

MME PLANNING SERVICES

Conversion of existing barn to form 1no detached self-build dwelling and associated works.

at

Oakridge House, The Street, Thakeham, Pulborough,
West Sussex, RH20 3EP

Planning Statement

Ref: P-093

March 2026

Version 1

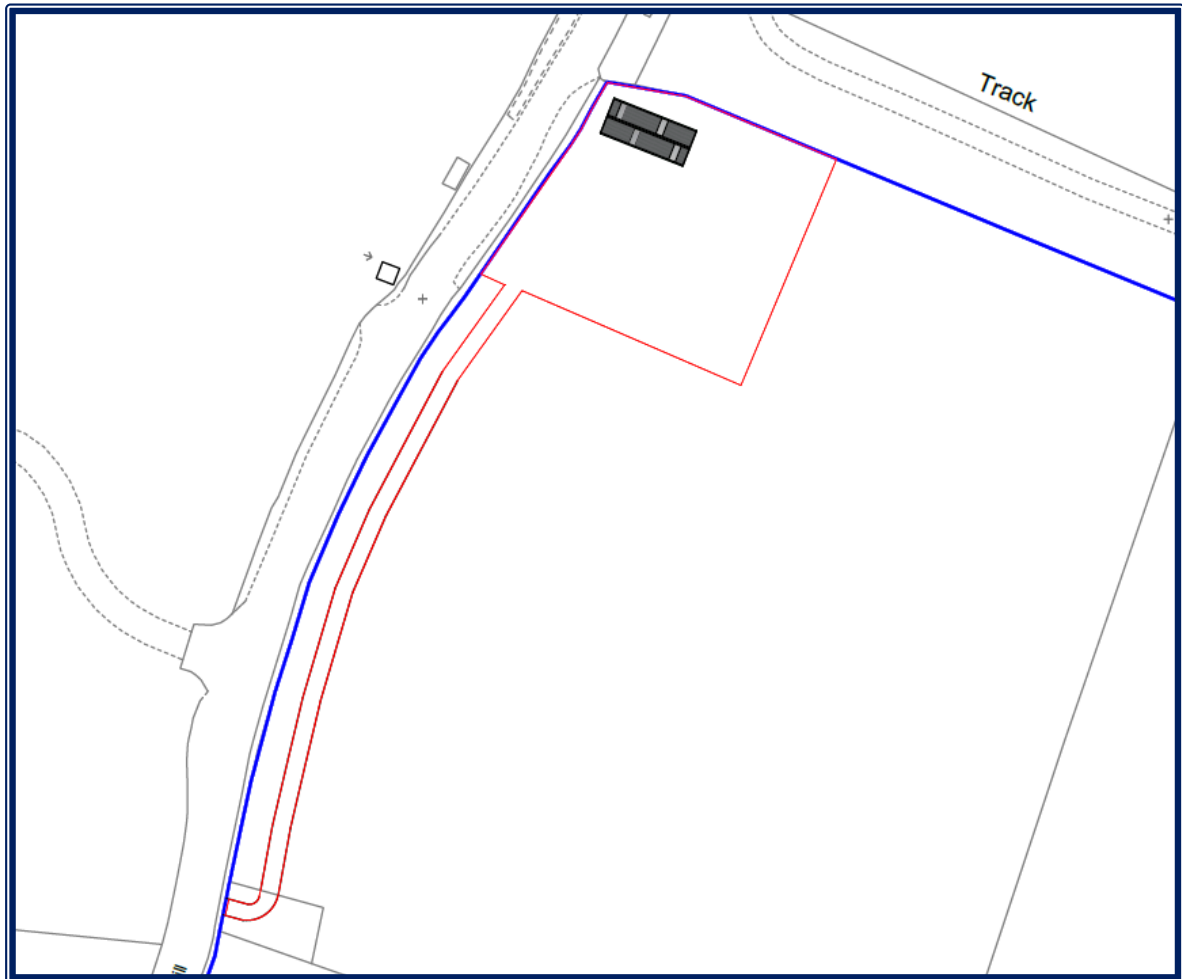


Figure 1: Site Location

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 MME Planning Services is instructed to submit this full planning application for the 'Conversion of existing barn to form 1no detached self-build dwelling and associated works' at Oakridge House, The Street, Thakeham, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 3EP.
- 1.2 This statement sets out the proposed scheme in detail with regard to the following aspects: the planning history of the site, the development proposals, the relevant planning policy, the planning merits of the scheme and how the proposals comply with the Council's policies.

2. Site, Surroundings and Background

- 2.1 The application site relates to an existing agricultural barn located on the eastern side of Coolham Road and to the north of the dwelling at Oakridge House, The Street, Thakeham. The site is located outside, but in close proximity, to any designated built-up area boundary and is therefore located within the countryside in policy terms.
- 2.2 Oakridge House adjoins a Grade II listed building and is located within the Thakeham Conservation Area, however the barn building which is the subject of this application is located outside of the Conservation Area.
- 2.3 The barn building on site was granted planning permission in December 2019 under planning reference DC/19/1928. The barn consists of a steel-framed construction with metal sheeting making up the external walls and roof and has a utilitarian agricultural appearance. The site is accessed to the south-west via an existing access point from Coolham Road. Existing and extensive soft landscaping is located to the west of the site, screening the application site and building from clear views from Coolham Road.
- 2.4 As detailed above and at Figure 2, the application site is well related to the defined built-up area of Thakeham to the south. The site is also located in close proximity to bus stops along Coolham Road and Dukes Hill, providing direct links to larger settlements to the north and south of the site, as detailed at Figure 3, and to the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network, as shown within Figure 4.

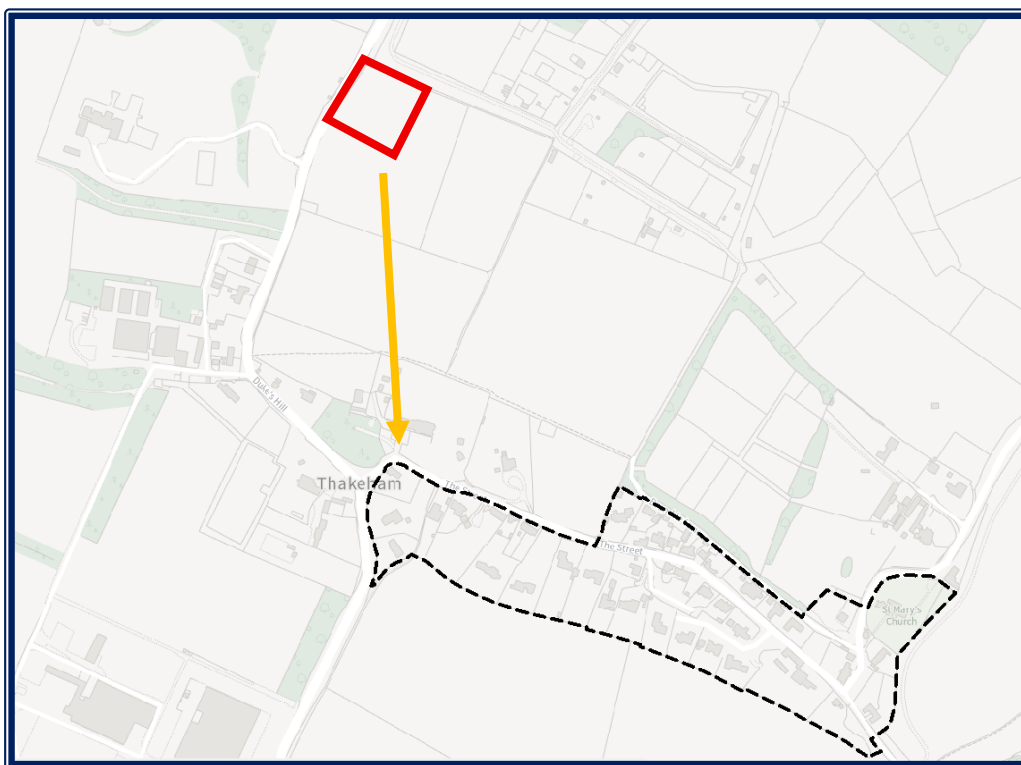


Figure 2: Map Showing relationship of the site to Built-Up Area Boundary (dashed black line)

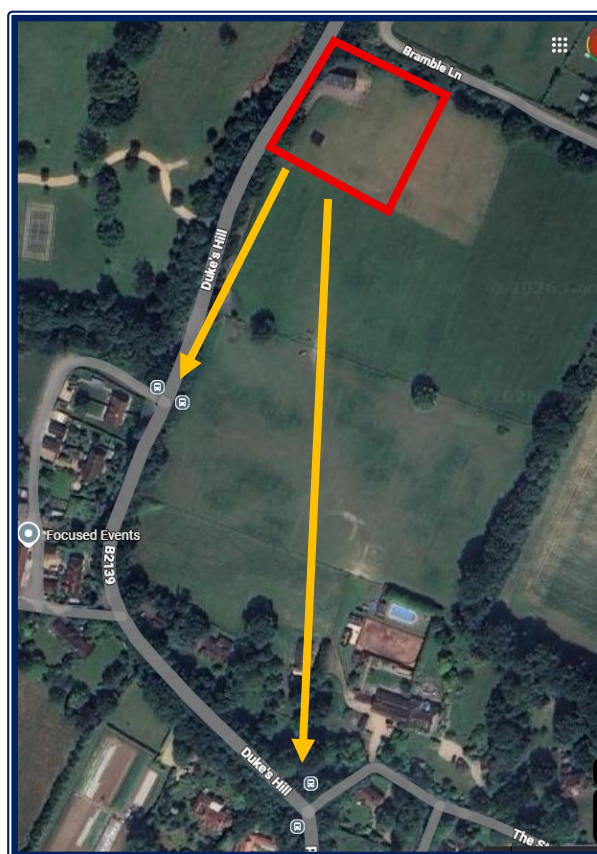


Figure 3: Map Showing relationship of the site with existing bus stops



Figure 4: Map Showing relationship of the site with existing Public Rights of Way (PROW)

3. Planning History

- Erection of an agricultural building for the storage of hay and machinery

Ref. No: DC/19/1928 | Status: Application Permitted, December 2019

- Prior Notification for Change of Use and extension of an Agricultural Building to 1no dwellinghouse (C3 Use Class).

Ref. No: DC/24/1711 | Status: Refuse Prior Approval, December 2024

4. Proposals

- 4.1 As detailed above, planning permission is sought for the conversion of an existing barn building to form 1no 2-bed detached dwelling and associated works. The proposed conversion would retain all of the main features of the barn building, maintaining its utilitarian agricultural form and character.

- 4.2 The proposed dwelling would have an overall width of approximately 15m, an overall depth of approximately 6m and an overall height to the ridge of the building of approximately 5m. The existing barn building would not be extended and the conversion would be fully contained within the existing building fabric. The proposed dwelling would have accommodation of two-storeys and would have a GIA of approximately 158sqm.
- 4.3 As set out above, the main form, appearance and external materials of the host building would be retained, resulting in a modest dwelling which clearly reflects the agricultural / rural form and character of the existing building, resulting in a development which would be commensurate with the existing setting and the countryside location. The proposals also incorporate extensive landscaping which would enhance the setting of the building. The proposals would keep openings to a minimum and these have been positioned and scaled to ensure that the existing agricultural character is maintained.



Figure 5: Proposed Site / Landscaping Plan

- 4.4 The proposals would retain the existing external materials consisting of green coloured metal sheeting, maintaining the overall form, appearance and character of the host building. Extensive mature soft landscaping is present to the western boundary of the application site, limiting views of the application site / building from the Coolham Road.

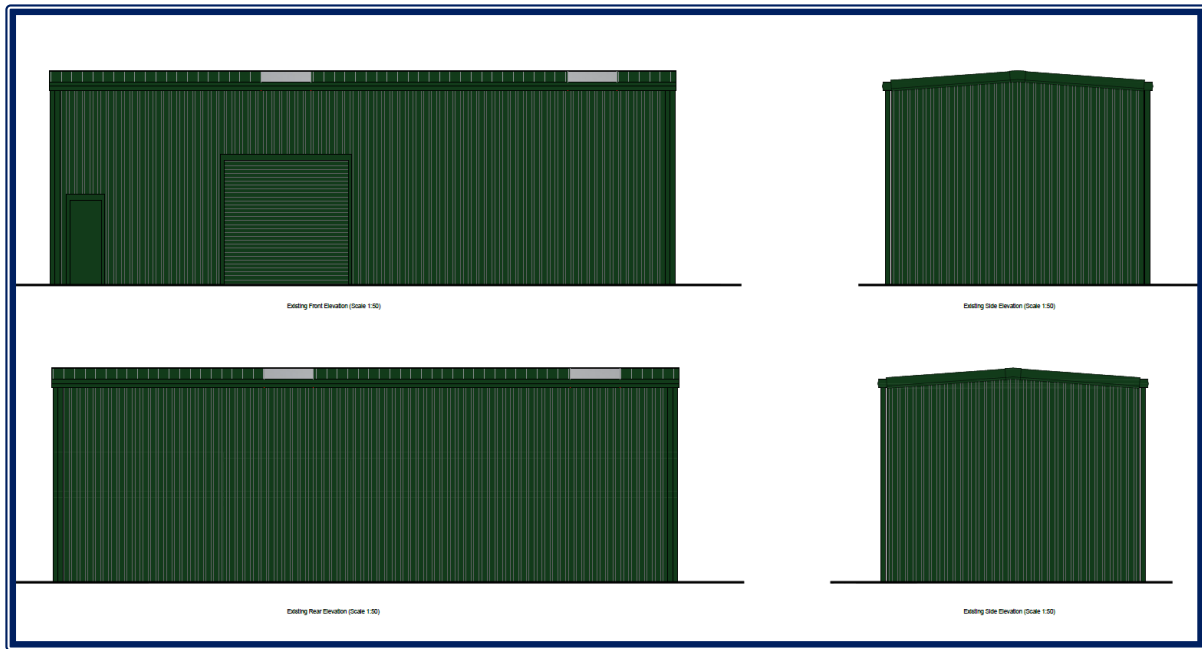


Figure 6: Existing Elevations



Figure 7: Proposed Elevations

- 4.5 The proposed design is considered to be in keeping with the setting and the overall scale would be comparable to existing development within the immediate vicinity, and appropriate in terms of the size of the plot. Given the retention of the overall form, appearance and agricultural character of the host building, there would be no detrimental impact on the countryside setting, with the proposed landscaping aiding in enhancing the setting of the building, as detailed above.

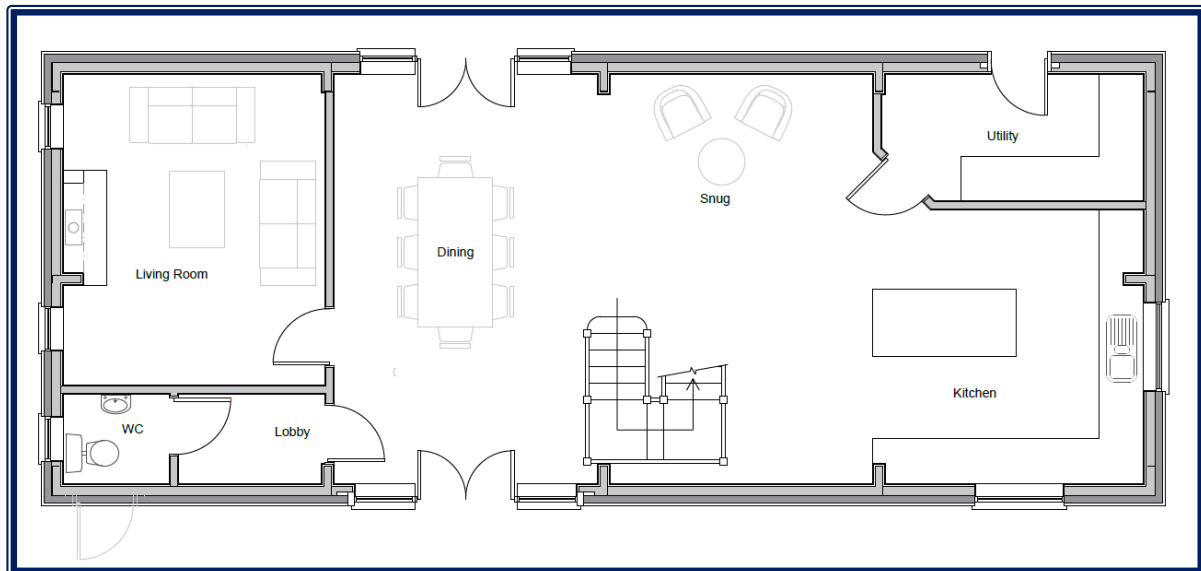


Figure 8: Proposed Ground Floor Plan

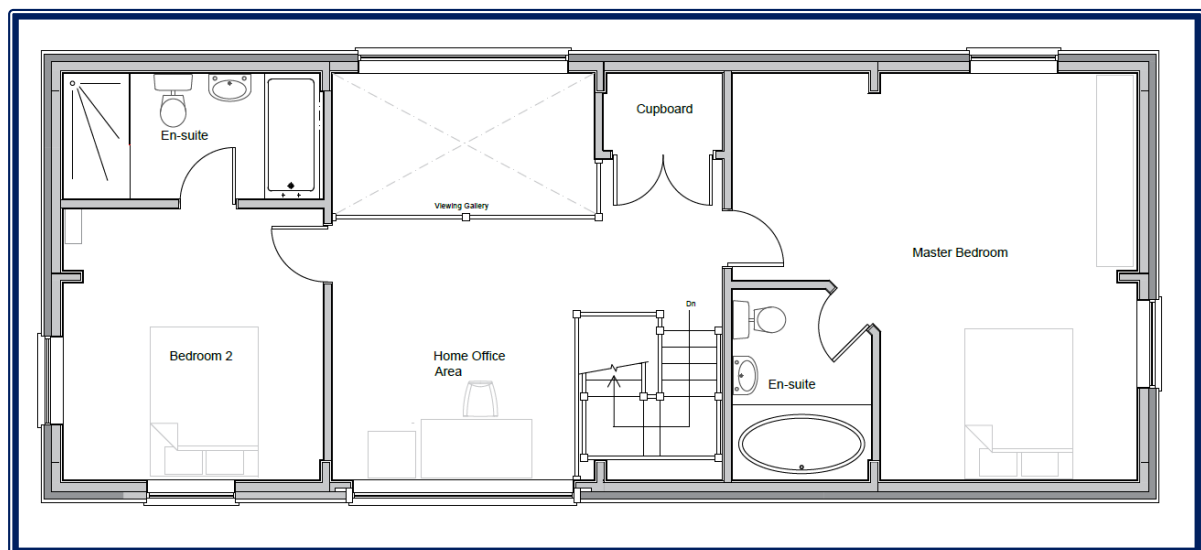


Figure 9: Proposed First Floor Plan

- 4.6 The proposed development is considered to be appropriately separated from neighbouring properties so as to avoid any impact on amenity and would provide a good level of accommodation for future occupiers. Sufficient parking would also be provided, with the development served by an existing access from Coolham Road.
- 4.7 Given the extent and nature of the alterations to the building, which would not include any extensions or changes to the footprint, the proposal would not result in harm to any trees, nor would it unacceptably harm biodiversity, protected species or any priority habitats.
- 4.8 It is noted that under a previous application under planning reference DC/24/1711, while it is acknowledged that this was a different application type (Class Q Prior Approval) the Council considered the location of the site / building to be acceptable for a residential use and that alterations to the building to form a dwelling would not be harmful to the setting.

5. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) and National Guidance

- 5.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England 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.
- 5.2 Running throughout the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is achieved through three main objectives which are – economic, social and environmental.
- 5.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that for decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless the policies of the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or, any adverse impact of doing so would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits' when assessed against the policies of the NPPF when taken as a whole (NPPF paragraph 11 d).

Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015)

- 5.4 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF requires that all development plans complete their reviews no later than 5 years from their adoption. Horsham District Council has submitted its new local plan for examination, however at this stage, the emerging policies carry little to no weight in decision-making.
- 5.5 A Local Development Scheme (LDS) was published in February 2025 by the Council. The LDS sets out the production timetable for the New Local Plan anticipated to be adopted in April 2026. Notwithstanding the above, as the HDPF is now over 5 years old, the most important policies for determining this application / appeal are now considered to be 'out-of-date'. This position is further highlighted given that the Horsham District Local Plan examination hearing meetings scheduled for January 2025 were cancelled by the appointed Inspector, and in April 2025 advised that the Plan is withdrawn due to concerns about its legal compliance. Proceedings for the new Local Plan are due to re-open in April 2026, however the new local plan carries limited weight in decision-making at this stage.
- 5.6 The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The presumption in favour of development within Paragraph 11d) of the NPPF therefore applies in the consideration of all applications for housing development within the District, with Policies 2, 4, 15 and 26 now carrying limited weight in decision-making.
- 5.7 While considered to be out of date, the main HDPF policies relevant to this application are as follows:
- Policy 1 - Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
 - Policy 2 - Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
 - Policy 3 - Strategic Policy: Development Hierarchy
 - Policy 4 - Strategic Policy: Settlement Expansion
 - Policy 10 - Rural Economic Development
 - Policy 15 - Strategic Policy: Housing Provision
 - Policy 16 - Strategic Policy: Meeting Local Housing Needs
 - Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
 - Policy 26 - Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection
 - Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
 - Policy 32 - Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
 - Policy 33 - Development Principles

- Policy 35 - Strategic Policy: Climate Change
- Policy 36 - Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
- Policy 37 - Sustainable Construction
- Policy 40 - Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 - Parking

Thakeham Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) (2017)

5.8 While also considered to be out-of-date, the Neighbourhood Plan policies relevant to this application are as follows:

- Thakeham1 - A Spatial Plan for the Parish
- Thakeham6 - Design

Planning Advice Note(s) (PAN)

5.9 Relevant PAN's to this application are as follows:

- Shaping Development in Horsham District
- Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

6. Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The HDPF spatial development strategy as contained within policies 2, 3 & 4 directs development to sites within built-up area boundaries, encourage the effective use of brownfield land, and aim to manage development around the edges of existing settlements in order to protect the rural character and landscape.
- 6.2 The site is located outside of the built-up area and is not allocated within Horsham's adopted development plan (which in this case comprises the HDPF and TNP), while it is again noted that these are now out of date. As a result, residential development in this location would conflict with the requirements of Policies 2 and 4 (Settlement Expansion) of the HDPF. The site is also not in an isolated location therefore the opportunities afforded by Paragraph 84 of the NPPF do not apply in this instance.

- 6.3 Notwithstanding the above, the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, with the latest Authority Monitoring Report (December 2025) detailing a supply of only 1.7 years. Therefore, the tilted balance contained in Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.
- 6.4 While the Council has submitted the New Horsham District Local Plan for examination, as detailed above, the situation with this remains uncertain. As such, the weight given to the above policies and the New Local Plan is therefore limited to none at this stage. In addition, as will be detailed below, there are no material matters which would represent a reason to refuse this application. In any event, any issues or harm that are identified would need to surmount a high hurdle to prevail in this balance.
- 6.5 In addition, the Council has failed its most recent Housing Delivery Test, with the December 2024 test results demonstrating that the Council has only delivered 62% of its housing target in the preceding three years. This itself also triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development under Paragraph 11(d). This is irrespective of a Council's five-year housing land supply position.
- 6.6 It is noted that limited weight should be attached to any conflict with Policy 26 in respect of development outside of built-up area boundaries given that the deficient housing supply position dictates that these boundaries are out of date. As such, the fact that a site may lie outside of the built-up area boundary does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse the application.
- 6.7 Further to the above, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF notes that "in situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11(d)) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:
- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and
 - b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement".
- 6.8 The TNP is now more than five years old. Therefore, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF does not apply and the presumption in favour of sustainable development would not be affected in this instance.

- 6.9 The application building was previously submitted and approved as an agricultural storage barn. The applicants built and have used the building for this purpose, however their aspirations for the building have been significantly altered since 2020-2021, due to health and financial reasons. As a result, they have had to sell the machinery they purchased to use on site and have had to scale back the intended activities substantially. As such, the building is essentially redundant and is no longer needed for its original purpose.
- 6.10 Attention is drawn to Appendix A, which is a recent appeal decision where at Paragraph 36 the Inspector states that – “Although the appeal buildings are currently in use, I have no reason to dispute that they are redundant in terms of no longer being needed or useful”. The building is therefore no longer needed and is available for residential conversion. As such, the fact that it is still partly in use for agricultural storage and taking into account the Inspector’s view within Appendix A, should not form the basis for not accepting the proposed development in principle
- 6.11 The site is located approximately 300m from the built-up area boundary of Thakeham, and in close proximity to bus stops which provide direct public transport links to larger settlements to the north and south, including Abingworth and Storrington. The site is also located in close proximity to the PROW network, providing further opportunities for future occupiers to access nearby services and facilities. While it is acknowledged that future residents would generally be reliant upon private vehicles to meet their day to day needs leading to some harm in this regard, this harm would be tempered by the short distance to a defined built-up area and the close proximity to public transport links.
- 6.12 Indeed, as set out above, the Council have previously considered the site to be appropriately located for residential development, and it is therefore considered that the site is in a sustainable location and future occupants of the proposed dwelling would have reasonably good access to services and facilities.
- 6.13 The proposal relates to the conversion of an existing and established building to a residential dwelling. It is noted that Policy 10 of the HDPF supports the conversion of rural buildings to commercial in the first instance. However, given the spatial context of the site and surroundings, it is considered that a residential use would be more reflective of the surrounding land uses, and therefore more appropriate in this regard. This was also highlighted by the Council within the most recent application for the site, under planning reference DC/24/1711.

- 6.14 In addition to Policy 10 of the HDPF, Policy 32 of the emerging Local Plan introduces more explicit support for the conversion of rural buildings to residential use. Furthermore, the use and more effective use of previously developed land attracts support in the NPPF, as well as in Policy 2 of the HDPF. The subject building is considered to be structurally sound and capable of conversion, which was also confirmed by the Council under the previous application reference number DC/24/1711. The above all weigh in favour of the proposed development.
- 6.15 While considered to be out of date, the development accords with Policies 2, 3 and 4 of the HDPF which encourage the redevelopment of previously developed land and the expansion of settlements outside of built up area boundaries where the level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement type. The development would also accord with Policy 26 in this regard, as the proposal would enable the sustainable development of a rural area.
- 6.16 The NPPF states that isolated homes should be avoided unless the development meets one or more criteria from Paragraph 84. Paragraph 84c is the most relevant to this application, with the development utilising an existing redundant barn. The existing building is discreetly located, behind existing soft landscaping and is not clearly visible or prominent from public vantage points. The building has a typical barn appearance, of a type which is commonly found within rural areas, which would be retained as part of the proposals. In addition, the proposals include landscaping enhancements which would result in a marked improvement to the setting of the host building and site.
- 6.17 It is noted that there are a number of other recent decisions that have granted residential developments outside of the defined built-up areas in other parts of the District. Examples include reference numbers DC/22/0495 and DC/22/2250 which each sought permission for 1no dwelling and were granted at appeal in August 2023 and March 2024 respectively, and DC/23/2278 which sought permission for 8no dwellings and was granted by the Council's planning committee in April 2024.
- 6.18 A very recent appeal decision issued in October 2025 under planning reference DC/24/1486, granted permission for a new build dwelling approximately 2 miles away from the closest built-up area boundary. Within the appeal decision the Inspector states that:

- “27. The proposed dwelling would be in a location that is not considered suitable when assessed against the relevant HDPF and NP policies. The site lacks close proximity to a wide range of essential services and facilities. Although there are some opportunities for travel by means other than private car, reliance on car journeys is likely to be significant. In these respects, the proposal would conflict with key development plan policies.
28. Balanced against the harm are a number of benefits. The overall housing supply remains significantly deficient, and the provision of an additional dwelling would make a meaningful contribution to addressing this shortfall. The Framework recognises that small sites can make an important contribution to housing supply and are often built out quickly. There would also be modest economic benefits during construction and through local spending, as well as a small contribution to housing diversity. While the scale of these benefits is modest given that only one dwelling is proposed, in the context of current housing pressures, even a single additional home represents a valuable and positive contribution.
29. Taking all matters into account, the adverse impacts of granting permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole. Consequently, the proposal benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development as defined in paragraph 11d of the Framework.”

- 6.19 Another example of permitted dwellings outside of a defined built up area can be seen under planning reference DC/24/1887 which granted outline planning consent for 2no detached dwellings in December 2025. This application was granted at planning committee.
- 6.20 Further, more recent examples of applications for the conversion of existing buildings to dwellings include reference numbers DC/23/0627 which sought permission for the conversion of stables and was granted at appeal in December 2024; DC/21/0501 and DC/24/1710 which each sought permission for the conversion of existing buildings to form 1no dwelling and were both granted under delegated powers by the Council in January 2025 and DC/23/1023, which also sought permission for the conversion of an existing barn building to form 1no dwelling and was granted under delegated powers by the Council in March 2025.

- 6.21 While it is acknowledged that every application and site context should be considered on its own merits, taking into account the current situation of the Council in terms of its 5-year housing supply and the above examples, there is an expectation that a consistent approach is applied to decision making.
- 6.22 It is highlighted that the above permitted dwellings were located outside of any defined built-up areas. The above examples clearly show that notwithstanding the distances to the respective settlement boundaries, these boundaries are now considered to be out of date given the lack of 5-year housing supply. As such, the tilted balance is engaged and the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable.
- 6.23 This position is referenced at paragraph 6.6 above and confirmed by the Inspector within the appeal decision in relation to application reference DC/22/0495, which states “I have attached limited weight to the conflict with HDPF Policy 26 in respect of development outside of built-up area boundaries. The housing shortfall dictates that those boundaries are out of date. I consider that some weight can still be given to the strategy set out within HDPF Policy 2, in terms of the general locations of new development, but the fact that a site may lie outside of the built-up area boundary does not, in and of itself, constitute a reason to refuse planning permission”.
- 6.24 Notwithstanding this viewpoint, given the close proximity of the site to a defined built-up area, it is considered that the proposal would accord with criterion 4 of Policy 26 of the HDPF, as it would enable the sustainable development of rural areas. This would be the case for this application site, with the application seeking the conversion of an existing building and as future occupiers would have access to a range of facilities and services, similar to that of existing neighbouring residential properties within the vicinity.
- 6.25 The housing supply position of the Council is deficient. 1no additional dwelling would contribute towards the much-needed supply of dwellings. Small sites can often be built out relatively quickly. There would be economic benefits arising from construction and spend in the local economy. Although these benefits are tempered by the small contribution that 1no dwelling would make in the context of the current circumstances, the additional dwelling would be valuable.

- 6.26 In summary, given the lack of a 5-year housing supply, the location of the site close to a defined built-up area and public transport links, relevant recent examples of housing developments permitted outside of settlement boundaries, including the conversion of existing rural buildings, and the resulting landscape enhancement that the development would achieve, the principle of residential development is therefore acceptable.

Design, Appearance, and Impact on the Setting

- 6.27 Policy 25 of the HDPF seeks to protect the natural environment and landscape character of the District, including the landform, development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats. Development will be required to protect, conserve, and enhance landscape and townscape character, taking account of areas or features identified as being of landscape importance, individual settlement characteristics and settlement separation. In addition, development will be supported where it maintains and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network.
- 6.28 Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF require development to be of a high standard of design and layout. Development proposals must be locally distinctive in character and respect the character of their surroundings. Where relevant, the scale, massing and appearance of development will be required to relate sympathetically with its built-surroundings, landscape, open spaces and to consider any impact on the skyline and important views.
- 6.29 As set out above, the proposals have been developed and formulated with regard to the existing context of the building and site and have sought to retain the agricultural character of the building, as well as enhance its setting.
- 6.30 As detailed within the submitted plans, the overall form, external appearance and materials making up the walls and roof of the host building would be retained. The building is considered to be suitable for conversion, with minimal window and door openings proposed at varied positions and sizes. Overall, the agricultural features of the barn building would be retained and enhanced, ensuring that the character of the resulting dwelling remains as existing, resulting in an appropriate appearance within this setting.

- 6.31 The development would not encroach beyond the existing footprint of the building, with a detailed landscaping scheme submitted resulting in a marked enhancement of the setting of the building and limiting any impact on the countryside location. The external alterations to the building have been sensitively designed and are considered to enhance the setting. The existing building is discreetly located, behind an area of extensive soft landscaping to the north and west, and as such is not clearly visible from public vantage points.
- 6.32 Therefore, it is considered that given the resulting design of the conversion, the fact that the existing character of the building would be preserved and the landscape enhancements, the proposed dwelling would not appear as a prominent or alien feature within this setting. The proposal is considered to relate well to its surroundings and is considered to result in an enhancement to the site and surroundings. Given the sensitive conversion and overall appearance and scale of building which would be retained, it is viewed that the proposed residential use of the site would not detract from the landscape character.
- 6.33 In addition to the landscaping proposals submitted, the applicant is also happy to provide additional planting and is willing to accept a landscaping condition as part of any permission if the Council deem this to be necessary.
- 6.34 The proposed development would result in a development of high quality, and would appropriately reflect the character and visual amenities of the countryside location. This is further highlighted by the fact that the existing site already has an approved hardstanding / parking area, and there is no requirement or need to add any associated residential paraphernalia to the site.
- 6.35 Overall, the proposals would represent appropriate development within this setting, overcoming the concerns and reason for refusal 2 within the previously refused application under planning reference DC/25/0462, and would be in accordance with Policies 25, 30, 32 and 33 of the HDPF.

Neighbouring Amenity and Environment for Future Occupiers

- 6.36 Policy 33 of the HDPF states that permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the occupiers/users of nearby properties and land.

- 6.37 Given the relationship of the proposed dwelling, as indicated on the site plans provided, with neighbouring properties, it is considered that the proposals would not have a detrimental impact in terms of overlooking, overbearing effect or loss of light to neighbouring residential properties. In addition, it is contended that there would be no significant issues in terms of harmful noise or disturbance generated as a result of the proposed development, beyond that of the existing use of the site. The proposed dwelling would be of an appropriate size and would comply with national space standards and appropriate external amenity space would also be provided for future occupiers.
- 6.38 Overall, the proposed development would not result in demonstrable harm to neighbouring amenity and would therefore be in accordance with Policy 33 of the HDPF.

Parking and Highways

- 6.39 Policies 40 and 41 of the Horsham District Planning Framework relate to transport and parking, and state that more transport choice including community transport where appropriate will be encouraged, as well as a reduction in private car use and greater accessibility to more sustainable modes of transport. The district has a good rail network so the increased use of stations will be encouraged through better pedestrian and cycle links. Adequate parking and facilities must be provided within developments to meet the needs of anticipated users.
- 6.40 The plans indicate that the proposals would be served by an existing access to the site located to the south-west from Coolham Road. As such, no highway safety concerns would be apparent. The provision of 1no dwelling would not result in a marked increase in trips to and from the site which would be detrimental to the function of the highway network, particularly when compared to the existing use of the site.
- 6.41 Sufficient space for vehicle parking would be available on site, and overall, the proposals would be acceptable in this regard.

Ecological and Biodiversity Considerations / Enhancements

6.42 Policy 31 of the HDPF states that –

“Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and/or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks”.

6.43 The application is supported by an email from Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology which confirms that given the age and condition of the building, it has no bat roost potential, and does not require any further investigation. In addition, given that the proposals would not encroach beyond the existing footprint of the building, it is viewed that there would be no detrimental impact on existing trees, habitats or species, in accordance with Policy 31 of the HDPF.

7. Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Overall, given the position of the Council with regard to its 5-year housing supply, the location of the site in close proximity to a defined built-up area and public transport links to larger settlements, the use of an existing and established building and recent decisions relating to residential development outside of built-up areas, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development, resulting in the sustainable development of this rural location.

7.2 The proposals for 1no dwelling would be commensurate with the prevailing character of the vicinity and there would be no detrimental impact on the rural location, resulting in an overall enhancement of the site and the setting of the host building. The proposals would also be acceptable when considered against all other material matters, as detailed within this statement and supporting information.

- 7.3 There are no adverse impacts of granting permission which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of an additional dwelling when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied and Paragraph 11(d) indicates that permission should be granted.
- 7.4 As such, while now considered to be out of date, the proposals would be in accordance with Policies 2, 4, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33 and 34 of the HDPF and therefore the Local Planning Authority is respectfully requested to grant planning permission accordingly.