

Planning Statement

Planning application regarding the

Demolition of part of existing barn and conversion of the remainder to a dwelling with associated alterations, garden, garage and parking

at

**Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road,
Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT**

on behalf of

Mr.& Mrs McBride

July 2026



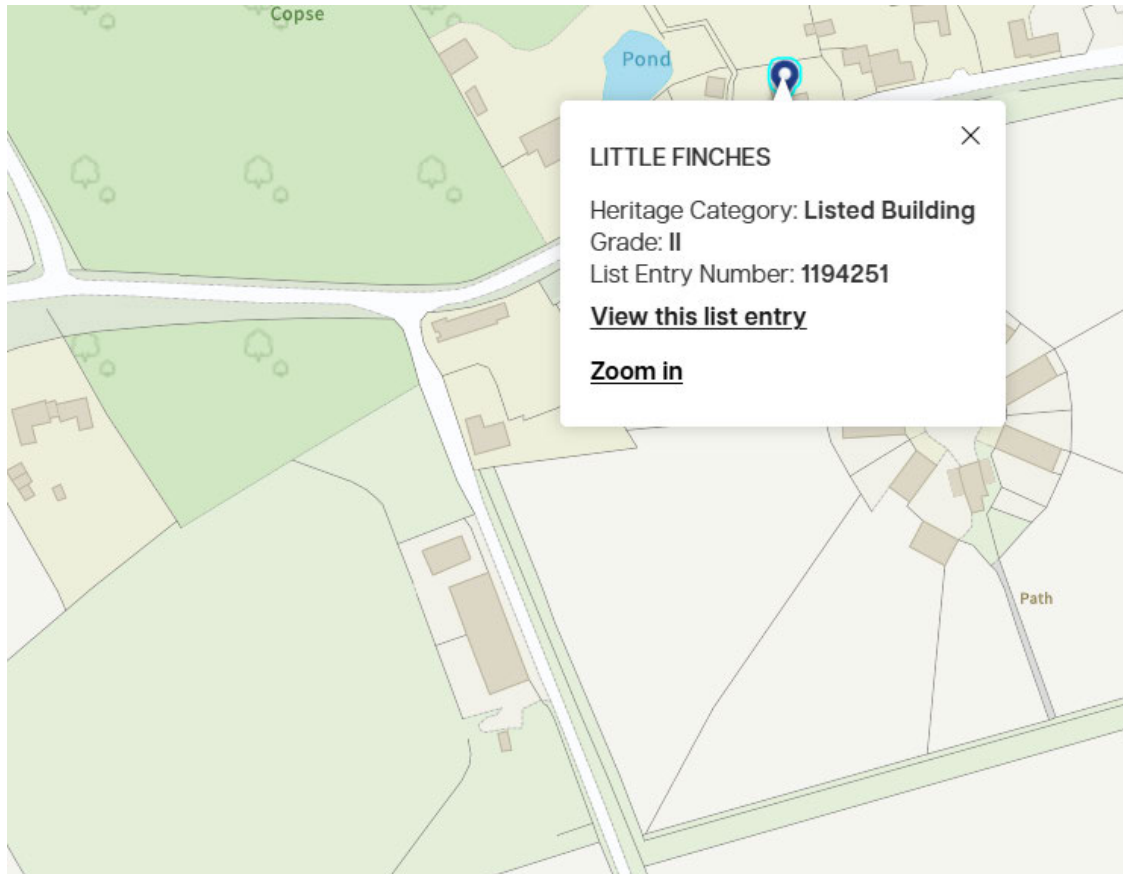
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1. Introduction

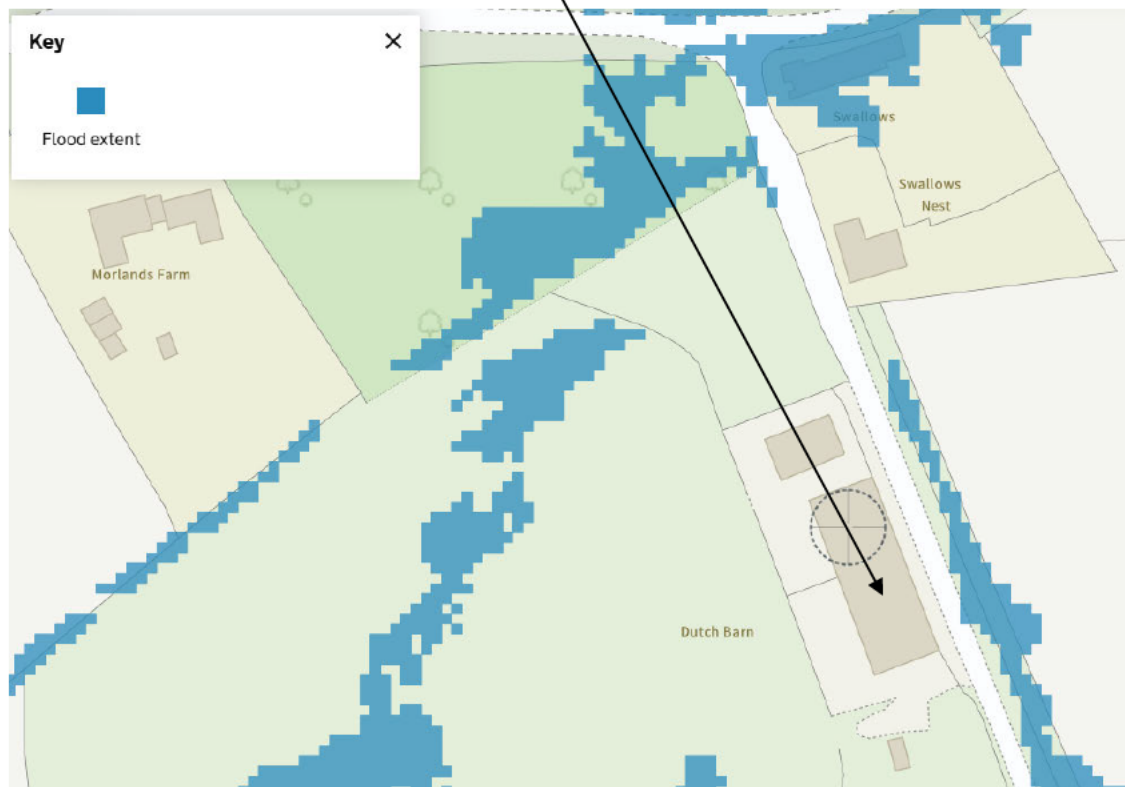
- 1.1. This Planning Statement supports an application concerning the demolition of part of existing barn and conversion of the remainder to a dwelling with associated alterations, garden, garage and parking at Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT.
- 1.2. This Statement sets out the background to the application and need for the development, before summarising the site's planning history and relevant planning policies. It then analyses the proposals against that background before concluding how the development would meet those policies and other material considerations.

2. Site Description and Proposals

- 2.1. The application building comprises a single storey agricultural storage barn associated with the Sussex Prairie Gardens which is now closed to the public. There are lean-to additions on the western side of the building which accommodate an ancillary café and seating area. In total the built form has a GIA of approximately 445m². The main structure is constructed from a timber frame under a corrugated sheet roof and is believed to have been constructed around 1910. The Structural Appraisal accompanies the application and confirms that the building is structurally in very good condition and suitable for conversion.
- 2.2. To the north is a former Dutch Barn which has been converted to a dwelling with there being poly tunnels and a mobile home to the south. There are other residential properties farther along the lane to the north and south.
- 2.3. The application proposes the conversion of the main part of the building to a dwelling and utilising part of the existing lean to on the western side at the southern end to provide an outside seating area. The lean-to at the northern end would be demolished. Part of the building at the northern end would provide a garage. Parking exists to the front of the building to the east and south with access direct from Wheatsheaf Road.
- 2.4. From a planning policy point of view the site falls outside the Built up Area within the Countryside. Importantly in this location, the land is unaffected by any special landscape designations. The nearest listed building is Little Finches and lies approximately 800m to the north east as shown on the map below. The application site does not contribute to the setting of this property in any meaningful way due to the distance and properties in between.



- 2.5. The application site is situated outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3 and is not impacted by surface water flooding, even taking account of future climate change and a 1 in 1000 year event, so on this basis the property has a low probability of flooding as confirmed by the Flood Map for Planning extracts below. There is existing foul drainage on site for the café toilets and it will be necessary that any new system meets the needs of the 3 bedroom dwelling proposed. There will be a reduction in surface water runoff from a reduction in built form and hard surfacing on site.



2.6. Footpath WOM-2535-1 runs past the application building from Wheatsheaf Road to Morley Farm connecting with other footpaths to the south and in turn to Henfield approximately 1 mile to the south west. Henfield is defined as a Small Town/Large Village by the Council and “with a good range of services and facilities, strong community networks and local employment provision, together with reasonable rail and / or bus services.” There are bus stops in the village serving routes 17, 100 and 106, providing connections to Horsham Town Centre. The area is therefore reasonably sustainable and can support additional residential development. A number of residential development sites have been approved or are proposed to be allocated around Henfield.



2.7. Photographs of the application building and the adjacent Dutch Barn conversion are included below:



Eastern elevation



Western elevation



Northern elevation



Southern elevation



Dutch Barn conversion

3. Planning History

3.1. The planning history is listed below:

Application Number:	Description:	Decision:
DC/06/0491	Erection of polytunnel	Permitted
DC/13/2248	Retrospective change of use of lean to building to provide cafe, meeting room and facilities, with outside paved area and parking for the period 1st June to 31st October each year	Permitted
DC/14/0450	Variation of conditions 1 and 2 on DC/13/2248 (Retrospective change of use of lean to building to provide cafe, meeting room and facilities, with outside paved area and parking for the period 1st June to 31st October each year)	Permitted
DC/14/0129	Erection of glasshouse	Prior Approval Not Required
DC/15/1010	Prior Approval of Proposed Change of Use to convert a agricultural building into 1 dwelling	Prior Approval Required and REFUSED
DC/15/2647	Notification for Prior approval for Change of Use from Agricultural use to a dwelling house	Allowed on appeal
DC/17/0906	Prior Approval for a proposed change of use from agricultural storage building to a 1 x 3 bedroom dwelling	Prior Approval Required and Permitted
DC/17/1718	Proposed relocation of existing 11 x 4m mobile home	Withdrawn
DC/18/0149	Proposed relocation of existing mobile home to plot adjacent to existing polytunnel	Permitted
DC/18/1525	Erection of a steel clad, two storey open viewing platform	Permitted

4. **Planning Policy**

- 4.1. The application site is located within the countryside. National planning policy is provided within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At a local level, policies are provided by Horsham District Planning Framework.

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- 4.2. The NPPF is a material consideration in all planning applications. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the document. Paragraph 39 confirms that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a *positive and creative way* in addition to seeking to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.3. Paragraph 61 sets out the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes to meet an area's identified housing need.
- 4.4. Paragraph 73 recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly. In particular it encourages 10% of sites to be less than 1 ha and specifically self-build and custom build housing;
- 4.5. Paragraph 78 requires authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old, with an appropriate buffer.

- 4.6. Paragraph 82 notes that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.
- 4.7. Paragraph 83 promotes sustainable development in rural areas noting that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.
- 4.8. Paragraph 84 states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more specific circumstances apply. These include where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and provide an enhancement to the setting.
- 4.9. Paragraph 89 goes on to state that decisions should recognise 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 cycling 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.
- 4.10. Section 9 'Promoting Sustainable Transport' recognises at paragraph 110 that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 4.11. Section 11 'Making effective use of land' states at paragraph 125 that decisions should:

“d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively”.

The footnote states that **“decisions should support efforts to identify and bring back into residential use empty homes and other buildings”.**

- 4.12. Section 12 is entitled ‘Achieving well-designed places’ and primarily focuses on ensuring that the high quality buildings and places are fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 4.13. Section 14 promotes sustainability including the conversion of existing buildings.
- 4.14. Section 15 concerns conserving and enhancing the natural environment. This includes seeking to minimise impacts on the landscape and biodiversity and providing net gains where possible. In addition, distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites so that protection is commensurate with their status.
- 4.15. Annex 1 confirms the weight that can be applied to policies adopted prior to the publication of the NPPF and that due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. In clarification, the closer the policies in the plan are to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.

Horsham District Planning Framework

4.16. The Horsham District Planning Framework was adopted in November 2015. This provides both the strategic and development focused policies for the District.

4.17. Policy 1 is on the Framework's strategic policies and in particular considers 'Sustainable Development'. The policy focuses on taking a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to confirm that the LPA will work pro-actively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.

4.18. Policy 10 concerns 'Rural Economic Development' and is of particular relevance stating:

"Sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the district will be encouraged in order to generate local employment opportunities and economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities..."

Any development should be appropriate to the countryside location and must:

1. Contribute to the diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the district or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, contribute to the wider rural economy... and...

a. Be contained wherever possible within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion...

2. Demonstrate that car parking requirements can be accommodated satisfactorily within the immediate surrounds of the buildings, or an alternative, logical solution is proposed.

Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to business and commercial uses will be considered favourably over residential in the first instance.”

4.19. Policy 24, a strategic policy considers ‘Environmental Protection’, whereby recognition of the high quality of the District’s environment will be given through the planning process. Development will be expected to minimise exposure to and the emission of pollutants including noise, odour, air and light pollution.

4.20. Policy 25, another strategic policy considers the natural environment and landscape character. In particular development proposals that protect, conserves and enhance the landscape character, whilst also taking into account the landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics and settlement separation will be supported.

4.21. Policy 26 is entitled ‘Countryside Protection’ and requires development to support the needs of agriculture in addition, developments must be of a scale appropriate to their countryside character and location. The policy goes on to state:

“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:

- 1. Support the needs of agriculture or forestry;***
- 2. Enable the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste;***
- 3. Provide for quiet informal recreational use; or***
- 4. Enable the sustainable development of rural area***

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 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.”

- 4.22. Policy 27 seeks to prevent settlement coalescence.
- 4.23. Policies 32 ‘The Quality of New Development’ and 33 ‘Development Principles’ require significant consideration within development proposals for attractive environments, respect for local character, optimal land uses and maximising design and layout standards to cater for surrounding amenity and accessibility needs.
- 4.24. Policy 35 promotes reduced energy use and renewable and low carbon energy systems.
- 4.25. Policy 37 promotes sustainable construction including through design measures and limiting water use to 110 litres/person/day. It encourages walking, cycling, cycle storage and accessibility to sustainable forms of transport.
- 4.26. Policy 40 promotes sustainable transport.
- 4.27. Policy 41 ‘Parking’ states that adequate parking and facilities must be provided within developments to meet the needs of anticipated users.

The Emerging Horsham Local Plan 2024

- 4.28. The Council have formally submitted their new Local Plan to the Inspectorate for examination on 26th July 2024. Despite a number of delays and concerns raised by the Inspector it is suggested that some weight can be given to the policies of the document, particularly where there are no unresolved objections to them.

4.29. In particular, regard has been given to the following policies:

- Strategic Policy 8 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- Strategic Policy 13 – The Natural Environment and Landscape Character.
- Strategic Policy 14 – Countryside Protection
- Strategic Policy 19 – Development Quality
- Strategic Policy 20 – Development Principles
- Policy 31 – Rural Economic Development
- Policy 32 – Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community & Residential Use (see below), although the suggested modifications include the removal of the words “Commercial, Community &”.

Policy 32: Conversion of Agricultural and Rural Buildings to Commercial, Community & Residential Uses

Outside defined built-up areas and secondary settlements, conversion of redundant agricultural and forestry buildings to residential use, will be supported where all of the following criteria are met:

1. The building is in established agricultural or forestry use and it can be demonstrated that:
 - a) the current use is no longer necessary, or
 - b) the proposal would secure the future of an existing heritage asset or a building worthy of retention.
2. The building is appropriate for conversion given its existing scale, architectural merit, character and setting, including its relationship with surrounding uses.
3. The existing building is not so derelict as to require substantial reconstruction, significant alteration or extension.
4. The site is served by an existing metalled road or other suitable access to the local road network.
5. The proposal would not result in a property with an overly domesticated or urban character, nor adversely affect the character, appearance or visual amenities and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside of the wider area.
6. It is demonstrated that the proposal will:
 - a) Enhance the immediate setting through its design and appearance, landscape design and materials; and
 - b) enhance biodiversity in and around the site.

- Strategic Policy 37 – Housing Provision
- Strategic Policy 38 – Meeting Local Housing Needs

5. **Analysis**

5.1. The proposal concerns the demolition of part of the existing barn and conversion of the remainder to a dwelling with associated alterations, garden, garage and parking.

5.2. It is suggested that the main issues relating to this proposal are as follows:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on the countryside;
- Residential amenity;
- Access and parking;
- Ecology.

Principle of development

5.3. The NPPF and a variety of the local level policies taken from the Horsham Planning Policy Framework/emerging Local Plan provide for the re-use of existing buildings. It is proposed that the applicants would live in the new dwelling.

5.4. The application building is now surplus to requirements as the Sussex Prairie Gardens and Café are no longer open to the public. In such circumstances paragraph 84 of the NPPF provides for conversion where there is an enhancement to the setting. The setting in this case would be enhanced by the demolition of a significant area of built form in terms of the lean to on the northwestern end, along with the provision of a garden to the west of the building in place of the existing hard surfaced areas. Irrespective of this the location is not considered isolated.

- 5.5. The building is of permanent and substantial construction and can therefore be easily converted without significant alteration or rebuilding. This is confirmed by the Structural Appraisal.
- 5.6. Whilst Policy 10 of the HDPF sets a preference for commercial re-use of buildings over residential, in this case a commercial use is not considered appropriate given the proximity to other residential properties nearby, immediately to the north and east. The access drive is also a public footpath which is not really suited to commercial traffic with there being other dwellings positioned very close to this. The policy recognises that in some instances residential uses can be more appropriate.
- 5.7. Policy 10 is not fully consistent with the direction of national policy which promotes the re-use of buildings and the development of new homes. Accordingly national policy dictates that less weight should be afforded to such policies. Permitted development rights also now provide for the conversion of barns on farms for up to 10 dwellings (the Dutch Barn to the north being one such example). It is for this reason that the emerging Local Plan proposes an updated policy on conversion of rural buildings specifically to dwellings - Policy 32. Given the advanced stage of the examination, it is considered that this policy can be afforded weight. The examining Inspector has not raised any fundamental concerns to the policy other than the deletion of the reference to commercial or community uses. In terms of the criteria of the policy these can be addressed as follows:

1. It is confirmed that the building is no longer required for agricultural purposes (the statutory definition of which includes horticultural) following the closure of the gardens to the public and it is simply used for residual storage. The building to be converted is relatively small in agricultural terms and having been constructed in the early part of the 20th Century is not suited to modern day agricultural purposes. The historic cattle pens do not meet modern standards for ventilation and the timber clad walls are not suitable

for containment. The single storey nature of the building also does not allow for bales to be stacked very high or for access by larger agricultural equipment.

2. The building is appropriate for conversion, given the residential context with surrounding properties and being finished in timber cladding which is appropriate within the landscape.

3. The existing building is not derelict and will not require substantial reconstruction, significant alteration or extension as confirmed by the supporting Structural Appraisal. It is of substantial construction requiring minor alterations to install appropriate fenestration and insulation to meet habitable requirements. A chimney is also provided as a design feature. Barns often have grain dryers attached to them above roof level so this would not be uncommon or out of place.

4. The site is served by an existing metalled access road which serves multiple other residential properties.

5. The proposal would not result in an overly domesticated appearance. The existing building features a significant amount of existing glazing, with a continuous run of 26 panes on the eastern elevation and 5 sets of glazed patio doors on the western elevation. There is therefore the opportunity to provide a more considered design reflecting the character of a period farm building.

6. The proposal would enhance the surroundings and biodiversity by removing a significant area of existing built form, replacing the existing hardstanding with a garden area including soft landscaping and planting. The new chimney feature will also incorporate bird brick nest boxes. Therefore would also be enhancement to the appearance of the building.

5.8. The application site is close to the large village of Henfield which includes a range of services which can support additional residential development. The sustainability of the location is set out further within the site description. The site is not at risk of flooding and there are no heritage assets nearby which would be impacted.

- 5.9. Having regard to the above it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable and in line with the current direction of planning policy. The proposal would make a positive addition to the housing supply and delivery positions in the District which the Council is currently performing poorly in relation to, in part due to previous water neutrality issues.

Impact on the countryside

- 5.10. Within the Countryside new forms of development should ensure that the quality and character of the area is maintained. The building was considered worthy of conversion given that it is structural sound and of considerable age (early 20th Century) with a traditional timber clad elevations.
- 5.11. The impact on the countryside is limited as the building already exists and includes doors and windows throughout the elevations. The majority of the proposed window and door openings would be inserted into elevations where there is existing glazing. The elevations facing the rear garden would not be readily visible within the public domain. The proposed glazing on the eastern elevation would not be dissimilar to the existing 26 panes in this location and would carry forward the existing characteristic design. The levels of glazing proposed in the adjacent Dutch Barn conversion were considered proportionate and the glazing proposed within this application would be no greater. The proposed chimney addition adds visual interest, with a minimal built form which is more than offset by the demolition of a significant part of the lean-to. The incorporation of sliding timber doors on the public facing side of the building help to maintain the rural character of the barn.
- 5.12. Policy 32 deals with the requirement for development proposals to be attractive, functional, safe and provide an adaptable environment. The alterations are compliant with policy as they positively respond to the site and would not undermine the character of the area.

- 5.13. The current application maintains the same finish of timber cladding under a corrugated sheet roof. The cladding would be stained black, enhancing the appearance. An insulated zinc roof is proposed in place of the existing metal corrugated sheets. The existing parking area to the south and east would be retained alongside the proposed garage provision.
- 5.14. The rear yard is currently hard surfaced and was formerly a cattle yard. The replacement of the existing hard surfacing which covers the whole of this area with a domestic garden would be beneficial and increase the level of green infrastructure on site. The garden would be defined by the existing native species hedge. The details of landscaping can be secured by condition if necessary.
- 5.15. Photovoltaic panels are currently located on the west facing roof plane and would be incorporated into the new roof to meet a proportion of the dwellings needs, in line with Policy 35 of the Local Plan.
- 5.16. It is suggested that the proposed changes will not appear at odds in its rural location and the development complies with the wider aims and aspirations of policies 10, 24 and 26 of Horsham's Planning Framework.

Residential amenity

- 5.17. The nearest dwelling is the 'Dutch Barn' immediately to the north. The proposed dwelling has been designed with its outlook to the east, west and south to ensure that there is no loss of privacy to the existing dwelling to the north. The northern part of the dwelling would serve as a garage, providing more of a perceived separation between the habitable components of both properties. Both will benefit from reasonably sized private garden areas to the rear of the respective houses.

- 5.18. The proposed internal layout would comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards providing a high quality living environment for future occupiers. Refuse collection would be from the existing access road which currently accommodates a refuse vehicle, replicating the arrangements of the other dwellings along the drive. There is sufficient space for secure cycle storage within the proposed garage, alongside a car.
- 5.19. There should be no concerns over noise given that the surrounding properties are all in residential use. The use of the surrounding land for horticulture or agriculture would not result in any impact on future occupiers. Within application DC/17/0906 concerning the conversion of the adjacent barn the Officer's report states in respect of noise that "The Council's Environmental Health department has raised no objections". It is considered the same conclusion would apply today in respect of the current proposals.
- 5.20. There are no contamination concerns given that the building currently hosts a café use and has a concrete slab throughout and that the proposed dwelling would include the installation of a level slab, insulation and appropriate damp proof membrane. A Preliminary Contamination Risk Assessment was undertaken of the site to support the adjacent conversion. This identified "No significant potential sources of contamination have been identified at the site or within the immediate vicinity" which would include the current application building. An additional report and if necessary appropriate testing can however be secured by condition if required.

Access and parking

- 5.21. The application site is accessed via a drive off of the southern side of Wheatsheaf Road. The site is located towards the northern end of the drive. The existing access and parking arrangements are suitable to meet the requirements of the proposed dwelling. The West Sussex Parking Standards require 2.2 spaces for a 3 bedroom property in this location. Parking would be

provided for up to 3 cars on the existing hardstanding where vehicles currently park to the east of the building. EV charging would be provided in accordance with current Building Regulations.

- 5.22. Within the application (DC/17/0906) concerning the conversion of the adjacent barn the Case Officer's report states that "The proposal is not considered to result in any further highways impact". The same conclusion would apply today for a proposal for a single dwelling on the application site.

Ecology

- 5.23. The site is currently completely hard surfaced and therefore there are no habitats removed that would necessitate the statutory provision of biodiversity net gain on site. The proposal also represents a self-build project by the applicants, with the site area being under 0.2ha and would be exempt in that regard. However the provision of a garden area to the rear including soft landscaping would provide an enhancement on site, along with the bird nesting boxes proposed within the chimney feature.
- 5.24. The applicants have commissioned an Ecological Appraisal of the building which is included as part of this application and identified that it had "**No bat roost suitability**". No further surveys were recommended and therefore there would be no impact on any protected species or habitats. The report recommends the placing bat boxes on nearby trees or buildings. Such enhancements can be secured by condition.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. This planning application concerns the demolition of part of existing barn and conversion of the remainder to a dwelling with associated alterations, garden, garage and parking at Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT.
- 6.2. It is submitted that the principle of development is acceptable and in line with the up to date planning policy for such development.
- 6.3. The changes proposed will ensure that the building retains its barn style appearance. The demolition of the lean to on the western part of the building at the northern end will increase the openness of the landscape and enhance the setting. There would be no adverse landscape impact and the provision of a garden area in place of the existing hardstanding will provide a net benefit in terms of soft landscaping and biodiversity. Further ecological enhancements in terms of the provision of bat boxes can be secured by condition.
- 6.4. The site is reasonably sustainably located given its close proximity to Henfield and the existence of public footpaths connecting to the village. This is also reinforced by the consent for the conversion of the Dutch Barn to a dwelling immediately to the north. The proposal would not have a harmful impact on residential amenities nearby.
- 6.5. For the above reasons, it is suggested that the Local Planning Authority should be able to support this planning application and grant consent. However, if there are any concerns or queries on this application, please contact the author of this statement to discuss.



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