.

- 3.12) **The well-defined curtilage:** The former tenant property is now a domestic dwelling in its own right, as opposed to the smallholding that it once worked. With large open expanses of lawn, curtilage outbuildings and a driveway entrance to the north-west, the grounds to the listed building remain extensive. The listed building has a generous and well-defined curtilage that is quite separate from the land to the eastern sides, with a clear demarcation in the landscape between the established formal setting of the dwelling and the existing stable block. The dwelling today is clearly not part of a smallholding or with anything associated with a commercial entity. Holders and its setting is now solely for residential use without any broader use. This context was well established when it was listed in 1955.
- 3.13) It is from within its curtilage that the present day principal elevation to the east is best appreciated, depicting the frontage of the building and porch entrance. The curtilage between the listed building and existing stable block is defined by a concrete hardstanding which encompasses the additional area of curtilage added to the eastern side of the dwelling in the late 20th Century, which feels somewhat improvised and without clear reasoning. To the south side, the vegetation and an existing fence line provides a partial barrier with views to the land beyond; from where filtered views may be experienced (see Fig 5).
- 3.14) **The land to the east, including the proposed development site:** This is the rural hinterland to Holders. The existing stable block faces west towards the listed building but in truth, feels more associated with the open pasture beyond it to the east and south sides. This land historically formed part of the smallholding and the overall design and material finish of the existing stable block is consistent with this. As the historic owner of this land, there is therefore a link with the listed building, although in reality such associations are more abstract and academic than something that can be experienced when standing on the ground. This land can however be experienced as linked with Holders albeit it is plain to see that the dwelling does not rely on the land for its significance. Conversely the land beyond, insofar as it can be experienced in a peripheral way, is understood to be part of the historic rural hinterland/context to the dwelling/former tenant property.

- 3.15) There are no important views of the proposed site from the frontage of the listed building, the existing stable block providing a barrier to any long distance views over the land to the east. The layout of the dwelling leaves the main focus of the curtilage centred around those areas that were historically part of the garden of the listed building, regardless of the presence of the existing stable block. Indeed, given the polite formality of the house, it would historically have been kept quite separate from the less salubrious smallholding activities.
- 3.16) Given the proximity of the existing stable block, you are aware of it when standing in the curtilage and from the vehicular access from Furners Lane (see **Fig 8**) as well as from its surrounding pasture land. It is an established building within the landscape but one that does not appear dominant in relation to the listed building that it sits beside. The presence of this building is not considered to have harmed the setting of the listed building or diminished the way in which it is best appreciated and understood within the context of a former tenant smallholding.
- 3.17) Overall, the proposed site plays a peripheral, albeit positive, role in the setting of Holders as part of the historic rural hinterland/context to the former tenant property, with a degree of associative interest. It is peripheral in the sense that it lies beyond the historic curtilage, in land once at the rear of the dwelling, with a lower sense of association. In terms of how it contributes to the significance of the listed building, it plays a lesser role. Nevertheless, it remains a sensitive part of the setting of the heritage asset.
- 3.18) The proposed site contains an existing late 20th Century stable block that is now well established, with an existing separate vehicular access that hugs the northern boundary. Although the presence of this building represents an evolution of the site as part of the setting of the listed building, it is not harmful to it and remains of a subservient form in terms of its design, size and overall material form.
- 3.19) The existing stable block, which is not a heritage asset, may offer an opportunity for improvement, subject to appropriate design.



Fig 3: The proposed site sits east of the cottage of Holders, a Grade II listed building. The east elevation shown here now forms the principal elevation, reversed from the western side in the late 20th Century.

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Fig 4: The proposed site contains an existing stable block that sits further to the eastern boundary of the historic curtilage of Holders. The proposal would see the existing building converted and extended for residential use.

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Fig 5: The view from the frontage of Holders with views overlooking open pasture land to the south-east. The proposal represents a measured approach and will preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building.

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Fig 6: The proposal will see vehicular access made from the eastern side of the stable block, ensuring that the outlook from the listed building is preserved and thoughtful landscaping boundary treatments added.

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Fig 7: The existing stable block would be converted for residential use and has been designed with care at our instigation to preserve the setting of the listed building, with an appropriate design and use of materials.

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Fig 8: The existing ridge height would be maintained and the building would not be brought closer to the listed building, to ensure its subservience. Landscaping would be added here to reduce awareness between the two.

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Fig 9: The rear of the stables to the east side would become the principal elevation of the new dwelling, with no awareness from the listed building. A timber clad garage would replace the existing field shelter.

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Fig 10: The proposed design would utilise the existing materials of the stable block. Dormer windows would be placed on the east side with conservation rooflights to the west, to prevent overlooking of the listed building.

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4) IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 4.1) The proposal would see the existing stable block converted and extended for residential use to provide a detached dwelling, with separate vehicular access to the east side off of Furners Lane. An assessment of the significance was led by us as historic building specialists and carried out in the presence of the architectural designer before any design work was initiated. The design here before you represents the conclusions of that assessment and has been worked up around the need to preserve and enhance the setting of the listed building.
- 4.2) The western elevation of the existing stable block is the most sensitive in terms of its outlook and proximity to the listed building. Care has been taken to utilise existing door and window openings, without the need to fundamentally alter the traditional appearance of the building, thus avoiding the need to add additional features more associated with domestic use. At first floor level, the design will use conservation rooflights which is considered to have a neutral impact and be in keeping with the setting of the listed building. The overall scale, bulk and mass of the building will remain broadly the same and where extensions are proposed, they relate to the replacement of an existing side extension and field shelter that are of no merit and capable of replacement. On balance, the proposed design is considered to be measured and does not attempt to push beyond a comfortable scope of development. The use of materials will reflect the existing outbuilding and is in keeping with the countryside setting. The additional landscaping between the proposed site and listed building will soften awareness of the existing stables which is likely to enhance the outlook from Holders, with the new boundary treatment well set back from its frontage. The proposal would be of a design and material quality that preserves the setting of the Grade II listed building and its appreciation.
- 4.3) The greatest changes would be focused to the eastern side of the existing stable block from where there is little to no awareness from the listed building, with vehicular access from this side via a separate access, keeping associated residential paraphernalia largely self-contained. From the historic curtilage areas of Holders itself, the south-easterly outlook over open pasture would remain unchanged, preserving the setting of the listed building.

5) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 5.1) The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 contains a statutory duty to give considerable importance and great weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building in the planning balance. Preserving means to do no harm.
- 5.2) The NPPF lays down an approach that corresponds with the statutory duty of the 1990 Act. In cases where harm occurs, the NPPF requires balancing the benefits of a proposal against harm resulting from it.
- 5.3) The Horsham District Council's adopted Development Plan policies require development proposals to conserve heritage assets (such as listed buildings), and their settings.
- 5.4) The guidance in Historic England's GPA3 provides a framework for considering and assessing effects on the setting of heritage assets.

Conclusions

- 5.5) The proposed design is respectful of the setting of the listed building and does not attempt to push beyond a comfortable scope of development.
- 5.6) The proposal would remain subservient and would utilise existing doors and windows without the need to overdevelop the existing stable block. Where extended, it would improve upon existing poor quality structures of no merit.
- 5.7) The proposal is of a design and material quality that would preserve the setting of the listed building. It is proportionate in relation to its scale, bulk and mass and would focus the most notable changes furthest from the listed building.
- 5.8) The proposal would enhance the modern day frontage of the listed building and appreciation from its driveway access off of Furners Lane. The boundary treatments would soften the awareness of the existing stable block building.

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