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Heritage Report

Hills Farm, The Village, Ashurst, Steyning, BN44 3AS

Report prepared by Chilcroft Heritage Planning
September 2026



Corporate members of:
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Historic Houses Association
The Georgian Group



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1) INTRODUCTION

- 1.1) I am Haig Dalton, founder of Chilcroft Heritage Planning, an established independent heritage consultancy since 2006. Formerly, I was a local planning authority officer within development control departments in the South of England. I have worked on a wide range of projects throughout the United Kingdom, predominantly (but not exclusively) for private sector clients.
- 1.2) I hold a masters degree in Historic Building Conservation (MSc); a postgraduate qualification in Architectural History from the University of Oxford (Oxon); I am an Affiliate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC).
- 1.3) Over the last 22 years I have specialised in the historic environment, both in terms of understanding and analysing physical fabric, and in terms of policy application, specifically by assessing impacts, providing advice and supporting development proposals. My experience includes a diverse range of cases relating to the assessment of physical changes to, and development affecting all manner of heritage assets, and their settings.
- 1.4) I have undertaken numerous impact assessments where I have considered the impacts of new development on the historic environment (dealing with physical impacts, setting, townscape, views and inter-visibility), including dealing with the effects of development on heritage assets in rural contexts.
- 1.5) I have provided expert evidence at appeals, including public inquiries, on behalf of both appellants and local planning authorities.
- 1.6) I understand my role in producing this heritage report; to give independent and objective evidence on matters within my expertise, based on my own independent opinion and uninfluenced by the instructing party. I confirm that I have stated the facts and matters on which my opinion is based, and that I have not omitted to mention facts or matters that could detract from my conclusions.

- 1.7) I believe that the facts stated within this Heritage Report are true and that the opinions expressed are correct. I have drawn attention to any matters where I consider I lack sufficient information to reach anything other than a provisional conclusion. I have adhered to the standards and duties of the professional bodies I am a member of, and will continue to adhere to those standards.
- 1.8) I was first approached April 2026, when I was asked to provide a heritage report in relation to the proposed development on behalf the applicant. My quote was based on several stages/elements, the first of which was an initial case review, including a site visit during May 2026. I confirm that I am able to act as the applicant's heritage expert following this initial work and a site visit.
- 1.9) As an independent professional, I have formed my own opinions and have come to my own conclusions about the effects of the proposed development.
- 1.10) I have included in my heritage report photos taken on my original site visit. The photos were taken with a compact digital camera and they have not been digitally altered, aside from cropping superfluous areas of sky and/or foreground. This visual assessment is intended to be informative, but it is not intended to be exhaustive.
- 1.11) This statement will describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by the setting, as required by HE5 (1) of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2026). It will assess the significance of the heritage assets by way of Historic England guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2017) in accordance with their preferred five-step procedure, identify, assess and explore the significance of their setting and consider the potential effect of the proposal on their significance.

2) LEGISLATION AND POLICY

- 2.1) Legislation relating to listed buildings and conservation areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act place a duty on the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.
- 2.2) Section 72 of the Act places similar duty on the decision maker with respect to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas, however this does not extend to the setting of conservation areas.
- 2.3) The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** constitutes the Government's current national guidance and policy regarding development in the historic environment. It is a material consideration and includes a succinct policy framework for local planning authorities and decision takers. It relates to planning law by stating that applications are to be determined in accordance with the local plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.4) **20. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment** of the NPPF states that the objectives of its heritage policies are to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.
- 2.5) **Assessing effects on heritage assets**, HE5 (1) of the NPPF states that proposals affecting heritage assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. Appropriate expertise should be employed where necessary.

2.6) HE5 (2) states that assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to:

- Enhance or better reveal the significance of the heritage asset;
- Have no effect on the significance of the heritage asset;
- Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset; or
- Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.

2.7) **HE6 and HE7:** For the first time the NPPF gives direction for determining proposals for designated or non-designated heritage assets.

2.8) **Proposals affecting designated heritages** HE6 (1) of the NPPF states that when considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

2.9) HE6 (2) states that development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported and HE6 (4) that where harm is identified, this should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

2.10) The importance and relevance of this definition is that it does not suggest conservation to be the same as preservation. Indeed, what sets conservation apart is the emphasis on proactively maintaining and managing change and not on a reactive approach to resisting change. In its simplest interpretation conservation could amount to a change that at least sustains the significance of a designated heritage asset.

- 2.11) Potential harm that can be caused to the significance of designated heritage assets are namely substantial harm and less than substantial harm. These effects are to be weighed in the planning balance according to the guidance set out within the paragraphs, bearing in mind the statutory provisions above. HE6 (6) of the NPPF states that substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including grade I and II* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional.
- 2.12) **Decisions on non-designated heritage assets** HE7 (2) states that where a development proposal would harm the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the benefits of the proposal and a balanced judgement made, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.13) Where a development proposal would cause substantial harm or the total loss of a non-designated heritage asset HE7 (3) states that it should only be supported where the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal, having regard to the scale of the harm or loss and the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.14) **Conservation areas** HE9 states that development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible, and consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.
- 2.15) HE9 (3) states that not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a building or other element which contributes to the character or appearance of a conservation area that is desirable to conserve, the assessment of impact should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole, and the effects of this considered in accordance with policies HE5 and HE6.

2.16) Harm is defined by Historic England as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.

2.17) **The National Planning Practice Guidance** provides advice on enhancing and conserving the historic environment in accordance with the NPPF. The PPG currently relates to the 2024 version of the NPPF but will be updated in due course to reflect NPPF 2026.

2.18) In regards to the setting of heritage assets the PPG notes:

“The setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage.”

2.19) The guidance notes that a thorough assessment of the impact on setting needs to take into account, and be proportionate to, the significance of the heritage asset and the degree to which proposed changes enhance or detract from that significance and the ability to appreciate it.

2.20) In relation to harm the guidance states:

“Whether a proposal causes substantial harm will be a judgment for the decision taker, having regard to the circumstances of the case and the policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. In general terms, substantial harm is a high test, so it may not arise in many cases. For example, in determining whether works to a listed building constitute substantial harm, an important consideration would be whether the adverse impact seriously affects a key element of its special architectural or historic interest. It is the degree of harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of the development that is to be assessed. The harm may arise from works to the asset or from development within its setting.”

3) ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1) The proposed development is situated in a rural environment to the south-east corner of the curtilage of Hill's Farmhouse. Vehicular access is provided via an existing entrance along the western boundary adjoining the B2135 highway, sitting directly opposite Golden Lane. The driveway leads directly along the southern side of the curtilage and sweeps northwards towards the dwelling.
- 3.2) The proposed site is largely self-contained within existing hedgerows, trees and behind curtilage outbuildings, which largely obscure any awareness of the main curtilage and Hills' Farmhouse itself, from the public realm (**see Fig 2**). As such, it is from within the curtilage that the significance of the Grade II listed former farmhouse is best experienced (**see Fig 5**). By contrast, the curtilage outbuilding can be best appreciated from the highway (**see Fig 3**).
- 3.3) The proposed site sits within the curtilage of Hill's Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building that dates from the 17th Century, if not earlier (**List No. 1353944**). It sits over two storeys with a Horsham Slab roof (part tiled), tile hung upper elevations and red brick infill with grey headers below. Parts of the building contain exposed timber framing at the rear. The principal elevation faces east overlooking the driveway (**see Fig 6**) and the building has modern windows in the form of metal casement windows with diamond leaded glazing bars. The former farmhouse has a close association with its historic range of outbuildings directly to the south-west, which serve to reinforce the origins of the former farmhouse and its relationship to the land around it (**see Fig 7**).
- 3.4) From the listed building itself, awareness of the curtilage outbuildings extends to visibility of the roofing areas, which are broken into two levels according to their age, with the older of the two portions being tallest (**see Fig 6**). The range of outbuildings sit with their back to the listed building, with no windows overlooking it and being neatly clad in dark timber weatherboarding. Proposals that seek to maintain this passive awareness between the curtilage outbuildings and the listed building would be broadly supported. In this case and as the proposed application is retrospective, it is clear that the design already meets with this criteria.

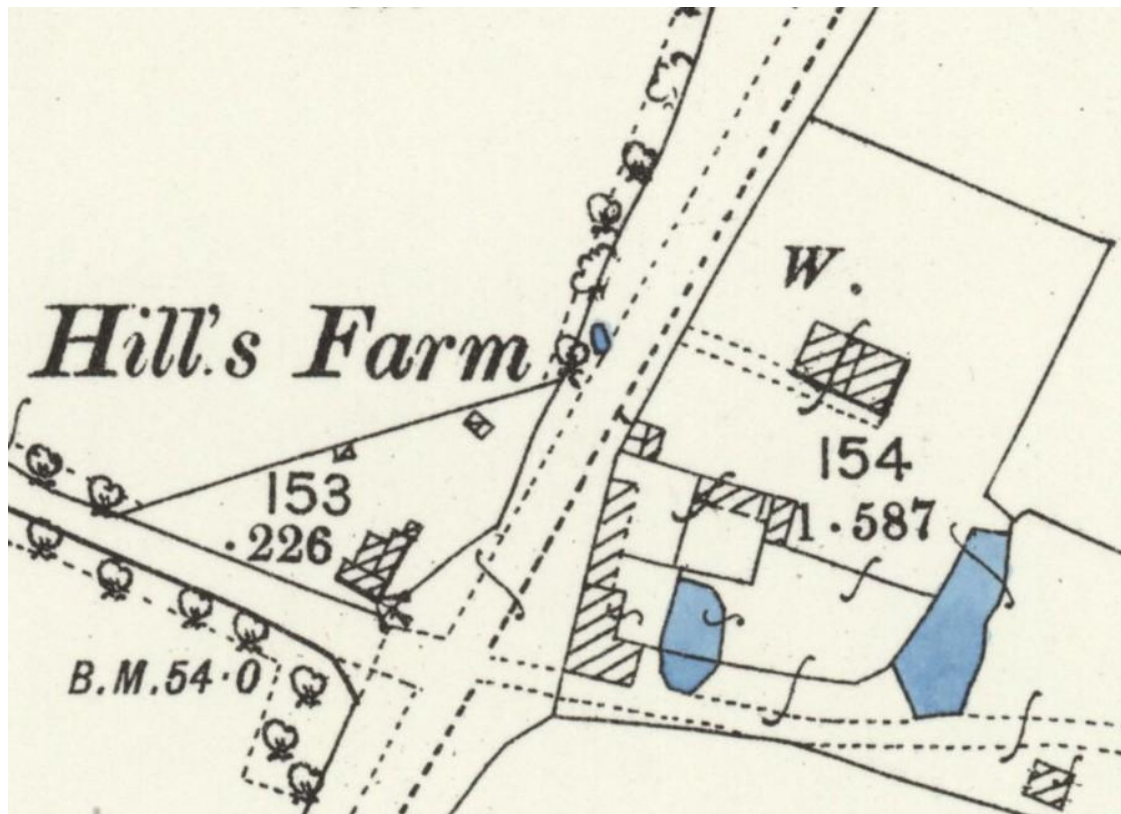


Fig 1: 1879 – The historic range of outbuildings were built over different periods with the tithe barn dating from 18th Century if not earlier and the extension to the north and L-shape courtyard from the 19th Century.

© Ordnance Survey 1897



Fig 2: The tithe barn remains clearly legible with later extensions added around it in the Victorian period.

© Bing 2010

- 3.5) The curtilage outbuilding is centred around a historic tithe barn that dates from the 18th Century if not earlier. Its principal elevation faces west overlooking the highway, from where it is best appreciated (**see Fig 3**). The tithe barn remains a single space and has not been developed or converted. It is used as a store room for ancillary use to the dwelling of Hill's Farmhouse. Although there is evidence of some timbers having been replaced, the timber frame largely remains original. The roofing rafters have been replaced, presumably at the same time that the building was last reroofed, albeit this appears to have been done quite sensitively (**see Fig 4**). The rear elevation is largely invisible due to a smaller single storey extension that sits abutting it. Part of this later extension, believed to have originally been added in the 19th Century, appears in the 1897 tithe map – giving the tithe barn the appearance of what was then became an L-shaped building (**see Fig 1**). This single storey rear extension to the back of the tithe barn has now been squared off but due to its subservient form, still clearly remains legible as a later extension to the larger historic tithe barn that sits behind it, thus helping to preserve its significance (**see Fig 9**). As the tithe barn and cluster of outbuildings sit within the curtilage of Hill's Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building, they are considered a curtilage listed building. Were it not for this, the 18th Century tithe barn would rightly be considered a non-designated heritage asset, in its own right.
- 3.6) To the north of the tithe barn sits a brick extension with a slate roof that was present at the time of the 1897 tithe map and is originally believed to date from the 19th Century. Much of the structure of this subsequent extension has now been rebuilt, albeit using like-for-like materials (**see Fig 10**). The western roofing slope uses a tiled roof finish as it was originally finished off, which is corroborated by the Bing map taken prior to the retrospective works now being applied for, being carried out (**see Fig 2**). By contrast, the eastern roofing slope uses a slate roof finish. Although unusual, it is also a characteristic of the listed building itself which uses tiles on two sides and Horsham Slab on the others. The remaining wing of the courtyard mostly dates from the 19th Century, albeit with a subsequent infill to the north-west, joining the two ranges of outbuildings into one, believed to have been done in the early 20th Century prior to listing in 1955. Some former open bays have been subsequently infilled, albeit in a way that still allows the openings to be legible (**see Fig 8**).



Fig 3: The tithe barn is believed to date from the 18th Century if not earlier. Its principal elevation faces the highway and it is from here that the significance of the curtilage outbuilding is best appreciated (**see 3.2**).

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Fig 4: The proposals do not relate to the historic tithe barn. The author of this report has had access to the historic tithe barn and is satisfied that its timber frame structure and historic fabric remains unaltered.

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Fig 5: The proposed site sits within the curtilage of the Grade II listed building of Hill's Farmhouse, which dates from the 17th Century if not earlier. Like the historic tithe barn beside, it is a timber frame structure.

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Fig 6: The principal elevation of the former farmhouse faces east overlooking the driveway, as seen here. Due to proximity, the dwelling maintains a close association with its range of curtilage outbuildings.

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Fig 7: The former farmhouse has a close association with its historic range of outbuildings directly to the south-west, which serve to reinforce the origins of the farmstead, use of stables and working the land.

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Fig 8: The outbuildings contain a smaller L-shaped wing that is believed to date from the 19th Century and is clearly shown on the tithe map of 1897 (**see Fig 1**). Originally open bays, these have been part infilled.

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Fig 9: The tithe barn sits proud of the later extended outbuildings around it. The smaller extension behind the tithe barn occupies a historic footprint shown on the tithe map and subsequently extended (**see Fig 1**).

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Fig 10: A Victorian single storey extension to the north shown on the tithe map is brick built with a slate roof and the proposal has maintained this later use of materials, repairing and replacing them as necessary.

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Fig 11: The design uses timber weather boarding, brickwork and slender metal windows, which are reflective of the former farmhouse. The overall appearance is of high quality design and material finish.

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Fig 12: The ancillary use of curtilage listed buildings is not unusual and has been done with care given to the retention of historic features and historic fabric. If anything, it serves to better reveal its significance.

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4) IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 4.1) The proposal seeks retrospective listed building consent for conversion of the curtilage outbuilding for ancillary use and associated works. Notably, the proposals do not affect the historic 18th Century tithe barn. The proposals relate solely to later extensions that have been added around the tithe barn in the 19th Century and which form part of the courtyard. The author of this report has had access to the historic tithe barn and is satisfied that its timber frame structure and historic fabric remains unaltered.
- 4.2) Before coming to any wider conclusions, it should be noted that the significance of the dwelling of Hill's Farmhouse and its historic interest linked to its age, its presence in the settlement, architectural form and historic fabric, and its place within the context of the former farmstead – will not be at all affected. These components of the significance of the listed building, and the areas from where they can be best appreciated, will be preserved.
- 4.3) The proposals have already been carried out and as the outbuilding is a curtilage listed building rather than a non-designated heritage asset, this would have therefore required listed building consent. We are pleased to see that the most historic part of the outbuilding remains unchanged, this being the tithe barn. Not only does the proposal relate only to the rear and side of the tithe barn, it leaves its principal elevation as experienced from the highway unchanged, thus preserving its significance, as it is from here that the historic tithe barn is best appreciated (**see Fig 3**). Although the rear extension comes into contact with the tithe barn and could be said to have impacted historic fabric, it had already been historically extended here as witnessed from the tithe map and insofar as it is understood, it has only come into direct contact with 20th Century weatherboarding and not resulted in any harm to the main timber frame of the tithe barn itself, thus avoiding loss of historic fabric. The materials used are also of a broadly high quality and consistent with the vernacular of Hill's Farmhouse. Whilst the rebuilding of the northern Victorian wing would have required structural justification, it has been carried out on a like-for-like basis and preserves the overall significance of the heritage asset. The former bay openings also remain legible indicating the former stables and hay store use that this part of the outbuilding would have been once used for.

5) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 5.1) The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 contains a statutory duty to give considerable importance and great weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building in the planning balance. Preserving means to do no harm.
- 5.2) The NPPF lays down an approach that corresponds with the statutory duty of the 1990 Act. In cases where harm occurs, the NPPF requires balancing the benefits of a proposal against harm resulting from it.
- 5.3) The Horsham District Council's adopted Development Plan policies require development proposals to conserve heritage assets (such as listed buildings), and their settings.
- 5.4) The guidance in Historic England's GPA3 provides a framework for considering and assessing effects on the setting of heritage assets.

Conclusions

- 5.5) The significance of the historic tithe barn is best appreciated from the highway and the proposals leave the experience of this heritage asset unchanged.
- 5.6) It is from within the curtilage that the listed building of Hill's Farmhouse is best appreciated, including from its principal elevation to the eastern side. The proposals preserve the association between the listed building and outbuilding.
- 5.7) The proposals preserve the significance of the historic 18th Century tithe barn and relate solely to later Victorian extensions that have been added around it. The proposals have repaired and converted these using like-for-like materials that are broadly reflective of the vernacular found at Hill's Farmhouse.
- 5.8) On balance, the proposals are of a design and material quality that preserves the significance of the curtilage listed building and the Grade II listed building.

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Chilcroft, A5 New Barn Office, Chichester, West Sussex PO18 9DA

Tel: 01243 631243 | Email: haig.dalton@chilcroft.co.uk