

Farm Business Diversification Statement

Site: Renvyle Farm, Okehurst Lane, Billingshurst, West Sussex

Proposal: Construction of a replacement warehouse building (four internal units) with new internal access road

Applicant: Mr David Walton **Date:** May 2026

1. Introduction

This Farm Business Diversification Statement has been prepared to support the planning application for a replacement warehouse building at Renvyle Farm. The proposal seeks to restore essential operational capacity lost following the collapse of an existing agricultural barn during recent severe winds. The new building will occupy the **same overall footprint** as the former barn, with a minor repositioning to allow for the safe diversion of the internal access road.

The development is **not commercial, not speculative, and not for rent**. It is solely intended to support the ongoing agricultural operations of Renvyle Farm and to strengthen the long-term sustainability and resilience of the holding.

This statement demonstrates how the proposal aligns with the principles of rural diversification set out in the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) and the Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan (BNP), particularly in relation to Policy 10 (Rural Economic Development).

2. Background to the Farm Enterprise

Renvyle Farm is a long-established agricultural holding comprising grazing land, farm tracks, and a small cluster of operational buildings. The farm supports a range of land-based activities requiring secure storage, machinery housing, feed management, and operational workspace.

A key agricultural barn—central to the farm’s day-to-day functioning—**collapsed during high winds**, resulting in the sudden loss of essential storage and operational capacity. This has created an immediate need for a replacement structure to ensure the farm can continue to operate efficiently and safely.

3. Purpose of the Proposed Development

The proposed warehouse building is required to:

- Replace the collapsed barn on a like-for-like footprint
- Provide secure, weather-resilient storage for machinery, feed, and equipment
- Support year-round farm operations
- Improve internal circulation through a safer access road layout
- Consolidate operational activities within the existing farmstead

The building will be **subdivided internally into four functional units**, not for commercial occupation but to allow the farm to separate different operational processes (e.g., machinery storage, feed storage, workshop space, and equipment maintenance).

The building will not be rented out, leased, or used by external businesses.

4. Alignment with HDPF Policy 10 – Rural Economic Development

HDPF Policy 10 supports development that:

- Contributes to the sustainable growth of rural businesses
- Supports land-based enterprises
- Enables diversification that strengthens long-term viability
- Is appropriate in scale and character to its countryside location

The proposal meets these criteria as follows:

4.1 Supports a Land-Based Enterprise

The building directly supports agricultural operations by replacing essential infrastructure lost through storm damage.

4.2 Enhances Long-Term Viability

The replacement building ensures the farm can continue to operate efficiently, safely, and sustainably, reducing operational vulnerability.

4.3 Appropriate Scale and Character

The building:

- Matches the footprint of the former barn
- Uses agricultural materials and form
- Sits within the existing farmstead cluster

4.4 Not Speculative or Commercial

The development is not intended for commercial rental or external business use, addressing concerns about inappropriate commercial expansion in the countryside.

5. Alignment with Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan Policies

5.1 Policy Bill 1 – Spatial Plan

The proposal does not introduce new commercial development outside the built-up area. It replaces an existing agricultural building and maintains the established pattern of development.

5.2 Policy Bill 10 – Employment and Enterprise

The policy supports rural enterprises where they:

- Are small-scale
- Support local employment
- Are appropriate to their setting

The proposal supports the farm's operational employment and is entirely appropriate to its rural context.

6. Functional Need for the Countryside Location

The proposed building is essential to its countryside location because:

- It forms part of the operational farm holding
- It replaces a barn that previously stood on the site
- It supports land-based activities that cannot be relocated to a built-up area
- It relies on proximity to grazing land, equipment, and livestock operations

The development is therefore fully justified in its location.

7. Sustainability Benefits

The proposal incorporates several sustainability advantages:

7.1 Reuse of Existing Footprint

Using the same footprint minimises land take, soil disturbance, and embodied carbon.

7.2 Reduced Vehicle Movements

Consolidating storage and operations reduces the need for off-site storage and associated transport emissions.

7.3 Energy Efficiency

The new building will incorporate modern insulated cladding, airtight construction, and low-energy lighting, with potential for future solar PV.

7.4 Climate Resilience

The replacement building is designed to withstand future extreme weather events, addressing the vulnerability highlighted by the collapse of the previous barn.

7.5 Biodiversity Enhancements

Native planting, hedgerow strengthening, and sensitive lighting will improve ecological value.

8. Economic and Operational Benefits

The proposal will:

- Restore essential operational capacity
- Improve efficiency and safety
- Reduce operational downtime
- Support the long-term viability of the farm
- Ensure the farm remains competitive and resilient

These benefits are central to the purpose of rural diversification policies.

9. Conclusion

The proposed warehouse building at Renvyle Farm represents a necessary and proportionate form of farm diversification and operational improvement. It replaces a collapsed barn on the same footprint, supports the long-term sustainability of the agricultural enterprise, and is essential to the functioning of the farm.

The development is not commercial, not speculative, and not for rent. It is a genuine agricultural replacement building that aligns with HDPF Policy 10 and the Billingshurst Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposal is therefore fully justified, and it is respectfully requested that the Local Planning Authority support the application.