



APPLICATIONS & APPEALS SERVICES

**TAINTFIELD FARM, KINGS LANE OFF KENT
STREET, COWFOLD, WEST SUSSEX, RH13 8BD**

**SUPPORTING PLANNING, HERITAGE & DESIGN
AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

APRIL 2026



CONTENTS	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. PHYSICAL CONTEXT & PLANNING HISTORY	3
3. THE PROPOSAL	7
4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	10
5. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL: USE, AMOUNT & SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT	17
6. LAYOUT, DESIGN & APPEARANCE	20
7. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	26
8. ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS	29
9. CONCLUSION	30

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing stable block into an open plan office and a former storage barn to be used as a garage at Taintfield Farm, Kings Lane off Kent Street, Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8BD.

1.2 The details of the proposals will be described and appraised having regard to the following aspects:

- **Physical Context** – explains the physical context of the site and its surroundings;
- **Planning Context** – the planning history of the site and broad policy requirements;
- **Use** – the purpose of the proposals;
- **Amount** – the extent of development on the site;
- **Scale** – the physical size of the development;
- **Layout** – the relationship of the proposals to neighbouring properties;
- **Appearance** – details of materials, style and impact upon the visual amenities of the area;

- **Landscape** – impact of the proposal on the existing landscape;
- **Access** – access to the development and parking provision.

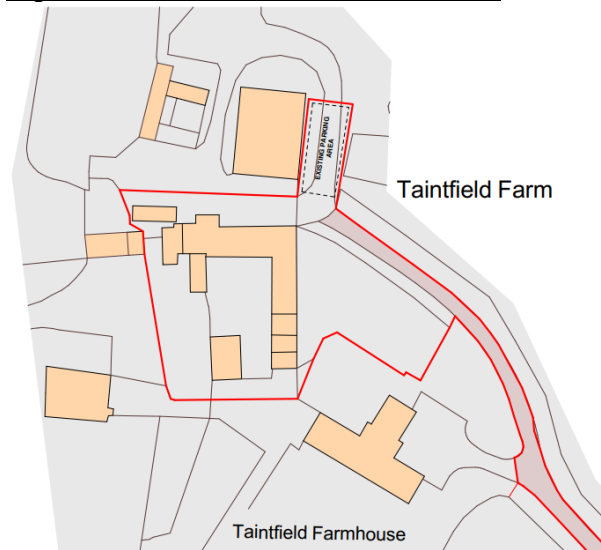
1.3 The Council is requested to consider this Statement alongside the submitted plans and this demonstration that the proposed development accords with the relevant planning policies and is acceptable in all respects. It is hoped that the Council will support the proposal and grant planning permission.

2. PHYSICAL CONTEXT & PLANNING HISTORY

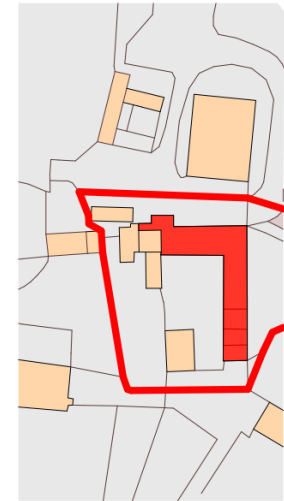
Physical Context

- 2.1 The application site comprises an area of 0.29ha and forms part of the wider Taintfield Farm site. It currently consists of a disused L-shape stable block and barn structure located around a courtyard, the buildings are situated to the northwest of Tanyard Farmhouse and are in poor condition. The locations of these buildings are shown on Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Site Location and ID Plans



Existing Store Location



Existing Stables Location

Source: Phillips Surveyors (2026)

- 2.2 The wider site includes other buildings namely storage facilities along with residential accommodation. None of these buildings are the subject of this application.
- 2.3 Taintfield Farm is located on the north side of Kings Lane, to the east of the village of Cowfold and to the south of the A272. The site can be accessed via Kings Lane to the south of the site.

Figure 2.2: Existing Site Photographs



Existing Stables From Courtyard



Existing Stables From North View



Existing Stables From Courtyard



Internal View of Stables



Existing Storage Barn

Source: NJA Town Planning Ltd (2025)

- 2.4 The application site is outside of the built-up area boundary and is therefore considered to be within the countryside for policy assessment.
- 2.5 The site is not subject to any environmental designations for its landscape or ecological value. There are some existing trees on the site, none of which would be impacted as part of the proposal. It is wholly located in Flood Zone 1.

2.6 Lydford Farmhouse is Grade II listed (list entry number: 1193164) and is located approximately 25 metres to the west of the site. It is a C16th two storey timber framed house.

Planning History

2.7 From a review of the Horsham Council Online Planning Register the below planning applications are relevant to the wider Taintfield Farm site:

- DC/25/0639 - Continued use of land for open storage purposes. Permitted June 2025.
- DC/07/2579 - Conversion of an existing barn to grooms/farm workers accommodation. Permitted May 2008.
- DC/04/2732 – Retention of a dwellinghouse (LDC). LDC issued May 2005.
- CF/20/95 – Attached garage and access. Permitted August 1995.

- CF/29/94 – First floor extension and alterations.
Permitted May 1994.
- CF/5/54 – Pair of agricultural workers bungalows.
Permitted August 1954.

2.8 Two recent planning applications have been submitted on the wider site. First to regularise the use of the northern area for open storage. Secondly, for the construction of a holiday let following the demolition of further stabling. These applications have not yet been determined by the Council.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is for the conversion of the existing stable block into an open plan office and a former storage barn to be used as a garage.
- 3.2 The existing stabling is 200m² (GIA) and forms an L-shape structure, it has been disused for a number of years and is in poor condition. The proposal would utilise the historic floorplan of the stables and restore the historic fabric of the building. The southern most block of three stables would be retained as stables.
- 3.3 The external brick walls of the building would remain largely unchanged, and the existing cement sheet roof would be replaced with a new slate roof. The windows would be replaced with PPCA double glazed windows and the existing stable doors are proposed to be replaced with hardwood doors. Two openings on the north elevation are proposed to be infilled with matching brickwork, and new doors and windows would be introduced. Figure 3.1 overpage provides the proposed elevations for the open plan office.

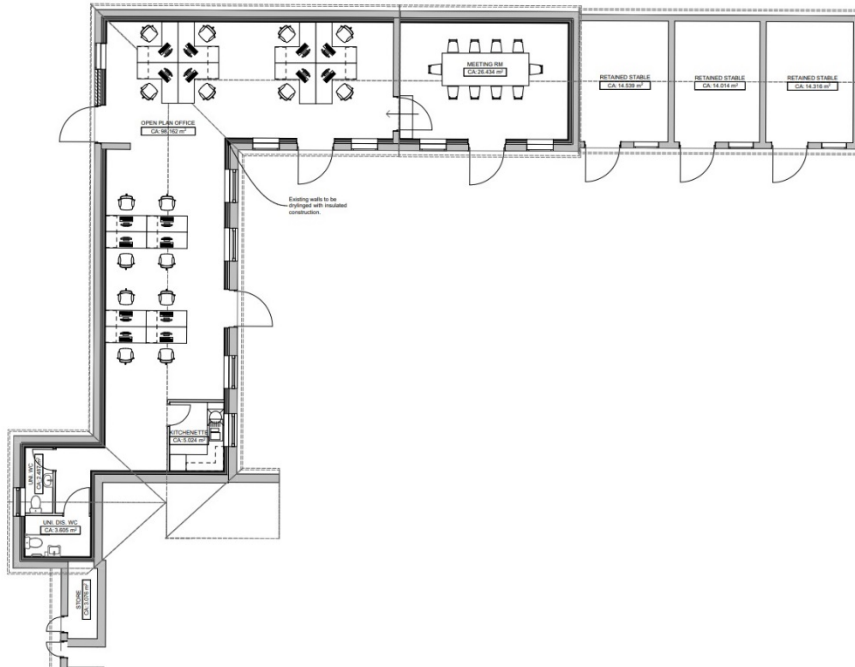
Figure 3.1: Proposed Office Elevations



Source: Philips Surveyors (2025)

- 3.4 Internally, an open plan office would be created along with a meeting room. A kitchenette and bathroom would be provided in the southwest section. The proposed floorplan is provided in Figure 3.2.

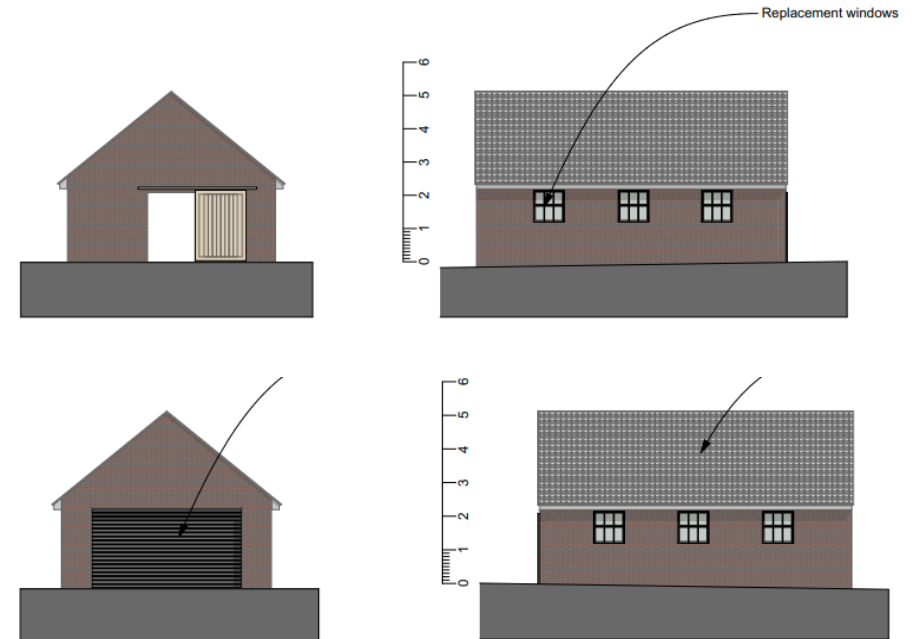
Figure 3.2: Proposed Office Floorplan



Source: Philips Surveyors (2025)

3.5 To the south-west of the stables lies the former storage barn. This barn is 51m² and would be repurposed for use as a single garage. A new roller shutter is proposed to be introduced in the north elevation and the windows would be replaced. The existing concrete roof would be retained. The building is not historic and would not result in any loss of historic fabric. Figure 3.3 below sets out the proposed elevations the garage.

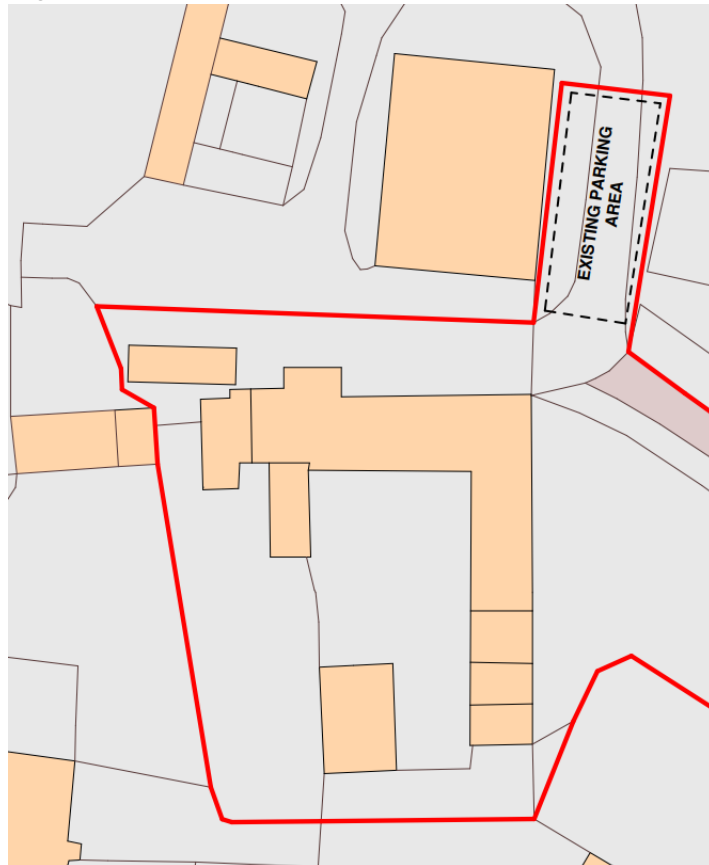
Figure 3.3: Proposed Garage Elevations



Source: Philips Surveyors (2025)

3.6 The existing access via Kings Lane to the east of the site would be retained, as shown on the Site Location Plan. The existing parking area located to the north east of the stables would be provided to the north of the site on an existing area of hardstanding, this is illustrated in Figure 3.4 below.

Figure 3.4: Proposed Block Plan



Source: Philips Surveyors (2026)

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

Sustainable Development

- 4.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and Wales 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.
- 4.2 Paragraph 2 of the NPPF sets out that ***'Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements'***.

- 4.3 Paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has the following three overarching objectives which are independent but need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:

- a) ***'an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;***
- b) ***a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect*** current and future needs and

support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy'.*

4.4 Paragraph 10 states ***'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 11).*** For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

4.5 Paragraph 12 of the Framework states that ***'The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Where a***

planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not normally be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed'.

Plan and Decision Making

4.6 Paragraph 34 requires local plans and spatial development strategies to be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary. In particular, 'Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the future'.

4.7 In terms of decision-making, the Framework states at paragraph 39 that ***'Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a***

positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible'.

Rural Businesses

- 4.8 Paragraph 85 requires planning policies and decisions to help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. In respect of rural areas, paragraph 88 supports ***'the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings'***.
- 4.9 Paragraph 89 recognises that ***'sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in***

locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycle or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist'.

Highways and Car Parking

- 4.10 Paragraph 109 requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. This is to ensure that (inter alia) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed.
- 4.11 Paragraph 112 states that if setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, policies should take into account the accessibility of the development,

its type, mix and use, the availability of land and opportunities for public transport, local car ownership levels and the need to ensure that adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

- 4.12 Paragraph 116 makes it clear that ***'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'***.

Effective Use of Land

- 4.13 Paragraph 124 requires planning policies and decisions to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring healthy living conditions.
- 4.14 Paragraph 125 states that planning policies and decision should encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land. Furthermore, paragraph 128 sets out that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not

allocated for a specific purpose in plans where this would help to meet identified needs.

- 4.15 Paragraph 129 states that ***'Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land.....'***

Design

- 4.16 In terms of design, Section 12 seeks to achieve well designed places sets out that the ***'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'*** (Paragraph 131).
- 4.17 Paragraph 135 further states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping. Development should also be sympathetic to local character and history and should be

designed with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

- 4.18 Paragraph 139 states that ***‘Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:***

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes: and/or***
- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit with the overall form and layout of their surroundings’.***

Climate Change

- 4.19 Paragraph 161 requires the planning system to support the transit to a low carbon future and to taking into account flood risk. New development should be planned in ways which avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change (paragraph 164).

Countryside

- 4.20 Paragraph 187 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural local environment by: (inter alia) ***‘recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside....’.***
- 4.21 Paragraph 189 sets out that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Biodiversity

- 4.22 Paragraph 192 requires the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity. Paragraph 193 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should avoid significant harm to biodiversity which should be adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for. Development should not result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Ground Conditions and Pollution

- 4.23 Paragraph 196 requires planning policies and decisions to ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination. Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner (paragraph 197).
- 4.24 Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on

health, living conditions and the natural environment (paragraph 198).

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

- 4.25 Local planning policy is set out in the Local Plan, the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) adopted was in 2015. The following policies of the HDPF are most relevant to the proposal:

- Policy 1: Sustainable Development
- Policy 2: Strategic Development
- Policy 3: Development Hierarchy
- Policy 4: Settlement Expansion
- Policy 7: Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
- Policy 10: Rural Economic Development
- Policy 24: Environmental Protection
- Policy 25: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 26: Countryside Protection
- Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 32: The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33: Development Principles
- Policy 35: Climate Change

- Policy 36: Appropriate Energy Use
- Policy 37: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy 38: Strategic Policy: Flooding
- Policy 40: Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41: Parking

Emerging Planning Policy

4.26 Public Examination is underway on the Council's emerging Local Plan, at present the emerging Local Plan does not yet represent adopted policy. However, having regard to NPPF paragraph 49, the Council's emerging Local Plan carries some weight at this stage. The following draft policies are noted below as being relevant to the planning application:

- Policy 1: Sustainable Development
- Policy 2: Development Hierarchy and Settlement Expansion
- Policy 3: Settlement Expansion
- Policy 6: Economic Growth
- Policy 8: Rural Economic Development

- Policy 9: Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community and Residential Uses
- Policy 25: Environmental Protection
- Policy 27: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 28: Countryside Protection
- Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 33: Development Quality
- Policy 34: Development Principles
- Policy 37: Climate Change
- Policy 38: Appropriate Energy Use
- Policy 39: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy 42: Sustainable Transport
- Policy 43: Parking

Cowfold Neighbourhood Development Plan

4.27 The Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan was made in November 2024 and proposed to influence and guide development within the Parish over the plan period up to 2031. Policy 14 'Employment' of this Plan is relevant to the proposal and discussed further below.

5. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL: USE, AMOUNT & SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

The Principle of Development

- 5.1 NPPF paragraph 7 states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental (NPPF paragraph 8).
- 5.2 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states '***So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11)***'. Importantly, paragraph 38 of the NPPF states '***Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible***'.
- 5.3 HDPF Policy 1 states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development

contained within the NPPF. Therefore, planning applications that accord with the policies of the HDPF will be approved without delay (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

- 5.4 HDPF Policy 26 states that within the countryside development must be essential to its countryside location and must meet certain criteria. In addition, proposals should be of a scale appropriate to its countryside character and location. The policy also notes that development will be considered acceptable where it does not lead, either individually or cumulatively, to a significant increase in the overall level of 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.
- 5.5 The proposed creation an office will help to enable the sustainable economic development of the rural area in accordance with policy 26. It is on a minor scale and would not lead to any significant increase in the level of activity in the countryside.

- 5.6 Furthermore, the proposal relates to previously developed land and regenerates unsightly structures to create buildings that are of a high-quality design and appearance. As such, there will be a positive impact upon the visual amenities of the countryside landscape.
- 5.7 The proposal complies with HDPF 26 and the NPPF and the principle of development is acceptable given it is compatible with its countryside location and the positive impact of the proposal on the character of the landscape.

Use of Building As Office Space

- 5.8 The NPPF at paragraph 85 requires planning policies and decisions to help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. In respect of rural areas, paragraph 88 supports ***‘the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings’***.
- 5.9 Similarly, HDPF policy 10 supports sustainable rural economic development within the District to help generate

local employment opportunities and economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. In the countryside, policy 10 supports development which maintains the quality and character of the area whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity. Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and should (inter alia) contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in and the enjoyment of the countryside. Development should wherever possible be contained within existing buildings suitable for conversion although new buildings or development may also be acceptable.

- 5.10 Policy 14 ‘Employment’ of the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan states ***“Proposals that enable the development or enhancement of small-scale businesses will be supported where schemes are (inter alia) on previously developed sites and in appropriate sustainable rural locations.”***
- 5.11 The existing stables and barn are incidental to Taintfield Farmhouse and are entirely suitable for conversion to positively contribute to sustaining the local rural economy.

The Council has recognised the importance of providing infrastructure for local remote working in its emerging Local Plan and proposals such as this support the community's ability to do this.

5.12 The proposed open plan office and garage use is small in scale and would not result in a larger footprint of built development on the site. Additionally, the use will not result in any harmful intensification of activity within the countryside.

5.13 It should be acknowledged that NPPF paragraph 85 recognises that ***'sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport'***. Given the small-scale nature of the proposal, the use of the buildings as an office and will not result in harmful unsustainable vehicle movements within the countryside.

6. LAYOUT, DESIGN & APPEARANCE

Design

- 6.1 The NPPF sets out that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Developments should be visually attractive and sympathetic to the local character of the surrounding area and should optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (paragraphs 131 and 135).
- 6.2 HDPF policy 32 requires high quality design for all development in the District. In addition, HDPF Policy 33 sets out the Council's key development control criteria and states that development should make efficient use of land, should not cause harm to neighbouring residential amenities, should be appropriate in scale, massing and appearance and be of a high standard of design. Development should also be locally distinctive in character and should use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping.

- 6.3 Policy 33 sets out "***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;

- 6.4 The proposal makes efficient use of previously developed land and brings buildings into use that are not currently suitable for occupation. The proposal complies with criterion 1.

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;

- 6.5 The buildings are located away from neighbouring properties and there will be no adverse impact caused in respect of any loss of privacy, overbearing appearance or loss of light to

neighbours including to Taintfield Farmhouse and Lydford Farmhouse. The proposal complies with criterion 2.

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;

- 6.6 The appearance of the building will be significantly enhanced from its current state and will benefit the appearance of the area. The office would be of an appropriate scale and mass and would be viewed in context of the other built form on the wider Taintfield Farm site. The building is not located within an isolated countryside position due to forming part of the wider farmyard, as such, there is limited impact upon the rural character and appearance of the area and any changes would be a betterment. The proposal complies with criterion 3.

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;

- 6.7 The proposal does not propose any significant alterations to the external elevations of the building and uses materials that are existing and typical of the rural area. As set out, it is set within other built form and its use will not result in any harmful spread of development within the countryside. The proposal complies with criterion 4.

5. Use high standards of building materials, finishes and landscaping; and includes the provision of street furniture and public art where appropriate;

- 6.8 A range of high-quality building materials are proposed to match the existing. The proposed windows and doors match the existing brickwork, and the slate roof ensures continuity across the site. All materials respect its rural character and there is no conflict with criterion 5.

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;

- 6.9 No trees, hedges, banks or watercourses are affected by the proposal. There is no conflict with criterion 6.

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.

- 6.10 The proposed office would be sufficiently lit by natural light from appropriately positioned and sized windows. The proposal complies with criterion 7.

Proposals will also need to take the following into account where relevant:

Incorporate where appropriate convenient, safe and visually attractive areas for the parking of vehicles and cycles, and the storage of bins/recycling facilities without dominating the development or its surroundings;

- 6.11 The proposal involves using the existing area of hardstanding to the north east of the stables. There is also space for the suitable storage of bins/recycling facilities at the site. The proposal complies with criterion 8.

9. Incorporate measures to reduce any actual or perceived opportunities for crime or antisocial behaviour on the site and in the surrounding area, and create visually attractive frontages where adjoining streets and public spaces, including appropriate windows and doors to assist in the informal surveillance of public amenity areas by occupants of the site;

6.12 The proposed development will provide an appropriate use within a safe and secure building. The close relationship of the offices to buildings on the wider site provides for natural surveillance within the curtilage. The proposal complies with criterion 9.

***10. Contribute to the removal of physical barriers;
and,***

***11. Make a clear distinction between the public
and private spaces within the site.***

6.13 The proposal raises no implications in respect of criteria 10 and 11. Overall it is demonstrated that the proposal complies in full with HDPF Policy 33.

Countryside

6.14 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (inter alia) '***recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside***'.

6.15 HDPF Policy 24 requires the high-quality environment of the District to be protected through the planning process. Policies 25, 32 and 33 of the HDPF promote development that is of a high-quality design, which is sympathetic to the character and distinctiveness of the site and surroundings. The landscape character of the area should be protected, conserved and enhanced, with proposals contributing to a sense of place through appropriate scale, massing and appearance.

6.16 The use of considered materials and no changes to the design, bulk and massing of the buildings ensures that the general character and appearance of the countryside will not be significantly altered as a result of the proposal. There would be no greater visual impact within the landscape, and it would be enhanced by sympathetically updating and protecting the buildings. The wider site is also screened by mature trees, hence there is no further landscaping required in order to protect the countryside.

6.17 In summary, the proposal would result in a very minimal impact to the character and appearance of the area and the high-quality environment is fully protected. The proposal is

therefore fully compliant with NPPF paragraphs 187 and HDPF policies 24, 25, 32 and 33.

Impact on Amenity

- 6.18 HDPF policy 32 states that development will be expected to provide an attractive, functional, accessible, safe, and adaptable environment that contributes to a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves. Policy 33 continues that development shall be required to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land.
- 6.19 The design of the proposed office is open plan and functional and would provide a comfortable working environment for local employees. The proposal would not generate any major noise, the building is located sufficient distance away from neighbouring residential dwellings and there will be no adverse impact caused in respect of any loss of privacy, overbearing appearance or loss of light to neighbours. The proposal would minorly increase the use of the access road however, this is anticipated to be minimal.

- 6.20 Therefore, the proposal would meet the needs of the occupiers and not result in an unacceptable impact on nearby residential neighbours and the requirements of policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF would be fully met as part of the proposal.

Heritage

- 6.21 Section 16 of the NPPF refers to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. The Framework requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting (Paragraph 207). NPPF paragraph 212 sets out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.
- 6.22 Any harm to, or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset (including from development within its setting) will require justification (Paragraph 213). In line with the NPPF, HDPF policy 34 sets out that the Council will sustain and enhance the historic environment through positive

management of development affecting heritage assets. It further requires development proposals to make a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area and ensure that the development is consistent with the special character of those areas.

- 6.23 Lydford Farmhouse is Grade II listed and is located approximately 25 meters west of the site. The Historic England register states:

“L-shaped C16 timber-framed house with plaster infilling, ground floor mainly rebuilt in red brick, south front tile-hung. Horsham slab roof with pentice behind. Gable at east end. Casement windows. Two storeys and attic in gable. Two windows.”

(List Entry Number: 1193164)

- 6.24 A Heritage Report has been prepared by Chilcroft Heritage Planning in support of this application. The assessment concludes overall proposed development would enhance the setting of the listed building and increase its appreciation and its legibility as part of a former farmstead.

- 6.25 Given the former stable block has been in a state of disuse for a significant period the proposal would provide it with a long-term sustainable use, in line with the aims of the NPPF. The proposed design is capable of converting and restoring the existing building without harming the historic fabric and would utilise its historic floorplan. It would also make use of the existing window and door openings and new stud walls would be a reversible intervention.

- 6.26 The proposed changes to the former storage barn into a garage would have a neutral impact and remain consistent with the practical use and appearance of the former farmstead buildings.

- 6.27 As such, no interests of acknowledged importance are harmed as a result of the proposal. It has been demonstrated the proposal complies with the heritage requirements of the NPPF and HDPF policy 34.

7. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 7.1 The NPPF requires that local planning authorities should preserve and enhance biodiversity and that new development should adequately mitigate against any potential harm. The site is not located within any designated landscape, however HDPF Policy 25 protects the landscape and habitats of the district and is relevant to this proposal.

Ecology

- 7.2 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, including a bat Preliminary Roost Assessment, and subsequent Bat Emergence Surveys have been prepared by Arun Ecology Ltd and submitted in support of this planning application. The PEA confirms that the site comprises predominantly developed land with sealed surfaces and buildings, offering limited ecological value and no irreplaceable habitats or Habitats of Principal Importance within the development boundary.
- 7.3 Whilst protected species including bats, nesting birds and great crested newts are identified as potential considerations, the appraisal concludes that the site itself provides limited

suitable habitat and that the risk of significant ecological effects is low, subject to appropriate mitigation and good practice during construction. In particular, the buildings were identified as having low (Building B1) and moderate (Building B2) suitability for roosting bats, necessitating further a survey.

- 7.4 The findings of the Bat Emergence Surveys confirm that no bats were recorded emerging from or re-entering either building during multiple survey visits undertaken in suitable conditions, and bats are therefore considered likely absent from the buildings at the time of survey. Accordingly, the proposed development is reasonably unlikely to result in harm to bats or their roosts and can proceed without adverse effects on this species, subject to standard precautionary measures.
- 7.5 The proposed demolition of the structures and construction of the accommodation will not result in the loss of significant biodiversity and an increase in green infrastructure focusing on native and wildlife enhancing features is proposed. Where practical, bird and bat boxes will be installed.
- 7.6 Overall, it is not considered that the proposal raises any issues in respect of the ecological requirements of the NPPF

and HDPF Policy 25. Importantly there would be no net loss in biodiversity value and thus no conflict with the relevant development plan policies or advice set out in the NPPF addressing biodiversity.

Sustainability

- 7.7 HDPF Policy 35 sets out that development will be supported where it makes a clear contribution to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change and to meet the District's carbon reduction targets. Development must be designed to mitigate the effects of climate change and to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- 7.8 The proposed office conversion has been carefully and specifically designed to ensure that it is environmentally sustainable in its conversion and future occupation.
- 7.9 The accompanying Energy and Sustainability Statement prepared by Blew Burton Ltd demonstrates that the proposal adopts a comprehensive 'fabric first' approach to energy efficiency, exceeding Building Regulations requirements through enhanced insulation and improved U-values across the building envelope. This includes high-performance glazing

and careful attention to airtightness and thermal bridging to minimise heat loss.

- 7.10 Low carbon technologies are incorporated, with heating and cooling to be provided via an air source heat pump system with zoned controls, ensuring energy is used efficiently and only where required. Passive design measures, including optimised glazing for natural daylight, further reduce energy demand, alongside energy-efficient lighting and appliances.
- 7.11 The scheme also demonstrates future adaptability and carbon reduction potential, with provision to incorporate solar photovoltaic panels utilising available roof space. In addition, the development promotes wider sustainability through water efficiency measures (achieving significant reductions in consumption), permeable surfacing for sustainable drainage, responsible material sourcing, and provision for electric vehicle charging.
- 7.12 Overall, the proposal goes beyond baseline requirements and embeds sustainability into both the construction and operational phases of the development. Details may be agreed and secured by condition to ensure compliance with

the NPPF and HDPF policies 35, 36 and 37 and the Council's target to become carbon neutral by 2030 (direct emissions) and by 2050 (indirect emissions).

8. ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS

- 8.1 The NPPF sets out at paragraph 116 that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 8.2 HDPF policies 40 and 41 seek to ensure that proposals incorporate safe and adequate means of access and that there is appropriate car parking provision.
- 8.3 The existing access route off Kings Lane to the south of the site would be utilised by the occupants of the office. This access route would be subject to a minor increase in the number of vehicle movements, however given the small-scale nature of the offices this is not considered to be significant. There would also be no adverse effect upon the surrounding road network.

- 8.4 The existing hardstanding to the north east of the stables will be used to provide adequate parking spaces and there is sufficient manoeuvring space.
- 8.5 Overall, the proposed access and car parking provision are adequate and the proposal complies with policies 40 and 41 of the HDPF and the NPPF.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 This Statement supports the proposal for the conversion of an existing stable block into an open plan office and a former storage barn to be used as a garage at Taintfield Farm, Kings Lane off Kent Street, Cowfold.
- 9.2 The proposal is compliant with the aims of the NPPF and the HDPF and Policy 14 of the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan to support sustainable rural economic development. The proposal will make a small but important contribution to help fulfil the employment needs in the District, making efficient use of previously developed land resulting in no harm to the countryside landscape.
- 9.3 The proposal is small in scale, as appropriate to the rural area and will not create any harmful intensification of its use in accordance with HDPF policies 10, 11 and 26. It is further demonstrated that no harm will be caused to any designated heritage assets. Neighbouring amenity will be fully respected and there are no ecological concerns and sufficient car parking and access is proposed.
- 9.4 Overall, the proposal complies with the relevant policies of the NPPF and the development plan (including the Neighbourhood Plan). Therefore, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, planning permission should be granted.