

Design and Access Statement
Demolition of part of the existing barn and conversion of the remainder to form a
new dwelling at Morlands Farm
Prepared by Sandy Rendel Architects
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1.0 Introduction

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared in support of an application for detailed planning permission for the demolition of part of the barn and the conversion of the remainder to a single dwelling at Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, Henfield. This document sets out the nature of the existing site and our design rationale. It should be read in conjunction with the Architect's drawings and supporting planning, structural and ecological statements.

The application is submitted on behalf of the owners of the land, Paul and Pauline McBride, who live in the adjacent converted Dutch Barn and who previously founded and ran the Sussex Prairies Garden.

1.1 The Team

Sandy Rendel Architects

Sandy Rendel Architects is an award winning practice founded in 2010. Our work addresses the unique physical, environmental and cultural contexts of each project to deliver architecture of long-term value and enduring meaning.

We are committed to a sustainable approach to architecture by ensuring our work has the minimum environmental impact, through its construction and ongoing energy use, and the maximum life, through its durability and tolerance to change.

In 2017 we were named RIBA South East Emerging Practice of the Year and our project on the banks of the River Ouse in Lewes was awarded the inaugural South Downs National Park Residential Design Award in 2019 for the best new house to have made a standout contribution to the landscape, heritage, built environment within the National Park.

More recently our Dutch Barn Conversion and Viewing Tower at Morlands Farm near Henfield was named RIBA South East Small Project of the Year 2022 and shortlisted for the RIBA House of the Year. We were named Individual House Architect of the Year in the Architect of the Year Awards 2024 and our new house at Bury Gate Farm in West Sussex won a 2025 RIBA South East Award and was shortlisted for the Architects' Journal House of the Year.



142 South Street, Lewes



Bury Gate Farm, nr. Pulborough

Sharpe Planning

Sharpe Planning was founded by Julian Sharpe, a Chartered Town Planner with over 20 years experience advising on development. He has particular experience on rural planning matters predominantly in Sussex and Surrey, to include a number of successful and high quality barn conversions.

The Ecology Co-op

Founded in 2014 by Paul Whitby, the Ecology Co-op has grown into a trusted and reputable organisation in the field of ecology. They deliver a range of ecological services to help manage the environmental impact of developments and support conservation work including ecological appraisals, conservation and habitat creation and protected species surveys.



Morlands Farm barn and viewing tower at Sussex Prairie Gardens

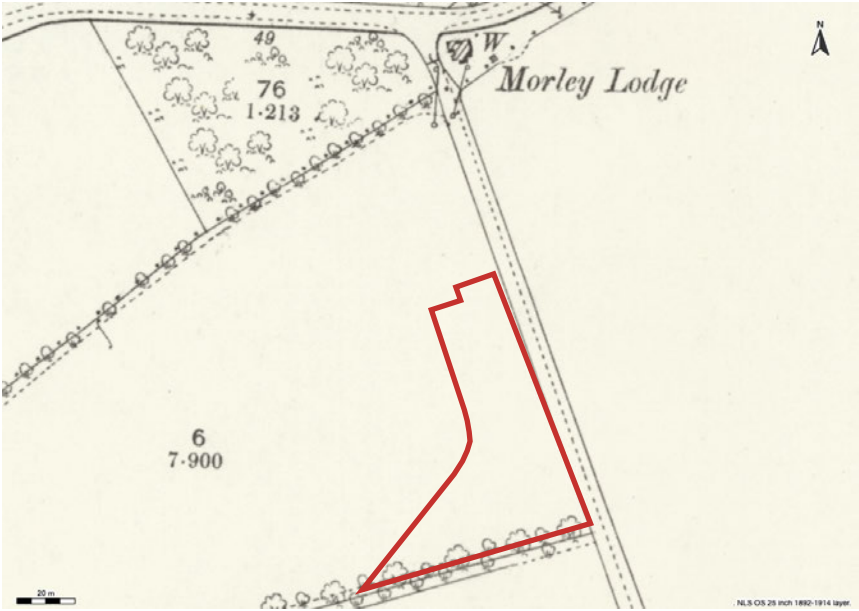
2.0 Site Location and Context

The site is located approximately two miles north east of Henfield village and is to the south of Wheatsheaf Road, accessed via a private road leading to Morley Farm to the south, which is a public right of way (footpath).

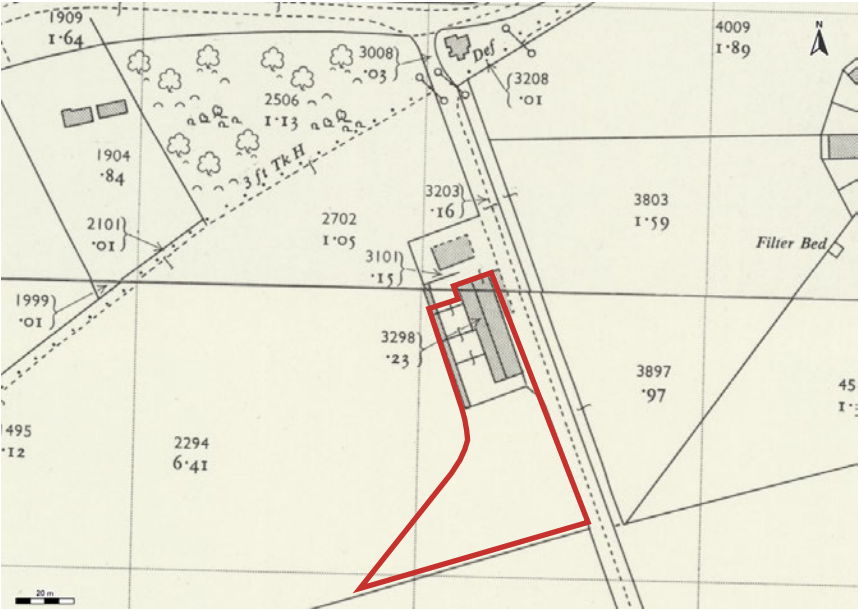
The barn is part of Morlands Farm, a small holding which was formally home to the horticultural business, Sussex Prairies. Directly to the north is the former Dutch Barn which is also part of the farm and was converted to residential use in 2019. To the south are a mobile home and polytunnels. Other residential properties lie further north towards the junction with Wheatsheaf Road on the other side of the lane.

The site is bounded by mature field oaks and dense hedgerows to the south and east screening anything other than the face of the main barn from view from public vantage points.

The site falls within the National Character Area 121: Low Weald but is outside any areas of special landscape designations.



1897 OS Map



1956 OS Map



Aerial view of the site and its surrounding

2.1 Existing Buildings

The main body of the existing buildings is a double pitch single storey storage barn, approximately 36.5m long, which fronts the lane. Behind this sit two lean-to additions which previously housed the café, public WC's and gallery spaces. In total the existing buildings provide 445m2 Gross Internal Area.

Following the closure of the public gardens the buildings are no longer required for agricultural purposes and do not suit modern day agricultural practices apart from as general residual storage.

The buildings are all of timber frame construction with timber cladding, corrugated metal roofs and concrete slabs. Their original date of construction is unknown but believed to be around 1910 which is supported by historic mapping evidence. All have been variously repaired, amended and adapted over the years but remain in sound structural condition that is suitable for conversion as evidenced by the accompanying Structural Appraisal.



View of south east gable end



View of north-east elevation from lane



View towards south-west elevation

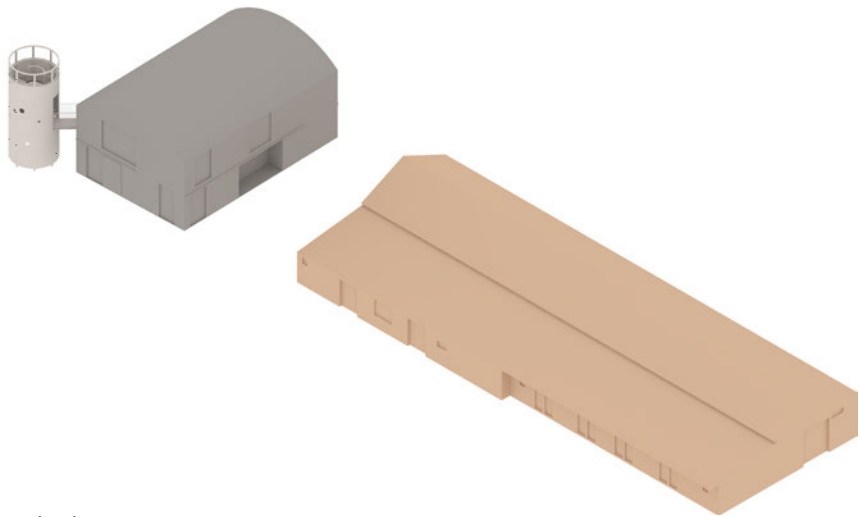
3.0 Design and Access Statement

3.1 Design Brief

Our clients' brief was to provide a high quality dwelling that would provide a long-term, flexible and highly sustainable home making productive use of the now redundant buildings. The aim was for the design to be sensitive to the adjacent neighbours and the setting, scale, form and character of the original agricultural buildings.

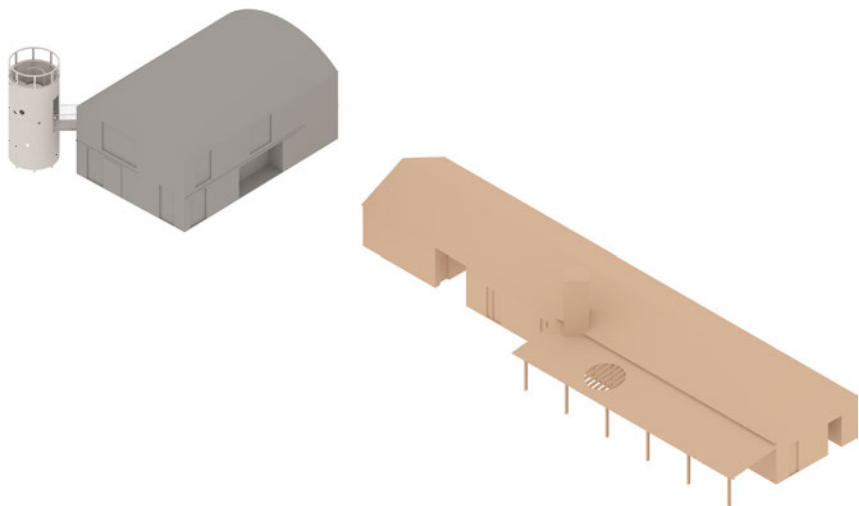
3.2 Use and Amount

The proposals are for a new 3-bed single family dwelling with associated garage and garden. The new dwelling will provide a Gross Internal Area of 172m² with a further 39m² of garage. This provides a generous floorplan well in excess of the minimum requirements of the National Technical Space Standards but amounts to a significant reduction of 214m² in the overall gross internal floor area compared to the existing buildings.



Existing GIA

Gross Internal Floor Area of Barn - 253m²
Gross Internal Floor Area of Cafe - 101m²
Gross Internal Floor Area of Gallery - 91m²
Total Gross Internal Floor Area - 445m²



Proposed GIA

Gross Internal Floor Area of House - 172m²
Gross Internal Floor Area of Garage - 39m²
Total Gross Internal Floor Area - 211m²

3.3 Orientation and Layout

The key drivers for the layout were to maintain privacy from the lane and Dutch Barn whilst opening up the aspect and outlook over the landscape. The existing configuration generates a very deep plan with little opportunity to bring light and air into the centre of the building. By stripping away and adapting the lean-to elements these issues can be addressed with a clear, ordered and generous layout.

The principal living spaces enjoy the full depth of the plan and are positioned towards the southern end of the building to enjoy the southerly and westerly aspect over the garden and beyond. The bedrooms sit either side of this generous open plan central volume and are shielded from the lane by the service functions.

The garage and covered passageway, pushed to the northern end, provide a buffer and increased separation between the house and Dutch Barn to protect the residential amenity of both.

The layout is open and flexible to allow for changing patterns of use and the future needs of its inhabitants.



Proposed Floor Plan

3.4 Scale, Massing and Form

The new house utilises the form of the original main barn, which offers the most generous volume, and ensures no visible impact in scale or form from any public vantage points from the lane or wider countryside. Changes to the massing are all grouped to the rear, facing the garden and result in a significant loss in built form on this side. The demolition of the café block reduces the massing adjacent to the Dutch Barn, opening up more garden on its south face, opposite the front entrance, and providing improved separation between the houses.

The walls of the southern lean-to will be stripped away and the roof cut back to raise its eaves and create a large covered external terrace that will provide passive solar shading to the principle living spaces on the south west elevation.

The addition of a new brickwork chimney, purposefully oversized to avoid over domesticising the character of the original building, will be dotted with built-in bird boxes as part of the strategy for ecological enhancements which will also include bat boxes in nearby tress as recommended in the Ecological Appraisal. The abstract form of the chimney is reminiscent of a dovecote or grain drying vent and continues the abstracted agricultural language initiated by the 'silo-like' viewing tower adjacent to the Dutch Barn.



View of the proposed scheme from the south east.

3.5 Appearance and Materials

As with the previous conversion of the Dutch Barn, our approach has been focussed ensuring the existing character of the agricultural buildings are maintained and avoiding an ‘overly domesticated or urban character’.

In line with the approach to the massing and form the architectural language and choice of materials reflect the simple extruded volumes, plain detailing, and robust appearance of the existing and adjacent buildings within their agricultural setting.

Corrugated metal roofs and dark stained timber cladding will match the existing and new window and door openings have been carefully composed to avoid over-domestication and to reinforce the utilitarian agricultural character.



Dark stained timber external wall cladding



Corrugated metal roof



Precedent image showing timber cladding with large sliding doors



4.0 Sustainability and Biodiversity

In addition to meeting the current Building Regulations we propose to use the following measures to enhance the sustainability, further reduce the carbon footprint of the new house and contribute to the mitigation of climate change:

- Retaining as much existing built fabric as possible.
- Recycling demolition concrete waste, for use in sub-bases.
- Specifying high quality, self-finished, durable, long-life materials which, where possible, are sourced locally.
- Creating an adaptive layout to provide a long-term, loose-fit dwelling, that allows for changing future patterns of use.

In addition, to minimise operational energy we propose:

- A fabric first approach, with excellent insulated properties.
- Efficient heating and ventilation control systems including a mechanical heat recovery ventilation system and air source heat pump.
- A passive energy strategy that carefully balances solar orientation and shading, to both maximise natural daylighting and control solar gain. This includes the covered terrace/colonnade which protects the south facing glazing from high angle summer sun also provide weather protection from the prevailing south westerly winds and helps reduce light pollution.
- High efficiency, low emissive triple glazing with solar control.
- Modern construction techniques to improve air tightness and minimise thermal bridging.
- Reuse of the existing 13.8kWp photovoltaic panels with a 9.5kWh battery array to supply the new dwelling.
- Car charging points located within the garage.
- Low consumption water fittings and low energy lighting.

5.0 Access, Parking and Accessibility

Access to the property remains via the private road off Wheatsheaf Road. The private road is of a good standard and serves the existing requirements of the site.

Existing large metal gates off the lane at the south east end of the barn lead to an area of hardstanding which will provide adequate parking and turning space for a minimum of three vehicles off road. In addition parking is available on the existing hardstanding to the east of the building off the lane and the north west end of the barn will be converted into a garage/store.

The single storey layout has level access to the front entrance and across the entire interior to achieve an M4(2) compliant dwelling.

6.0 Refuse and Recycling

Separate refuse and recycling bins will be stored at the south east end of the existing building behind the metal gates and adjacent to the rear door. In accordance with the existing arrangements for the Dutch Barn, the bins will be wheeled to the kerbside on collection days. Garden waste will be composed on site.

7.0 Foul Sewerage and Drainage

The existing septic tank which currently services the café/garden toilets will be retained and reused for foul water drainage.

As currently surface water will be fed into the existing pair of large ponds which connect to each other and overflow into soakaways within the garden.

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