

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(2)	23/02550/FULMAJ Hamstead Marshall	6 th February 2024 ¹	Demolition of Redundant Farmstead Buildings, New House, Relocated Barn, Change of Use of Field Area for Re-Location of Solar Panels and Significant Landscape/ Biodiversity Enhancement. Elm Farm Hamstead Marshall Newbury RG20 0HR Mr and Mrs D Oppenheim
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 23 rd September 2024			

The application can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link:

<https://publicaccess.westberks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=S3TCOJRD0HE00>

Recommendation Summary:	To delegate to the Development Manager to REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the reasons listed in section 8 of this report.
Ward Member(s):	Councillor Dennis Benneyworth, Councillor Denise Gaines, Councillor Tony Vickers
Reason for Committee Determination:	Called-in to be determined by committee if Officers' recommend refusal by Councillor Tony Vickers
Committee Site Visit:	12 th September 2024

Contact Officer Details

Name:	Jake Brown
Job Title:	Principal Planning Officer
Tel No:	01635 519111
Email:	jake.brown@westberks.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the proposed development against the policies of the development plan and the relevant material considerations, and to make a decision as to whether to approve or refuse the application.
- 1.2 The application site forms part of a previous agricultural holding that was sold off in 8 separate lots in 2020. The application site, agricultural land, farmhouse, traditional listed barn and converted courtyard buildings of Elm Farm were sold as single lot (lot 1), the total area of which comprises 19.53ha. The farmhouse, traditional Grade II listed barn and converted courtyard buildings of Elm Farm are located to the north-east of the application site. Agricultural land is located to the southeast, south and west of the application site comprising approximately 17.5ha.
- 1.3 Within the application site are 3 large modern portal-framed barns, one of which has solar panels on its roof, as well as a slurry tank. Much of the application site is covered with hardstanding. The application site has an existing access onto the public highway to the northeast, separate from the access to the converted courtyard buildings and farmhouse.
- 1.4 This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of barns, relocation and reduction of an existing barn, re-siting of solar panels, change of use of land to residential and erection of a two and half storey dwelling with a single storey wing and a single storey detached annex. The proposal includes the creation of a new residential curtilage to serve the dwelling and annex which is proposed to be formally landscaped. In addition, planting of a new orchard in the northeastern corner of the site is proposed. Hedgerow and tree planting are proposed within the application site, and additional planting on land within the applicant's ownership is also proposed.
- 1.5 An existing barn is to be reduced in size and relocated to the northwestern part of the application site, outside of the proposed residential curtilage, to provide storage for agricultural and maintenance machinery in connection with the agricultural land within the applicant's ownership (blue line area shown on the location plan).
- 1.6 The applicant advises that the agricultural land is currently grazed by sheep, and this was evident from your Officer's initial site visit, together with use of part of the land for the grazing of horses. At the time of your Officer's initial site visit, the barns were generally empty except for a parked car and a few hay bales. The applicant states that all of the remaining agricultural fields will be rotationally grazed by sheep in order to give the grass time to recover and for other plant species to break through.
- 1.7 The solar panels located on the roof of one of the barns are proposed to be relocated to the roof on the existing barn that is moved to the northwestern corner of the site as well as an area of agricultural land adjacent to the repositioned barn.

2. Relevant Planning History

- 2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site.

Application	Proposal	Decision Date /
77/06450/ADD	Six bay dutch barn to replace building destroyed by fire for use as hay & straw storage	Approved 31.05.1977

84/21310/ADD	Use of one room in existing farm house as farm shop	Approved 17.04.1984
93/43324/ADD	Vertical extension to cylindrical tower for storage of cattle slurry.	Approved 11.10.1993
97/50980/FUL	Lean to onto existing sheds- livestock and general purpose.	Approved 14.08.1997
99/56285/FUL	Temporary office accommodation and storage area	Approved 19.01.2000
00/01025/FUL	Conversion of existing redundant farm buildings to offices, extension to provide reception and additional office.	Approved 27.08.2002
00/01026/LBC	Conversion of existing barns to offices, no structural changes. Extension to provide reception and office. Alteration to existing ground floor.	Approved 27.08.2002
05/00665/LBC	Section 19 to vary condition 1. (Time Limit) of application no. 00/01026.	Approved 25.04.2005
06/00010/FULD	Change of use from existing (B1) offices to dwelling house (C3) as original	Approved 08.03.2006
06/02389/LBC2	Conversion of existing barn to offices. Extension to provide reception and office alteration to ground floor.	Approved 02.02.2007
06/02401/FUL	Conversion of existing redundant farm buildings to offices. Extension to provide reception and additional office.	Approved 02.02.2007
07/01904/LBC	Removal of fire escape.	Approved 23.10.2007
14/00481/COMIND	Demolish old dilapidated cattle buildings and replace with new building with photo voltaic roof system	Approved 09.06.2014
17/00258/FUL	Rear two storey extension to farmhouse. Regularisation of existing uses within building to include offices and short term accommodation for events, staff, students and interns.	Approved 05.10.2017
19/00378/FULD	Change of use from (B1) offices to dwelling house (C3).	Approved 02.05.2019
20/00196/FULD	Conversion of former research laboratory and offices to a single dwellinghouse (C3); with associated parking, turning, landscaping, private amenity space, and access.	Approved 09.04.2020

20/00197/LBC2	Conversion of former research laboratory and offices to a single dwellinghouse (C3); with associated parking, turning, landscaping, private amenity space, and access.	Approved 09.04.2020
20/00997/COND1	Application for approval of details reserved by Condition 4 - Boundary Treatment, Condition 5 - Surface Water Drainage Method, Condition 6 - Scheme of Landscaping and Condition 7 - Electric Vehicle Charging, of planning permission reference 20/00196/FULD.	Approved 25.06.2020
20/00998/COND1	Application for approval of details reserved by Condition 4 - Details of Doors and Windows and 5 - Schedule of Works ,of planning permission reference 20/00197/LBC2.	Approved 05.05.2020
20/02011/FUL	Installation of window and filling in of existing window	Approved 30.12.2020
20/02012/LBC2	Installation of window and filling in of existing window	Approved 30.12.2020
21/00098/FUL	Full planning permission for the partial demolition and conversion of a barn to a single residential dwelling	Refused 19.03.2021

3. Legal and Procedural Matters

- 3.1 **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA):** Whilst the nature and scale of this development is not considered to fall within the description of any development listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, it is in a sensitive location in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. However, given the limited type of development within the meaning of the EIA Regulations, an EIA screening is not required.
- 3.2 **Publicity:** Publicity has been undertaken in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Site notices were displayed on 17th November 2023 attached to two road signs, one of which is outside of the site access and the other further east, with a deadline for representations of 29th December 2023. A public notice was displayed in the Newbury Weekly News on 23rd November 2023; with a deadline for representations of 7th December 2023.
- 3.3 **Local Financial Considerations:** Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that a local planning authority must have regard to a local finance consideration as far as it is material. Whether or not a 'local finance consideration' is material to a particular decision will depend on whether it could help to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It would not be appropriate to make a decision based on the potential for the development to raise money for a local authority or other government body. The table below identified the relevant local financial considerations for this proposal.

Consideration	Applicable to proposal	Material to decision	Refer to paragraph(s)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	Yes	No	
New Homes Bonus	Yes	No	
Affordable Housing	No	No	
Public Open Space or Play Areas	No	No	
Developer Contributions (S106)	No	No	
Job Creation	No	No	

- 3.4 **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** CIL is a levy charged on most new development within an authority area. The money is used to pay for new infrastructure supporting the development of an area by funding the provision, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure. This can include roads and transport facilities, schools and education facilities, flood defences, medical facilities, open spaces, and sports and recreational areas. CIL will be charged on residential (C3 and C4) and retail (A1 - A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more than 100 square metres of net floorspace (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres).
- 3.5 Based on the CIL PAIR form, it appears that the development proposed would be CIL liable. However, CIL liability will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following the grant of any permission. More information is available at www.westberks.gov.uk/cil.
- 3.6 **New Homes Bonus (NHB):** New Homes Bonus payments recognise the efforts made by authorities to bring residential development forward. NHB money will be material to the planning application when it is reinvested in the local areas in which the developments generating the money are to be located, or when it is used for specific projects or infrastructure items which are likely to affect the operation or impacts of those developments. NHB is not considered to be a relevant material consideration in this instance, but can be noted for information.
- 3.7 **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):** In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Council must have due regard to the need to achieve the following objectives:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.8 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to—

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
 - (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
 - (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 3.9 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage, the duty is to have regard to and remove or minimise disadvantage. In considering the merits of this planning application, due regard has been given to these objectives.
- 3.10 There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.
- 3.11 **Human Rights Act:** The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, including Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of property), Article 6 (Right to a fair trial) and Article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life and home) of the Act itself. The consideration of the application in accordance with the Council procedures will ensure that views of all those interested are taken into account. All comments from interested parties have been considered and reported in summary in this report, with full text available via the Council's website.
- 3.12 Any interference with property rights is in the public interest and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 regime for controlling the development of land. This recommendation is based on the consideration of the proposal against adopted Development Plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the Human Rights of the applicant or any third party.
- 3.13 **Listed building setting:** Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 16(2) has the same requirement for proposals for listed building consent. There is a Grade II listed building (barn) adjacent to the application site and a Grade II listed Old Post Office, northeast of the application site. The impact on the setting of those Grade II listed buildings is undertaken within the applicant's Historic Impact Assessment and considered in this report.

4. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 4.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received to the application as originally submitted. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report.

Consultation Responses to Original Application Submissions

Hamstead Marshall Parish Council:	<p>Support. The plans have been intelligently designed and sets a gold standard for this kind of development. It achieves a sustainable development, making effective use of the land. It protects the rural setting within which the scheme will exist. It conserves and indeed enhances the natural environment by removing unwanted and dis-used steel-clad barns and the removal of hard standing concrete. This aspect alone, helps to restore the land to its natural environment. Providing for much needed nutrients to re-enter the soil and for nitrogen to be formed for the re-establishment of vegetation.</p> <p>The discovery of a very old orchard, most likely established hundreds of years ago will be rejuvenated and indigenous apples trees to be planted. The orchard will attract more much needed species diversity including pollinators. Hamstead Marshall Parish Council notes that the United Kingdom has lost approximately 60% in species diversity.</p> <p>There is a value added to Hamstead Marshall. It uplifts the community and restores the loss of biodiversity. The creation of new habitats is an excellent example of good countryside stewardship.</p>
WBC Highways:	No objections subject to conditions to secure: construction method statement, electric vehicle charging point, surfacing of access, and parking in accordance with plans.
WBC Environmental Health:	No objections.
WBC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	Object – Flood Risk Assessment is required.
WBC Tree Officer:	No objections subject to conditions to secure tree protection and landscaping.
WBC Archaeologist:	The proposals documents don't appear to make any reference to heritage assets of archaeological interest. I do not believe there would be much potential for surviving deposits below the modern farmyard of Elm Farm, but it is possible there are below ground features of multiple periods within the surrounding fields. This is relevant in terms of the ecological proposals also included in the document, such as digging ponds or undertaking large amounts of planting. Ridge and furrow earthworks were once recorded in the holding, though these may have been levelled, and cropmarks of a possible enclosure were also seen. Adding in the historic dimension to the ecological appraisal would give a much rounder and more holistic picture.
WBC Conservation Officer:	Application considered to be acceptable on balance, subject to conditions to secure materials, hard surfacing details, details of windows and doors.
Berkshire Newt Officer:	We are generally satisfied with the ecological reports, but it is considered that there is a low risk of great crested newt presence within the red line boundary. Both ecological reports state that great crested newts are likely to use the wider site, and there are no barriers between the wider site and the red line boundary

	<p>area. There is also some suitable terrestrial habitat within the red line boundary and there are great crested newt records within 250m of the red line boundary, both to the north and the south of the road. It is therefore recommended that reasonable avoidance measures are followed to further reduce the risk of impacts to great crested newts. Precautionary measures are provided for reptiles in the AE Ecology report so it is recommended that these are amended to include reference to amphibians. It is also recommended that these measures include the requirement of a suitably qualified ecologist to oversee destructive works in areas of suitable terrestrial habitat. As these amendments would be minor, they could be provided following planning determination.</p> <p>Alternatively, the applicant has the option to enquire for West Berkshire Council's District Licence to cover works within the red line boundary. This would provide full legal cover for the works in regard to great crested newt impacts, and would avoid the need to stop works if great crested newts are found within the site.</p>
Environment Agency:	Do not wish to be consulted.
Active Travel England:	No comments to make.
WBC Ecologist:	No response received.
Thames Water:	No response received.
Thames Valley Police:	No response received.
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue:	No response received.
SPOKES:	No response received.
WBC Waste Service:	No response received.
WBC Economic Development:	No response received.
WBC Transport Policy:	No response received.
WBC Environment Team:	No response received.
North Wessex Downs:	No response received.
Ramblers' Association:	No response received.

- 4.2 The table below summarises the consultation responses received to the package of amendments and additional information that was submitted during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council’s website, using the link at the start of this report.

Consultation Responses to Amended Application Submissions

Hamstead Marshall Parish Council:	No objections to the changes proposed.
WBC Highways:	No further highway comments.
WBC Environmental Health:	No objections.
WBC Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	No response received.
WBC Tree Officer:	No response received.
WBC Archaeologist:	No further comments other than to reiterate that a consideration of the wider historic environment would be beneficial if there are new ponds being dug and trees being planted in the fields around the redevelopment site.
WBC Conservation Officer:	As per previous comments - Application considered to be acceptable on balance, subject to conditions to secure materials, hard surfacing details, details of windows and doors.
Berkshire Newt Officer:	No response received.
WBC Ecologist:	No objections subject to conditions to secure compliance with ecological and biodiversity net gain assessments, construction and environmental management plan, lighting design strategy for light sensitive biodiversity, updated surveys.
North Wessex Downs:	No response received.
Thames Water:	No response received.
WBC Minerals and Waste Team:	No response received.

Public representations

- 4.3 Representations have been received from 23 contributors, all of which support the proposal.
- 4.4 The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. In summary, the following points have been raised:
- Existing farm buildings are redundant, unattractive and spoil village environment.
 - Proposed new house is well designed, sympathetic and would enhance the village and environs.
 - Existing buildings not suitable for any farming activity.
 - Proposal will improve views from village and footpaths.
 - Proposal will improve landscape and biodiversity.

5. Planning Policy

- 5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.
- Policies ADDP1, ADPP5, CS1, CS4, CS5, CS13, CS14, CS15, CS16, CS17, CS18, CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (WBCS).
 - Policies C1, C3, C4, P1 of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2006-2026 (HSA DPD).
 - Policies OVS.5, OVS.6 and TRANS.1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).
- 5.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
 - North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24
 - WBC Quality Design SPD (2006)
 - WBC Sustainable Drainage Systems SPD (2018)
 - Hamstead Marshall Village Design Statement
 - West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019
 - North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002
 - North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement - Housing 2012

6. Appraisal

- 6.1 The main issues for consideration in this application are:
- Principle of Development
 - Design, Character and Appearance
 - Historic Environment
 - Impact on Highways
 - Neighbouring Amenity

- Flooding and Drainage
- Biodiversity and Landscaping
- Sustainable Construction

Principle of Development

- 6.2 The application site is located outside of any designated settlement boundary, within the open countryside and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB). Policy ADPP1 states that most development will be within or adjacent to the settlements included in the settlement hierarchy set out in that policy. The nearest settlement boundary to the application site is the Kintbury Service Village, some 2.5km (straight line) to the northwest. Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy goes on to advise that in the open countryside, only appropriate limited development will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy.
- 6.3 No information has been submitted that demonstrates there is a need for housing in the local area, nor is the proposed dwelling considered necessary as the Local Planning Authority has a sufficient 5-year housing land supply. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal would contribute to the maintenance of a strong rural economy. The application submissions consider the existing barns redundant due to reduced associated agricultural land following the sale of the wider agricultural unit into individual lots. The remaining agricultural land within the applicants' ownership is approximately 17.5ha and the applicants have advised that agricultural activity would continue to take place on that land. The application seeks to retain (and reduce in size) one of the existing barns for agricultural purposes outside of the proposed residential curtilage, demonstrating that the existing barns are not entirely redundant. Furthermore, the applicant has submitted a commercial use appraisal for the existing barns which considers there to be a strong demand for rural commercial workshop/storage units and advises that the existing barns are suitable for such uses, subject to some upgrading of the barns. Therefore, it is not considered that the barns are redundant, and they have the potential to address identified needs and maintain a strong rural economy. The works would be primarily domestic in nature and would result in the loss of agricultural land as well as modern agricultural buildings.
- 6.4 Policy ADPP5 of the Core Strategy identifies that there will be further opportunities for infill development and for development on previously developed land within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and advises that new housing allocations will be focused on rural service centres and service villages. Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) excludes land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings from being considered as previously developed land. Therefore, as the lawful use of the application site and existing buildings is for agricultural purposes, the application site is not considered as previously developed land. Furthermore, Hamstead Marshall is not a rural service centre or service village as identified in Policy ADPP1 and as such the principle of the proposed dwelling runs contrary to Policy ADPP5 of the Core Strategy.
- 6.5 Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy states that new housing shall primarily be on suitable previously developed land within settlement boundaries, other suitable land within settlement boundaries or on the strategic or allocated sites as set out in subsequent development plan documents. The application site is located outside of, and far from, any settlement boundary, and on greenfield land based on the definition provided within the NPPF. Therefore, the proposed new dwelling is not in accordance with Policy CS1.
- 6.6 Policy C1 of the HSA DPD relates specifically to proposals for new housing in the countryside and states a presumption against new residential development outside settlement boundaries. However, Policy C1 also advises that infill development may be considered where:

- it is within a closely knit cluster of 10 or more existing dwellings adjacent to, or fronting an existing highway;
 - the scale of development consists of infilling a small undeveloped plot commensurate with the scale and character of existing dwellings within an otherwise built up frontage;
 - it does not extend the existing frontage; and,
 - the plot size and spacing between dwellings is similar to adjacent properties and respects the rural character and street scene of the locality.
- 6.7 Policy C1 of the HSADPD also states that planning permission will not be granted where a proposal harms or undermines the existing relationship of the settlement within the open countryside, where it does not contribute to the character and distinctiveness of a rural area, including the natural beauty of the National Landscape or where development would have an adverse cumulative impact on the environment or highway safety.
- 6.8 Two existing dwellings are located to the north-east of the application site alongside the road and the proposed dwelling is to be set back from the road to the rear of those dwellings. Across the road from the proposed access to the application site is a group of residential properties and the wider area alongside the road comprises residential properties with an overall uneven and spacious layout and varying distances between curtilages. The application site is not considered to fall within a closely knit cluster of 10 or more existing dwellings adjacent to or fronting an existing highway. In addition, the proposed dwelling would be significantly set-back from the road and would not comprise a small undeveloped plot commensurate with the scale and character of existing dwellings within an otherwise built-up frontage. The proposed dwelling would be located away from other built forms and be larger in scale and curtilage than those nearby. Therefore, the proposal does not meet the above criteria, and runs contrary to Policy C1.
- 6.9 The relevant policies in Local Plan Review indicate the same direction of travel in planning policy terms for the restriction of housing in the open countryside and the proposal would not accord with Policies SP1, SP3 and DM1 of the emerging Local Plan.
- 6.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, paragraph 84) advises that Local Planning Authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as: an essential need for rural worker; securing the future of heritage assets; re-use of redundant buildings; or the design is of exceptional quality.
- 6.11 The application submissions do not seek to rely on paragraph 84 of the NPPF in support of the proposal and the development proposed is not considered to fall within the special circumstances identified in the NPPF.
- 6.12 The application site is located in an area that is not well served by public transport or other means of sustainable travel and does not have good access to key services and facilities. Therefore, the application site is not in a sustainable location and occupants of the new residential dwelling would be reliant on the car for access to services and facilities, contrary to Policy CS13 and CS14 of the Core Strategy.
- 6.13 Therefore, the principle of the development of a residential dwelling and change of use of land to residential is not in general accordance with both the current and emerging local development plans, and the NPPF.
- 6.14 In their application submissions, the applicant contends that the conversion of one of the existing barns to a residential dwelling could be achieved through a separate planning application, such that the principle of a residential dwelling being located within

the site is a fallback position is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

- 6.15 As shown in the planning history section of this report, an application was submitted seeking permission for the partial demolition and conversion of a barn to a single residential dwelling (ref: 21/00098/FUL). However, that application was refused for the following reasons:
- Insufficient justification that the building is no longer required and likely subsequent request for replacement agricultural buildings.
 - The barn is not capable of being converted without extensive redevelopment, substantial rebuilding, or alteration.
 - The conversion and residential curtilage would not be of high quality design and would not sit well in the surrounding rural agricultural character and appearance of the site and the area.
- 6.16 Whilst the applicant has sought in their submissions to demonstrate why an application for the conversion of part of one of the barns would be acceptable, that is given limited weight as no such permission has been granted and a recent application for such development was refused.
- 6.17 In respect of the proposed relocated (and reduced) barn and placement of solar panels on agricultural land, those elements are considered acceptable in principle in accordance with Policies ADPP1 and ADPP5 of the Core Strategy as well as the NPPF.

Design, Character and Appearance

- 6.18 Policy CS14 requires new developments to demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. The Policy advises that considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate area, but to the wider locality.
- 6.19 Policy CS14 also sets out that development proposals will be expected to, amongst others: create safe environments; make good provision for access; are accessible; make efficient use of land whilst respecting the density, character, landscape and biodiversity of the surrounding area.
- 6.20 Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy outlines that in order to ensure that the diversity and local distinctiveness of the landscape character of the District is conserved and enhanced, the natural, cultural, and functional components of its character will be considered as a whole. In adopting this holistic approach, particular regard has been given to the sensitivity of the area to change and ensuring that the new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement history, form, pattern and character.
- 6.21 Policy C3 of the HSADPD states that the design of new housing in the countryside must have regard to the impact individually and collectively on the landscape character of the area and its sensitivity to change. The Policy goes on to consider that development should be designed having regard to the character of the area in which it is located taking account of the local settlement and building character.
- 6.22 The Council has adopted a Supplementary Planning Document series entitled Quality Design (SPDQD). Part 2 of SPDQD provides detailed design guidance on residential development. It offers guidance on how to preserve residential character by emphasising that respecting the physical massing of an existing residential area is a critical part of protecting residential character.

- 6.23 The West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment 2019 places the application site within Landscape Character Area WH1: Inkpen Woodland and Heath Mosaic. That character area is considered to be a topographically complex area with ridges and shallow valleys, incised by numerous small streams flowing from the spring line where the chalk meets the clay. Additionally, woodland is considered to dominate the land cover, interspersed with arable and pasture fields and small areas of heathland. The extent of connected woodland creates an enclosed and very rural character despite the extent of settlement. The LCA identifies increasing development pressures in the area to construct new dwellings which change the character of the rural villages. One of the landscape strategies it identifies is to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlements and rural character in the area.
- 6.24 Alongside the West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment is the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2002. The application site is located within character area 8E: Highclere Lowlands and Heath of that assessment. The key management requirements it identifies are to conserve and enhance the quiet, secluded character of the area and maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement with its small hamlets and loose linear settlements and prevent gradual merging and coalesce.
- 6.25 The North Wessex Down AONB Management Plan highlights the change of use of land to domestic garden use and new housing on greenfield sites to be key issues for the National Landscape, together with the loss of rural character through suburbanising influences such as fencing, lighting parking areas, paved footpaths and new garden areas. The Management Plan sets out policies for development within the National Landscape which seek to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs and require high standards of design including comprehensive landscaping and use of traditional materials. The Management Plan also seeks the use of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) to help inform proposals.
- 6.26 Alongside the Management Plan, the North Wessex Down National Landscape body have produced a position statement on housing which identifies that new house building in the countryside brings with it a level of domestication with features including lighting, new drives, gardens, sheds, car parking, traffic, washing lines and even bins. It considers that even if a new dwelling is not particularly visible there is often a change in character resulting from new house building. The position statement advises that developments should integrate well into the historical pattern and character of the settlement, should respect the local tradition, respect and conserve and not obstruct public views to higher slopes, skylines, or sweeping views across the landscape or landmark views within the settlements.
- 6.27 The NPPF considers that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes and the scale and extent of development within all these National Landscapes should be limited.
- 6.28 The application site comprises 3 large modern portal-framed barns one of which has solar panels on its roof, as well as a slurry tank. The existing barn structures are between approximately 3.5 and 4.5 metres tall. Those structure are visible from the surroundings, particularly from the public right of way (HAMS/7/1) to the south and east of the site as well as in glimpses from the road. The application site is located within a valley with ground levels rising directly to the south and to the north opposite, beyond the road.
- 6.29 Given the sensitive location of the proposed development in the National Landscape, a LVIA was requested from the applicant. Unfortunately, whilst a document titled 'Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' was submitted it did not comprise an assessment undertaken in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact

Assessment (GLVIA 3rd Ed.) industry standard. Therefore, the assessment submitted by the applicant cannot be relied upon to represent a full LVIA and has limited weight in the determination of the application.

- 6.30 The applicant considers the current built form on the site to be visually intrusive to the landscape setting and heritage assets of the historic farmstead. They go on to consider that the reduced amount of built form from the proposal in terms of volume (by over 75%) - although the existing barns are largely open sided - and footprint (under 25% of existing buildings) will result in far less visual impact and sit more comfortably within its setting.
- 6.31 Whilst it is acknowledged that the large existing barns are bulky in scale and not considered attractive in appearance, they are structures commonly found in West Berkshire's rural areas and the National Landscape. The buildings are of a proportion and materiality that are expected in modern agricultural practice, and as such the existing barns do not necessarily appear out of place. However, they are located away from the general built form in the area, extending into agricultural land beyond the general settlement of Hamstead Marshall, whilst acknowledging that the built form of the neighbouring animal welfare site extends further south.
- 6.32 The proposal would see the existing barns (and slurry tank) removed and a new dwelling of slightly greater height than the existing barns, positioned close to the centre of the site. Whilst the proposed dwelling would not be sited as far south within the site as an existing barn to be removed, its associated residential curtilage would extend beyond the existing barn to an existing raised bank hedgerow. The proposed dwelling would be sited some 50m at the closest point from the existing dwelling of Elm Farmhouse, with the bulk of the proposed dwelling being set further south.
- 6.33 The residential built form would be detached from the existing settlement pattern along the road, and beyond the general building line of existing residential properties. Whilst the proposed dwelling would not be as prominent from the road as the existing barns, its roof and chimneys would be of greater height than the existing barns and glimpses of that roof form representing domestic development would be possible, particularly in winter. In addition, the appearance of the access from the road would be domesticated through the provision of hard surfacing and trees in a formal linear fashion. From the public right of way to the south, as users of that path travel northwards clear views of the development and proposed residential garden would be possible.
- 6.34 The proposal would change the appearance of the site from a working agricultural character to a domestic character, due to the residential built form and spread of domestic paraphernalia associated with the dwelling. Whilst landscaping is proposed within the application site, much of it would be of a formal domestic appearance altering the character of the site. The domestic appearance of the development proposed, including its curtilage, would encroach into the countryside, harming the rural character and appearance of the area and National Landscape.
- 6.35 It is acknowledged there would be a significant reduction in volume and footprint of built form within the site. Furthermore, the design of the proposed dwelling is considered to incorporate traditional materials and an architectural style in keeping with the local area.
- 6.36 However, the scale of the proposed dwelling and its curtilage would be greater than existing dwellings in the area, be detached from the existing pattern of residential dwellings of the settlement of Hamstead Marshall and introduce a distinct change in character from agricultural to domestic. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to conserve and enhance the character of the area. When balanced against the reduction in built form and complementary appearance of the proposed dwelling, it is considered the proposed residential development and associated curtilage would result in a

moderate harmful impact on the rural character and appearance of the area. Due to the topography of the area and lack of wide-ranging views of the site, it is considered the harm to the National Landscape would be limited.

- 6.37 In addition, 203 of the existing solar panels located on the roof of an existing barn are proposed to be relocated to the northwestern corner of the application site, beyond an existing hedgerow within a field. The solar panels would be ground mounted and would be approximately 2 metres tall covering some 500sqm. A new hedgerow is proposed to enclose the land on which the solar panels are to be sited. The application submissions do not specify where the electricity generated by the solar panels would be used but given the considerable size of the solar array it can reasonable be assumed that as well as serving the proposed relocated barn and residential dwelling, some of the electricity generated would be supplied to the national grid.
- 6.38 The proposed solar array would introduce development into an area which will not respect or enhance the character of that area. Mitigation in the form of hedgerow landscaping would eventually largely screen the solar array from wider views, however, glimpsed views of the solar array from the public right of way to the south are likely to remain. Given the limited views of the solar array that would remain once the landscaping is established, any residual harmful impact on the landscape and character and appearance of the area would be localised and limited.
- 6.39 Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development does not accord with Policy CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy, Policy C3 of the HSADPD, as well as the NPPF, and North Wessex Down AONB Position Statement – Housing.
- 6.40 This application also proposes to relocate one of the existing barns to the northwest corner of the site, reduce the size of the barn and place 64 of the existing solar panels on its roof. The applicant advises that the proposed barn is to be used for farm related equipment and storage in association with the remaining agricultural land which will be used for summer grazing. The barn will be used to store a tractor and trailer plus such equipment as fencing materials and potentially the storage of hay or feed.
- 6.41 The proposed barn is considered to be in keeping with the character of the area and demonstrates the continuing need for a barn within the site to serve the agricultural holding. On its own, the proposed barn would not harm the character and appearance of the area.

Historic Environment

- 6.42 Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy and the NPPF requires new development to preserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their settings, and make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 6.43 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 6.44 Paragraph 205 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great 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 harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 6.45 The application site is located in close proximity to a Grade II listed aisled barn and, further afield, the Grade II listed Old Post Office. The site was historically the pastureland

and farmland of Elm Farm, formerly Village Farm. The farmstead is located to the east of the site and was likely established in the 1750s (the date inscribed on the listed barn's aisle post is 1756). The aisled barn is part of a historic farmstead, making up the southwest section of the U-shaped farmyard of agricultural buildings, enclosed by an early to mid C19 farmhouse. These buildings are considered to have a positive contribution to the setting of the listed barn through the provision of historic context, illustrating the historic functional relationships and intervisibility between the buildings. The wider site, impacted by this application, would have had a positive contribution to the setting of the listed barn and historic farmyard at the time of listing, through the retention of historic functional agricultural and rural context.

- 6.46 Currently, the site is considered to have a slight negative/neutral contribution to the setting of the listed building and historic farmstead. The presence of the modern (early C21) large portal framed agricultural buildings and slurry tank has a negative contribution. While their use aligns with the historic agricultural/light industrial use of the wider site, the structures are very large in scale and in poor condition. They are considered to be dominating in the context of the historic farmyard and unsympathetic in materiality. However, their form reflects their use, which does align with the wider agricultural activities taking place on the site and pastureland beyond.
- 6.47 The setting of the Old Post Office is primarily impacted by the visual contribution of the site (which is currently considered to be a slight negative contribution) due to no historic association between the building and the application site.
- 6.48 This application proposes to demolish 3 modern barns and a slurry tank. The removal of those would have a positive contribution to the settings of the nearby heritage assets as those structures are considered to be unsympathetic through their scale and appearance, and they are currently visible from the listed aisled barn and historic farmstead.
- 6.49 In respect of the proposed change of use of the site to residential use, this would result in an altered connection and association between the historic farmstead and the wider landscape, which was formerly used as pasture and farmland. This loss of historic rural/agricultural context would incur a level of less than substantial harm to the listed aisled barn and associated curtilage listed buildings. However, this harm is mitigated, in part, by the fact that the listed aisled barn has changed in use from offices (still associated with the wider agricultural/light industrial use of the site) to residential, further reducing its connection and association to the wider site.
- 6.50 With regard to the proposed erection of a residential building and resulting domesticated curtilage, the proposed dwelling is relatively large in scale and would be visible from the listed barn and historic farmstead. This would result in a change of context through the introduction of residential form and curtilage. However, this is considered to be mitigated by the loss of the modern agricultural structures (which are similar in height but considerably larger in footprint), the design of the building (which is sympathetic to the historic/architectural context of the site in composition, materiality and detailing) and some screening between the dwelling and farmyard (through the reintroduction of an orchard between the proposed dwelling and farmyard).
- 6.51 The ecological and landscape enhancements and reintroduction of historic landscaping are considered to have a positive contribution to the settings of the listed barn and historic farmyard, through the visual improvement of their rural/landscape context. The reintroduction of an orchard to the west of the historic farmstead is also considered to improve the settings of the affected heritage assets, through the reconstruction of lost historic rural features (seen in C19 OS mapping).

- 6.52 Most of the impacts above also apply to the setting of the Grade II listed Old Post Office. However, due to the lack of historic association between the site and this building, the impacts relating to changes in appearance are more keenly felt rather than those relating to a change in use.
- 6.53 In conclusion, a low level of less than substantial harm is incurred by the change in use of the site and the further separation/removal of historic agricultural context to the listed barn and farmstead. However, this is considered to be balanced against the benefits and mitigating factors listed above. This low level of harm can also be weighed against the public benefits of the application (ecological enhancement). Therefore, the development proposed would have an overall neutral impact on the settings of the nearby listed aisled barn, historic farmstead and Old Post Office.
- 6.54 In respect of below ground heritage assets, the Archaeologist in respect of the original application submissions noted that no reference was made to heritage assets of archaeological interest, and rather surprisingly no contact seems to have been made with the Council to obtain information from the Historic Environment Record (HER), as advised in the NPPF.
- 6.55 Nonetheless, the Archaeologist considers there is little potential for surviving deposits below the modern farmyard of Elm Farm, but it is possible there are below ground features of multiple periods within the surrounding fields. This is relevant in terms of the ecological/landscaping proposals also included in the application submissions, such as digging new ponds or undertaking large amounts of planting. Ridge and furrow earthworks were once recorded in the holding, though these may have been levelled, and cropmarks of a possible enclosure were also seen.
- 6.56 As part of the original application submissions, planting including various trees within the fields and a new pond were proposed outside of the application site but on land within the applicants' ownership, as denoted by the blue line area on the location plan submitted. Those works on that land would have the potential to impact on below ground heritage assets as confirmed by the Archaeologist.
- 6.57 Whilst the planting outside of the application site and within the applicants' ownership would not require planning permission, the creation of a new pond comprises engineering works that would require planning permission. However, no details of those engineering works have been provided and the new pond is located outside of the application site.
- 6.58 The applicant considers in their package of amendments and additional information that details of the new pond could be secured by a landscaping condition together with an archaeological watching brief also secured by condition to ensure appropriate preservation of below ground heritage assets. However, as the proposed new pond is not located within the application site it does not form development to be considered as part of this application. Furthermore, it would not be appropriate to secure details of such development by condition given that it requires planning permission. Potential issues regarding below ground heritage assets would therefore be considered under a separate application for planning permission for those works.
- 6.59 Therefore, in respect of the impact on heritage assets, the development proposed is considered to accord with the NPPF and Policies CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on Highways

- 6.60 It is reasonably considered that the change of use of the site from agriculture to a single residential dwelling would result in fewer vehicle movements via the existing access. The proposed development would provide sufficient off-road parking and access. The

Highways Officer has reviewed the application and raises no objection subject to conditions to secure: details of electric vehicle charging points, construction method statement, surfacing of the access, and provision of parking areas.

Neighbouring Amenity

- 6.61 The nearest neighbouring dwellings are Elm Farm farmhouse and the converted Grade II listed barn, both located some 50 metres at the closest point northeast of the proposed dwelling. An area of orchard planting is proposed between those neighbouring dwellings and the new dwelling.
- 6.62 Due to the distance between the proposed dwelling and neighbouring properties, the proposed dwelling and its associated curtilage is not considered to introduce any significant harmful impact on the amenities of those neighbouring dwellings.
- 6.63 In respect to the relocated barn and solar array, due to their proposed location at a distance from the neighbouring property to the west, Little Orchard, and orientation southwards away from that dwelling in respect of the panels, they are not considered to introduce any significant harmful impact on the amenity of that neighbouring dwelling.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.64 Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy requires surface water to be managed in a sustainable manner through the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Methods (SuDS).
- 6.65 The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low risk of fluvial flooding) and whilst the application site itself generally has a low risk of surface water flooding, areas at high risk of surface water flooding are identified along the western boundary of the application site, along the road in front of the access to the application site, and along the public right of way to the east of the application site.
- 6.66 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy was submitted by the applicant with the package of amendments and additional information following the request from the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for one to be provided.
- 6.67 The LLFA have reviewed that document and confirmed that they are satisfied with the standard of information provided but have commented that the final outfall rate should be reduced, and products can be used to achieve that. In addition, the LLFA have requested that the calculations within the FRA are set out in a different order for easier reading and that an assessment of the outfall is undertaken to identify the impact of that.
- 6.68 As the details submitted demonstrate that a suitable sustainable drainage for the site are feasible and the comments made by the LLFA relate to minor technical points, it is considered that the provision of suitable sustainable drainage details could be adequately secured by a planning condition, should the application be approved.
- 6.69 Therefore, subject to a condition, the application is considered to accord with Policy CS16 and the NPPF in respect of flooding and sustainable drainage.

Biodiversity and Landscaping

- 6.70 The application was submitted prior to the recent changes in legislation requiring developments to achieve at least 10% net gain in biodiversity. However, Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy states that, in order to conserve and enhance the environmental capacity of the District, all new development should maximise opportunities to achieve net gains in biodiversity.

- 6.71 The application submissions propose various landscaping and biodiversity measures within the application site and on land outside of the application but within the applicants' ownership.
- 6.72 Within the application site these include orchard planting in the northeastern corner of the residential curtilage, a tree lined avenue along the access road into the site, tree planting within the proposed garden area together with a formal ornamental planting, and a new hedgerow along the southwestern boundary of the land on which the solar array is to be sited.
- 6.73 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has been submitted which assesses the application site and concludes that there was negligible potential for the development within the application site to affect protected or notable species. The BNG assessment considers that the proposed planting and works within the application site would result in a BNG of approximately 20% for habitats and 32% for hedgerows.
- 6.74 The Council's Ecologist has reviewed the information submitted and raises no objections subject to conditions to secure compliance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, a construction and environmental management plan (CEMP), a lighting design strategy for biodiversity and updated ecological surveys and assessment prior to development commencing.
- 6.75 The BNG of the application site only as a result of the development proposed is considered to represent a moderate benefit in favour of the proposal.
- 6.76 Outside of the application site but within the applicants' ownership it is shown that new native hedgerows, 'parkland' trees, spinneys and scrub will be planted together with the restoration of an existing pond and creation of a new pond. In addition, locations for the erection of a Tawny owl box, 10 bat boxes, and 10 dormouse boxes are identified and the field to the south of the application site is to be planted as a wildflower meadow.
- 6.77 A separate Biodiversity Net Gain assessment for the land outside of the application site concludes that a net gain of approximately 98% (for habitats) and 59% (for hedgerows) would be achieved, subject to a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan for the wider farmland area outside of the application site.
- 6.78 It is important to note that the landscaping and ecological enhancements on land outside of the application site, with the exception of a new pond, do not require planning permission and therefore could be implemented by the applicants at any time. The granting of this application would not provide permission to construct a new pond on land outside of the application site. In addition, the landscaping and ecological enhancements on land outside of the application site are not considered necessary as a result of the development proposed. Therefore, the public benefit as a result of the proposed landscaping and ecological enhancements on land outside of the application site are given limited weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 6.79 In respect of specific tree impacts and landscaping proposals, the Tree Officer notes that no tree information has been provided and offers some comments on the species of trees proposed within the site and on land outside of the application site. Therefore, the Tree Officer requests that conditions to secure a tree protection scheme and a detailed landscaping scheme are imposed, should the application be approved.
- 6.80 In conclusion, the proposed development within the application site including landscaping would result in a biodiversity net gain of approximately 20% for habitats and 32% for hedgerows and would not affect protected or notable species. As such, the application accords with Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF in respect of

biodiversity subject to conditions to secure the provision of and long-term management of the landscaping proposed.

Sustainable Construction

- 6.81 Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy requires major developments to achieve zero carbon in total CO2 emissions (regulated and unregulated energy use) from renewable energy or low/zero carbon energy generation on site or in the locality of the development as long as a direct physical connection is used, unless it can be demonstrated that such provision is not technically or economically viable.
- 6.82 Policy CS14 Design Principles states “New development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that ... makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. Good design relates not only to the appearance of a development, but the way in which it functions... All developments will be expected to minimise carbon dioxide emissions through sustainable design and construction, energy efficiency, and the incorporation of renewable energy technology as appropriate and in accordance with Policy CS15”.
- 6.83 An Energy and Sustainability Statement has been submitted which considers the proposal will fall within the margins of a passive house standard and achieve a 101% reduction in CO2 emissions against building regulations. Policy CS15 requires major development to achieve zero-carbon based on regulated and unregulated energy and after energy efficiency measures have been considered. No comments or objections have been raised by the Council’s Environment Delivery Team. Therefore, it is considered that the information submitted is adequate and the development would accord with Policy CS15 of the Core Strategy.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (NPPF Paragraph 11)

- 7.1 The Council can demonstrate both a 4 year and 5 year housing land supply, and housing delivery over the past years passes the Housing Delivery Test. There are many ‘relevant’ development plan policies and of those development plan policies there is a wide basket of policies, which are ‘most important’ to the determination of the application and which are consistent with the relevant NPPF policies and provisions.
- 7.2 In view of the above, the ‘most important’ development plan policies for the determination of this application are ‘not out-of-date’. For these reasons the NPPF paragraph 11(d) (ii) tilted balance (i.e. the presumption in favour of sustainable development) is not engaged in this case.

Assessment against ‘the most important policies’ in the development plan and other material considerations

- 7.3 As set out in this report, the principle of residential development on this site does not accord with the Core Strategy Policies ADPP1, ADPP5 and Policy CS1, and Policy C1 of the HSA DPD relating to housing development. Therefore, the residential development of the site is objected to in principle attracting substantial weight against the development proposed.
- 7.4 Further to the in-principle unacceptability of residential development, as set out in this report, the proposed development also runs contrary to Policies CS13, CS14 and CS19

of the Core Strategy as well as Policy C3 of the HSA DPD due to the unsustainable location of the development where occupants will be reliant on a motor vehicle for access to services and facilities, as well as the impact on the character and appearance of the area. These policies are up-to-date and should carry full weight.

- 7.5 Therefore, the proposal is not considered to be in accordance with the development plan as a whole.
- 7.6 Determination of this application should be made pursuant to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act which requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.7 It is acknowledged that the development would provide some benefits in favour of the proposal, comprising a biodiversity net gain of approximately 20% for habitats and 32% for hedgerows within the application site, and ecological improvements to land outside of the application site. For the reasons set out in this report those benefits are considered to attract moderate and limited weight in favour of the proposal respectively.
- 7.8 The conservation officer has assessed the development as having an overall neutral impact on the setting of the listed buildings. As such the proposal is considered to have neutral weight in the planning balance.
- 7.9 The provision of a large solar array would normally also attract weight in favour of the proposal given the contribution to a low carbon future in a changing climate. However, those panels are existing at present, and the development does not seek to increase the generation of renewable energy on-site. As such the proposed solar array is considered to have neutral weight in the planning balance.
- 7.10 The application proposal would provide limited economic benefit due to the limited scale of works proposed and would contribute minimally to the provision of housing locally and nationally. As such, those benefits are given limited weight in favour of the proposal.
- 7.11 Having taken account of all the relevant policy considerations and other material considerations referred to above, it is considered that the application fails to comply with the development plan and the adverse impacts of the development outweigh the benefits identified.
- 7.12 Therefore, the application is, on balance, recommended for refusal.

8. Full Recommendation

- 8.1 To delegate to the Development Manager to REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the reasons listed below.

Refusal Reasons

1.	<p>Principle of development in an unsustainable location</p> <p>The application site is located outside of any designated settlement boundary within the open countryside and within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB). Policy ADPP1 states that most development will be within or adjacent to the settlements included in the settlement hierarchy set out in that policy and that in the open countryside, only appropriate limited development will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy. Policy ADPP5 of the Core Strategy identifies that there will be further</p>
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	<p>opportunities for infill development and for development on previously developed land within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and advises that new housing allocations will be focused on rural service centres and service villages. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy states that new housing shall primarily be on suitable previously developed land within settlement boundaries, other suitable land within settlement boundaries or on the strategic or allocated sites as set out in subsequent development plan documents. Policy C1 of the HSA DPD relates specifically to proposals for new housing in the countryside and states a presumption against new residential development outside settlement boundaries.</p> <p>No information has been submitted that demonstrates there is a need for housing in the local area, nor is the proposed dwelling considered necessary as the Local Planning Authority has a sufficient housing land supply. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal would contribute to the maintenance of a strong rural economy and it has not been demonstrated that the existing barns are redundant. The application site is located in an area that is not well served by public transport or other means of sustainable travel and does not have good access to key services and facilities such that occupants of a new residential dwelling would be reliant on the car for access to services and facilities. As such, the application site is not in a sustainable location. Therefore, the principle of the development of a residential dwelling and change of use of land to residential runs contrary to Policies ADPP1, ADPP5, CS1, CS13 and CS14 of the Core Strategy as well as Policy C1 of the HSA DPD and the NPPF.</p>
2.	<p>Impact on character and appearance of the area</p> <p>The residential built form would be detached from the existing settlement pattern along the road, beyond the general building line of existing residential properties and the scale of the proposed dwelling and its curtilage would be greater than existing dwellings in the area. Whilst the proposed dwelling would not be as prominent from the road as the existing barns, its roof and chimneys would be of greater height than the existing barns and glimpses from the road of that roof form representing domestic development would be possible, particularly in winter. In addition, the appearance of the access from the road would be domesticated through the provision of hard surfacing and trees in a formal linear fashion. From the public right of way to the south, as users of that path travel northwards clear views of the development and proposed residential garden would be possible.</p> <p>The proposal would change the appearance of the site from a working agricultural character to a domestic character, due to the residential built form and spread of domestic paraphernalia associated with the dwelling. Whilst landscaping is proposed within the application site, much of it would be of a formal domestic appearance altering the character of the site. The domestic appearance of the development proposed, including its curtilage, would encroach into the countryside, harming the rural character and appearance of the area and National Landscape. The proposed solar array would also introduce a limited harm on the landscape and character and appearance of the area.</p> <p>Therefore, the proposed development does not accord with Policy CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy, Policy C3 of the HSADPD, as well as the NPPF, North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-24 and North Wessex Down AONB Position Statement – Housing.</p>

Informatives

1.	In attempting to determine the application in a way that can foster the delivery of sustainable development, the local planning authority has approached this decision in a positive way having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to try to secure high quality appropriate development. In this application whilst there has been a need to balance conflicting considerations, the local planning authority has also been unable to find an acceptable solution to the problems with the development so that the development can be said to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
2.	This application has been considered by West Berkshire Council, and REFUSED. Should the application be granted on appeal there will be a liability to pay Community Infrastructure Levy to West Berkshire Council on commencement of the development. This charge would be levied in accordance with the West Berkshire Council CIL Charging Schedule and Section 211 of the Planning Act 2008.
3.	<p>The following plans/documents have been considered in the determination of this application:</p> <p>Received 7 November 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Roof Plan, drawing number 001 Rev P0.- Landscape Section, drawing number 017 Rev P2.- Location Plan, Scheme B, drawing number 07 Rev P1.- Ground Floor Plan, drawing number 009 Rev P0.- First Floor Plan, drawing number 010 Rev P0.- Proposed Elevations, Scheme B, drawing number 016 Rev P0.- Existing Barns Plans, drawing number 02 Rev P0.- Barn 3, Proposed Elevations, drawing number 06 Rev P1.- Barn 3, Proposed Plan, drawing number 05 Rev P0.- Existing Barns, Elevations, drawing number 015 Rev P0.- Site Plan Proposed, Scheme A, drawing number 01 Rev P4.- Application Form.- Site Elevation, drawing number 012 Rev P1.- Existing Site Plan, Scheme B, drawing number 013 Rev P2.- Barn 3 Wall Treatment Detail, drawing number 014 Rev P1.- Design and Access / Heritage Statement for Submission to West Berkshire, Volume I: Illustrated Text.- Design and Access / Heritage Statement for Submission to West Berkshire, Volume II: Main Application Drawings.- Design and Access / Heritage Statement for Submission to West Berkshire, Volume III: Appendices.- CIL PAAIR Form.- Cover Letter from Martin Leay Associates dated 6 November 2023.- Site Plan Existing, Scheme A, drawing number 03 Rev P2. <p>Received 20 March 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Second Floor Plan, drawing number 021 Rev P0.- Sections, Main House and Outbuildings, drawing number 022 Rev P0.- North Barn, Proposed, drawing number 023 Rev P0.- Commercial use appraisal by Carter Jonas dated 20 January 2023.- Landscape and Visual Assessment. <p>Received 4 June 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Solar PV panels Proposed Plan and Elevations, drawing number 024 Rev P1.- Site Elevation, drawing number 012 Rev P2.- Landscape Section, drawing number 017 Rev P2.

- Landscape Section 2, drawing number 025 Rev P1.
- Landscape Section 2 Detail, drawing number 026 Rev P1.
- Whole Site Plan, drawing number C101.A.
- Field Names Plan, drawing number C101.B.
- Area Around House (blank) Plan, drawing number C101.F.
- Area Around House (labelled) Plan, drawing number C101.D.
- Site Improvements Plan, drawing number C101.E.
- Whole Site – red and blue outlines Plan, drawing number C101.C.

Received 26 June 2024:

- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Rev D dated June 2024, ref: 47301.

Received 20 August 2024:

- Site Plan Proposed, Scheme B, drawing number 08 Rev P4.