

MME PLANNING SERVICES

Erection of a Forestry Building / Barn.

at

Redlands Farm, Rock Road, Washington, Pulborough,
West Sussex, RH20 3BQ

Planning Statement

Ref: P-037a

September 2025

Version 1

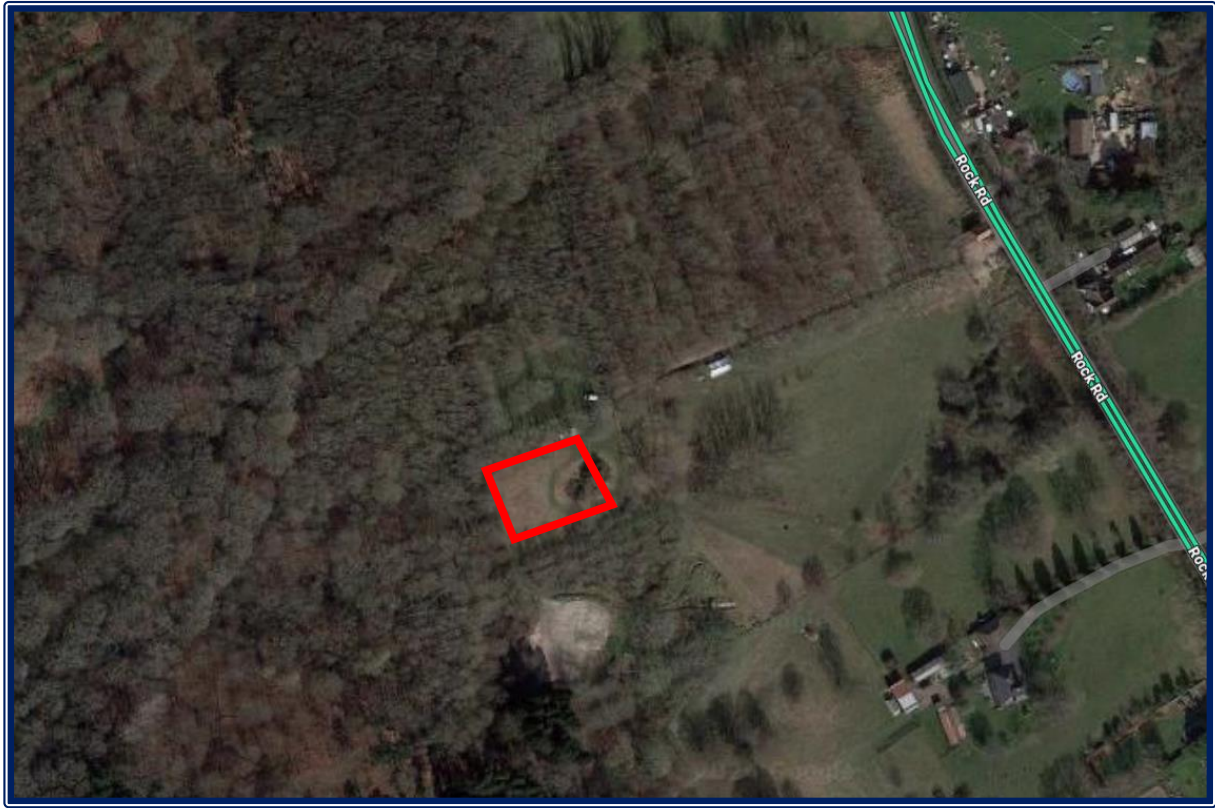


Figure 1: Site Location

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 MME Planning Services is instructed to submit an application for the erection of a Forestry Building / Barn at Redlands Farm, Rock Road, Washington, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 3BQ.
- 1.2 This statement sets out the proposed scheme in detail with regard to the following aspects: the planning history of the site, the development proposals, the relevant planning policy, the planning merits of the scheme and how the proposals comply with the Council's policies.
- 1.3 It is noted that this application is submitted following a recent application for an almost identical barn in the same location. That application, reference number DC/24/1892, was made under Schedule 2, Part 6 (Agricultural and Forestry), Class E (Forestry Developments) of the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) (England) (2015), as amended. The Council confirmed that Prior Approval was Required and Permitted for this application (decision date January 2025). The only difference between the previous approval and the current application is the overall height of the building which has been increased by 1m, giving a total height of 4m to the ridge

2. Site, Surroundings, Background

- 2.1 The application site is located on the western side of Rock Road, outside of any defined built-up area. The site is therefore located within a countryside location in policy terms. The site consists of fields, nursery amenity trees to the north and wild trees to the west. The site is served via an existing access from Rock Road to the east.
- 2.2 The surrounding area consists of sporadic development and fields which are bounded and divided by hedgerows and agricultural tracks. The site holding extends to some 7ha and it is noted that there was previously a building located on site in a similar location to that of the proposed barn, as evident on the title deed plan below.

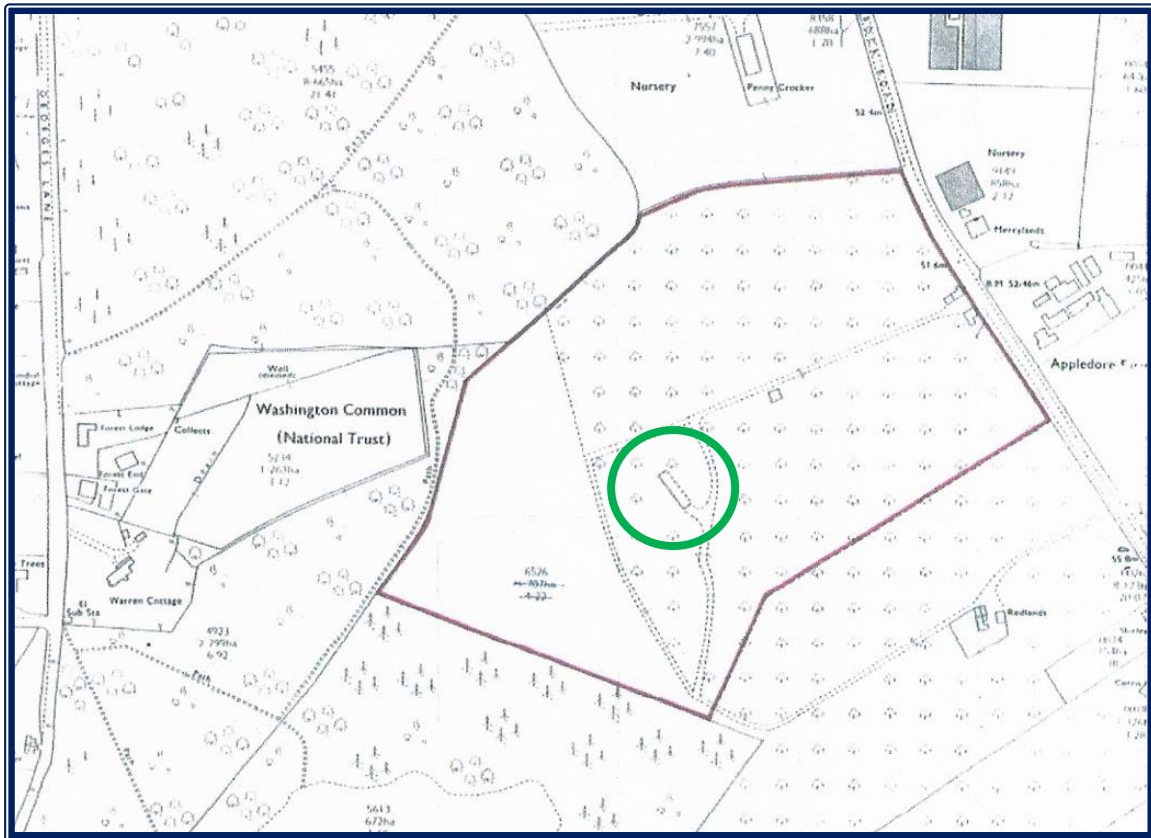


Figure 2: Location of a building previously located on site on Green

- 2.3 As detailed above, this application is submitted following a recent approval earlier this year for a similar scheme under planning reference DC/24/1892. Within this approval it was confirmed that the building is intended to be used as a forestry building / barn in connection with forestry operations. The need for the building was accepted and approved by the Council.
- 2.4 In terms of background and context, it is highlighted that approximately 3,000 nursery trees were planted in 1990. The applicant / applicant's wife was previously granted a felling licence in 2014 which subsequently expired in 2017. The applicant has previously felled the nursery trees on site and is intending to do this on a regular basis, felling the trees and replanting over a period of 3-5 years. The felled trees are used as amenity trees and sold with root ball and not as timber.
- 2.5 The applicant has applied for and been granted a new felling licence for the site by the Forestry Commission (November 2024) which is included with this application. The felling licence is for a period of five years.

- 2.6 The applicant has a number and wide variety of machinery and tools which are currently stored off-site and have been for some time. The proposed forestry building / barn would be used to store this machinery and tools to be used in connection with the forestry activities. The applicants' tools and machinery consist of the following; New Holland tractor, Massey Ferguson tractor with bucket and back actor, post hole bore for pro tractors, Power Roller 5 tonnes, Cultivator, 5 chain saws, Long reach chain saw, Topper and various other power tools.
- 2.7 All of the machinery and equipment are of appropriate size to fit within the proposed building / barn. The machinery and equipment is currently located at various locations off-site, including at the applicants' residential address and other locations within the surrounding area.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Prior Notification Application – Ref: DC/22/0921 – Description: Prior notification for the erection of 2no dry storage buildings – Decision: Prior Approval Required and Refused, 26/07/2022.
- 3.2 Prior Notification Application – Ref: DC/24/1892 – Description: Prior notification for the erection of a forestry building / barn – Decision: Prior Approval Required and Permitted, 27/01/2025.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 As detailed above, the proposals relate to the erection of a forestry building / barn to be used in connection with the forestry operations / felling of existing trees on the holding. The proposed building would measure approximately 25m by 18m and would have a maximum height of 4m. The machinery and equipment to be stored in the building are of an appropriate size and number to fit within the proposed forestry building / barn.
- 4.2 The proposed modest increase in height when compared to the previous approval under planning reference DC/24/1892 would merely allow for additional space and manoeuvrability within the building.

- 4.3 The proposed barn would consist of galvanised metal profile sheeting making up the external walls and roof finished in juniper green with 1no roller shutter door and 1no pedestrian access door. The proposed barn would be used for the secure storage of machinery and equipment and dry storage in relation to the felling and management of the trees on site.

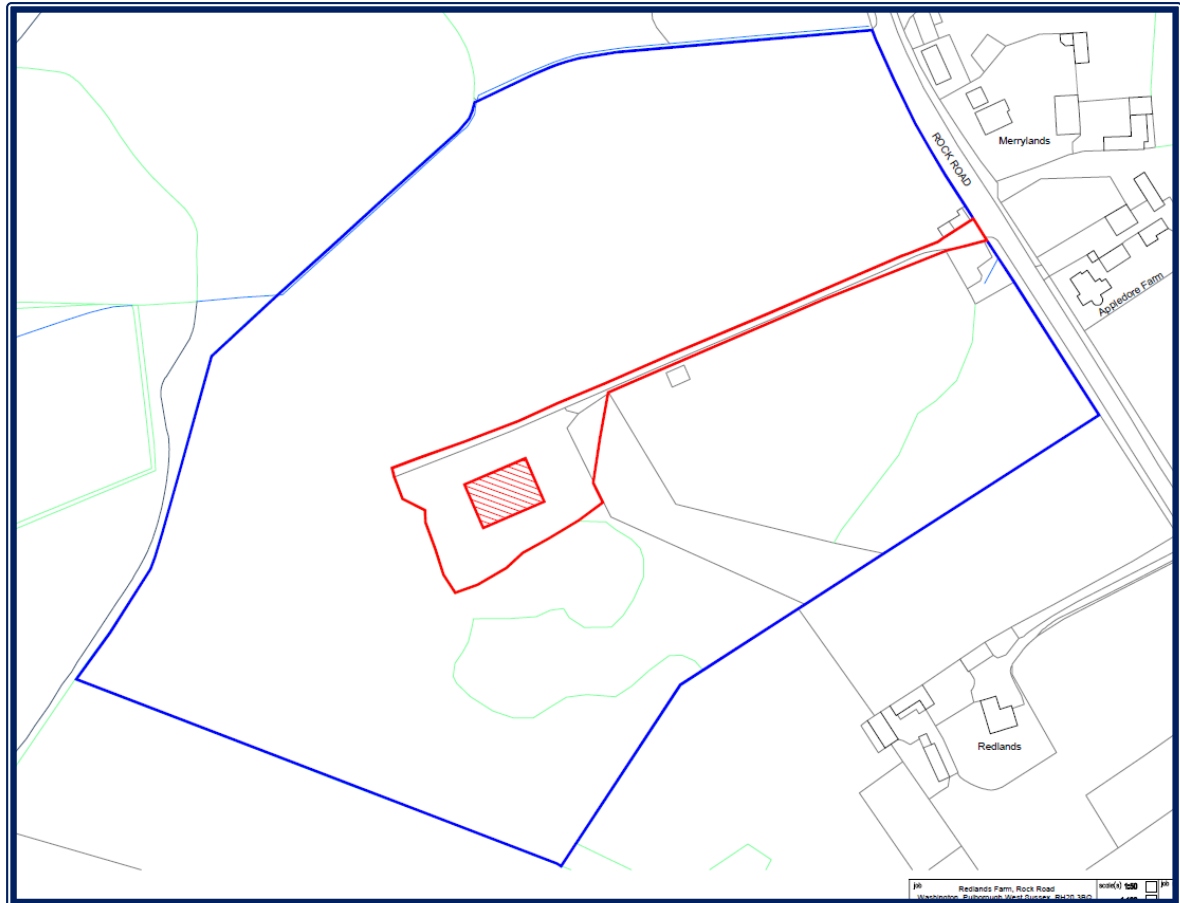


Figure 3: Proposed Location / Block Plan showing location of proposed building / barn.

- 4.4 The barn is of a typical appearance with a functional and utilitarian design which is considered to be common in this rural setting and commensurate with other examples within the immediate vicinity. As set out at paragraph 2.2, the proposed forestry building / barn would be sited in the location of a building that was previously present on site.

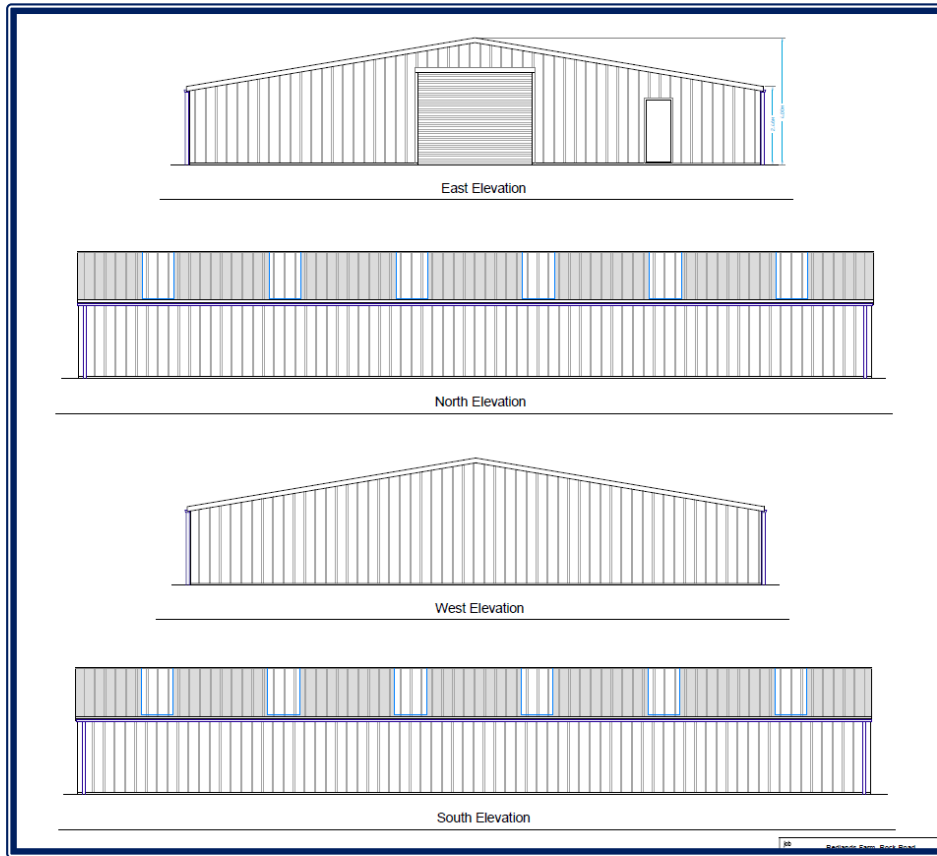


Figure 4: Proposed Elevations

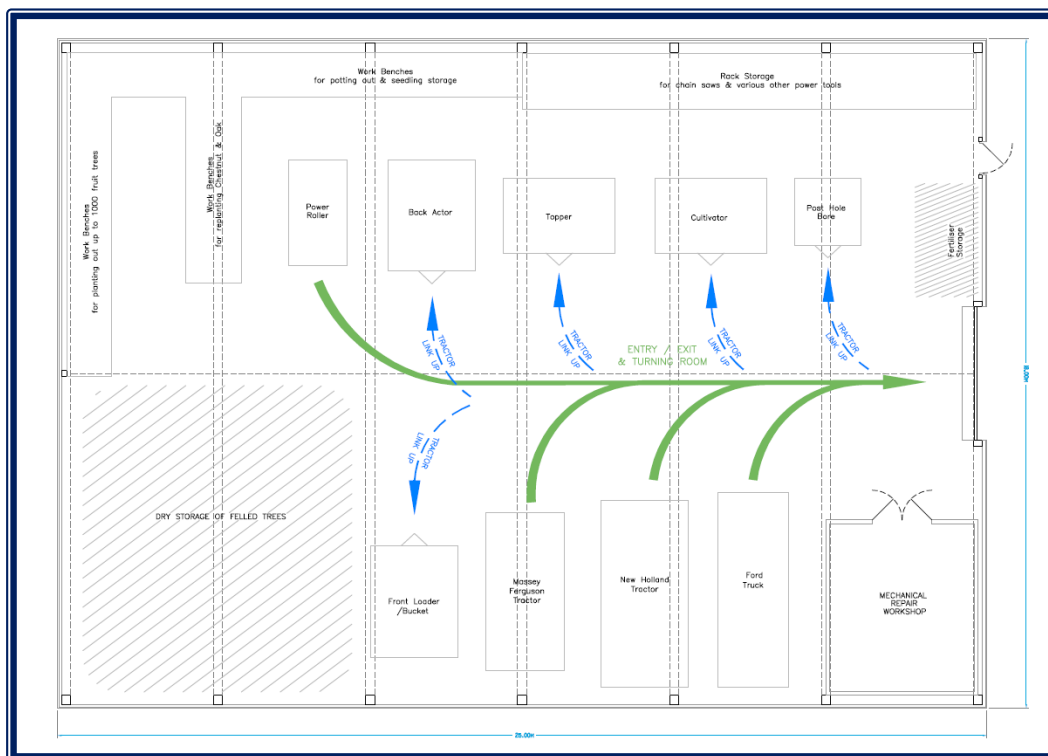


Figure 5: Proposed Floor Plan

- 4.5 The applicant intends to plant a significant number of fruit trees (up to 1,000) on the site with the intention to establish a Forestry / Horticultural holding. In addition, the applicant is intending to purchase additional equipment to be stored in the building. Space is also required within the building for potting out, planting, propagation and the growing of saplings to a healthy state before planting out on site. Following the granting of the new felling licence and hopefully approval for the proposed barn, the site will be formally registered for Forestry / Horticultural / Agricultural purposes.

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) and National Guidance

- 5.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework for the preparation of local plans for housing and other development. The NPPF should be read as a whole.
- 5.2 Running throughout the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is achieved through three main objectives which are – economic, social and environmental.
- 5.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or, any adverse impact of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole (NPPF paragraph 11 (d)).

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 5.4 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council has submitted its new local plan for examination, however at this stage, the emerging policies carry little to no weight in decision making.

5.5 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in February 2025 by the Council. The LDS sets out the production timetable for the New Local Plan anticipated to be adopted in April 2026. Notwithstanding the above, as the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for determining this application are now considered to be 'out-of-date'. This position is further highlighted given that the Horsham District Local Plan examination hearing meetings scheduled for January 2025 were cancelled by the appointed Inspector, and in April 2025 advised that the Plan is withdrawn due to concerns about its legal compliance. It is understood that the Council is preparing to withdraw the New Local Plan.

5.6 While considered to be out of date, the main HDPF policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
- Policy 29 - Equestrian Development
- Policy 30 - Protected Landscapes
- Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33 - Development Principles
- Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 – Parking

Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan (2019)

5.7 While also considered to be out of date, the Neighbourhood Plan policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Policy 1 A Spatial Plan for the Parishes
- Policy 8 Countryside Protection
- Policy 14 Design
- Policy 15 Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 17 Traffic and Transport

Planning Advice Note(s) (PAN)

5.8 Relevant PAN's to this application are as follows:

- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

6. Planning Considerations

Principle / Need

6.1 Policy 26 of the HDPF states that –

“Outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development. Any proposal must be essential to its countryside location, and in addition meet one of the following criteria: support the needs of agriculture or forestry; enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste; provide for quiet informal recreational use; or enable the sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, proposals must be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. Development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the level of overall activity in the countryside, and protects, and/or conserves, and /or enhances the key features and characteristics of the landscape character area in which it is located.”

6.2 As detailed above the building would be used in association with forestry / horticultural activities on site. In addition, the principle of a very similar forestry building has already been established under recent prior approval application, reference number DC/24/1892, where the Council considered the need for the building to be justified. The previous approval represents a viable and realistic fall-back position in the event that this application is refused.

6.3 Taking the above into account, it is considered that in this context, a building of this type would be reasonably necessary and expected and would therefore be essential in this countryside location.

Design, Appearance, and Impact on the Setting

6.4 Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the District, including the landform, development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats. Development will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance landscape and townscape character, taking account of areas or features identified as being of landscape importance, individual settlement characteristics and settlement separation. In addition, development will be supported where it maintains and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network.

- 6.5 Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF require development to be of a high standard of design and layout. Development proposals must be locally distinctive in character and respect the character of their surroundings. Where relevant, the scale, massing and appearance of development will be required to relate sympathetically with its built-surroundings, landscape, open spaces and to consider any impact on the skyline and important views.
- 6.6 The proposed barn would be of a typical design for such buildings in a countryside location. As detailed above, the proposed forestry building / barn would be sited in the location of a building which was previously present on site. The proposed barn would be located approximately 190m away from the public highway at Rock Road to the east. The proposed barn would consist of galvanised metal profile sheeting in a juniper green colour to the external walls and roof and would be of a utilitarian, modern barn design.
- 6.7 Given the location of the proposed barn and distance maintained to the public road, the design and materials to be used, it is considered that the resulting building would be of an appropriate appearance and would reflect the rural character and vernacular of buildings within the countryside location.
- 6.8 In addition to the above, it is noted that the wider site / holding adjoins the South Downs National Park (SDNP). Policy 30 of the HDPF states that –
- “The natural beauty and public enjoyment of the High Weald AONB and the adjoining South Downs National Park will be conserved and enhanced and opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities will be promoted. Development proposals will be supported in or close to protected landscapes where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts to the natural beauty and public enjoyment of these landscapes as well as any relevant cross boundary linkages”.
- 6.9 Given the overall height and design of the proposed building, its use, and the extensive soft landscaping surrounding the site, it is considered that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the setting of the SDNP.
- 6.10 Overall, the proposals would represent appropriate development within this countryside setting and would be in accordance with Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Water Neutrality

- 6.11 The application site falls within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone as defined by Natural England which draws its water supply from groundwater abstraction at Hardham. Natural England has issued a Position Statement for applications within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone which states that it cannot be concluded with the required degree of certainty that new development in this zone would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Arun Valley SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites.
- 6.12 Natural England advises that plans and projects affecting sites where an existing adverse effect is known will be required to demonstrate, with sufficient certainty, that they will not contribute further to an existing adverse effect. The received advice note advises that the matter of water neutrality should be addressed in assessments to agree and ensure that water use is offset for all new developments within the Sussex North Water Supply Zone.
- 6.13 The application is supported by a detailed Water Neutrality Statement which sets out through the provision of rainwater harvesting using the roof areas of the proposed building, that the proposed development would be water neutral. Full details are set out within the Water Neutrality Statement and are not repeated in this statement to avoid duplication of the information.
- 6.14 As such, the grant of planning permission would not therefore adversely affect the integrity of these sites or otherwise conflict with Policy 31 of the HDPF, NPPF paragraph 180 and the Council's obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Neighbouring Amenity

- 6.15 Policy 33 of the HDPF states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.
- 6.16 The application site is located some distance from residential properties, with the nearest dwelling located approximately 145m to the south-east and separated by existing extensive soft landscaping. Given this spatial context, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in adverse harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties through loss of outlook, loss of light or privacy.

- 6.17 In addition, given the nature of the use of the building and its scale, it is not considered that there would be a marked increase in noise or activities which would have a detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity, or which would be unexpected in this location.

Parking and Highways

- 6.18 Policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF requires that development provides safe and suitable access and adequate parking and facilities to meet the needs of anticipated users, with consideration given to the needs of cycle parking, motorcycle parking and electric/low emission vehicles.
- 6.19 No alterations are proposed to the existing vehicular access arrangement, with the site served by an existing access from Rock Road to the east. Given the nature of the proposals, it is not anticipated that the proposal would give rise to a material intensification of use of the existing access point.
- 6.20 Therefore, there are no transport grounds to resist the proposal and the application would be in accordance with the above policies.

Ecological and Biodiversity Considerations / Enhancements

- 6.21 Policy 31 of the HDPF states that –
- “Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and/or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks”.
- 6.22 The application is supported by a detailed Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA). The PEA sets out recommendations and mitigation measures to ensure that there would be no detrimental impact on any protected species or habitats. The applicant would be happy to agree to suitable conditions to cover these requirements.

- 6.23 The application is also supported by the small sites Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric and a BNG report which shows that the proposals would deliver measurable BNG (minimum 10%). As such, the submitted details provided show that the proposed development would be in accordance with Policy 31 of the HDPF.

7. Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1 Overall, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development within the countryside setting which would be reasonably required and essential within this location. The proposals would be acceptable in terms of design and impact on the setting, and would not appear prominently within this context given the materials to be used and extensive soft landscaping within and around the site.
- 7.2 It has been demonstrated that the proposed use would be commensurate with this countryside location and would be typical of other developments permitted by the Council. The proposal would be in accordance with Policies 25, 26, 32 and 33 of the HDPF and therefore, the Local Planning Authority is respectfully asked to grant permission accordingly.