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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Application Overview

This document has been prepared on behalf of Hatchery to support the planning application for the proposed commercial development at Preston Farm, near Shoreham in Kent.

The images and illustrations contained within this report should be read alongside the architectural drawings and other supporting documents submitted as part of the application.

Preston Farm is a former dairy farm that diversified to business use in the 1990s. The property was acquired in 2019 by the Bax family, who now reside on-site in one of the farmhouses. This application focuses on the old farmyard and associated buildings, much of which is in an advanced state of disrepair

The ambition is to reimagine the farmstead of yesterday to create a new 'rural campus' where everything is designed to promote a more wholesome, enjoyable and productive way of working.

McMullan Studio and the consultant team have worked closely with Hatchery and key stakeholders to understand the requirements of the brief, the needs of local businesses and the demands of the sensitive site location.

This process has involved active consultation with a number of stakeholders, including parish, district and county councils, local business groups, landscape and wildlife organisations, local residents and neighbouring landlords.

At the heart of the design response is a series of thoughtful solutions that will bring the farm's heritage, location and local community into the daily life of the site.

The proposed development will restore the traditional 'loose courtyard' farm layout and contribute to the character of the surrounding landscape and its scenic beauty through enhanced amenity, wellbeing and biodiversity.



1.2 Consultant Team

Client & Project Management	Architect	Landscape	Planning and Transport
Hatchery	Mcmullan Studio	Land Managment Services	DHA
Preston Farm Shoreham TN14 7UD	17 Shorts Gardens London WC2H 9AT	Abbey House 25 Clarendon Road Redhill RH1 1QZ	Eclipse House Sittingbourne Road Maidstone ME14 3EN
Cost	Structural Engineer	M&E Engineer / Sustainability	Access
Jackson Coles	Elliott Wood Partnership	P3r Engineers	David Bonnett Associates
Morelands 5-23 Old Street London EC1V 9HL	55 Whitfield Street London W1T 4AH	70 Cowcross Street London EC1M 6EJ	32 Indigo Mews Carysfort Road London N16 9AE



Happy Valley Masterplan, Innsbruck



The Flexstead, Horton-in-Ribblesdale



Hefted Housing, Burneside

1.3 McMullan Studio

McMullan Studio believes design is optimistic. Based in London, our team creates architecture of all types and scales.

Rural regeneration or human-scale workspaces, we think every challenge has a perfect solution. To reveal it, we bring a disciplined passion for making the impossible, tangible. Empathy is at the heart of our approach. We immerse ourselves in other people's worlds to put them at the centre of our work.

This positive vision of architecture is shaped by studio founder Andrew McMullan. Creating renowned global projects for fifteen years, he has shown that innovative design comes from multiple flashes of insight.

Today, he brings together eclectic ideas and thoughtful pragmatism to create beautiful, buildable projects for progressive companies, people, places and communities. Real-world challenges such as affordable workspaces, access to talent and training and community resilience, can be the driving force for exceptional architecture that improves rural life.

McMullan Studio is an RIBA Chartered Practice and has signed the UK Architects 'Climate and biodiversity emergency' declaration.



1.4 Hatchery

Hatchery is a new business, co-founded by Will Bax and Rich Mills, which transforms old farms and agricultural buildings into high-quality flexible workspaces, designed to promote a more wholesome, enjoyable and productive way of working.

Hatchery's intention is for the developed site to achieve three key aims:

- Help small businesses grow by providing better rural workspace, more flexibility and the support of a well-networked community of like-minded members.
- Empower people to work on their own terms by providing professional environments close to home. This will allow people to work more flexibly, waste less time commuting, see their families more and stay rooted in their communities.
- Be a force for good in the local community by providing better infrastructure and amenities that will create local jobs and connect a diverse range of people.

Hatchery seeks to support job creation in the rural economy, whilst responding to a number of societal mega trends. Including changing working patterns to a more flexible and agile working culture; wellbeing – both mental and physical – and the role of the workplace in supporting balance; and sustainability with an urgent requirement for all businesses to play their part in tackling the climate emergency. All these trends have accelerated rapidly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.0

SITE CONTEXT

2.1 Site Location

The site is situated in a rural location approximately 1.5km north-east of the village of Shoreham, in the Sevenoaks District of Kent.

Preston Farm lies at the southern end of the Darent Valley as it cuts through the Kent Downs. The River Darent rises near Westerham and flows north to the Thames at Dartford.

The site lies on the eastern bank of the river. The land associated with Preston Farm rises gently to the east.

The site is overlooked by the chalk downland on the valley sides, in particular from Preston Hill to the east and the downs above Shoreham to the west and south west.

The eastern farm boundary is defined by the embankments to the London to Sevenoaks railway line.



- 1. Preston Farm
- 2. Shoreham Station
- 3. Shoreham Village School
- 4. Shoreham Village Hall
- 5. Shoreham War Memorial
- 6. The Mount Vineyard
- 7. Castle Farm
- 8. The Hop Shop
- 9. Darent Valley Forge
- 10. Lullingstone Castle
- 11. Lullingstone Roman Villa
- 12. Eagle Heights Wildlife Foundation
- 13. Eynsford Station

Site Location

2.2 Transport Links

The main access to Preston Farm is from the A225, which connects the site to the nearby villages of Shoreham and Eynsford. It is a 10 minute drive from the M25, M20 and M26.

The Farm is accessed via a long approach road, which runs along the western side of the railway line to the A225, immediately west of the railway bridge. The access road splits with one road serving the Dairy House and Farmyard and the second serving Preston Farmhouse. There is a narrow track leading from the site and bridging the River Darent to Castle Farm Road on the west.

Shoreham railway station is located approximately 1.5km to the south and Eynsford railway station 3km to the north-east. These stations provide Thameslink train services to London via Bromley South, and to Sevenoaks. It is a 55 minute train journey into Central London.

There is a public right of way (Footpath SR19) which runs north to south through the Farm. This footpath runs directly south from the Farm towards the village of Shoreham.



Site Transport

2.3 Landscape Heritage

The River Darent is one of five ancient chalk streams which cut through the chalk downland of the Kent Downs. The river not only defines the character and ecology of the valley but also lies at the heart of human activity over the centuries, providing fertile land for agriculture, a transport corridor and power for mills.

Human activity in the valley can be dated back to pre-history from finds in the valley and surrounding areas, including the famous Swanscombe Skull estimated to be around 300,000 years old. Stone and flint tool finds have indicated settlement and agricultural activity in the valley dating back to Mesolithic and Neolithic times and there is evidence of Bronze and Iron Age activity from finds at Otford, Lullingstone and Farningham.

The river and valley was an important supply route during Roman times. There is evidence of up to thirteen Roman sites, including finds at Preston Farm, together with up to eight villas including Lullingstone. There are many later sites of national importance including the Norman 'enclosure castle' at Eynsford and Otford Palace which was said to have rivalled Hampton Court Palace in terms of scale and grandeur during the times of Henry VIII and Queen Anne.

During the 16th century the valley underwent something of an industrial revolution with the establishment of dozens of mills along the valley for the production of gunpowder, paper, flour and corn and brewing. A number of larger estates also existed at this time.

The early nineteenth century saw the Enclosure Acts and a period of extreme poverty for local farms. It also saw the growth of the railways further defining the importance of the valley as a transport corridor. Activity in this period largely defined the landscape we see today. Agricultural land use has changed over time from traditional production of hops, fruit and arable crops to introductions such as lavender and vineyards. Sheep and cattle grazing remain but there has also been an increase in horse grazing as evidenced by the livery stables at Preston Farm.

The river itself is now in a recovery phase from over abstraction which led to the river drying up completely in 1976 and 1991. Improved river management, as now being undertaken at Preston Farm, is both restoring the traditional character and enhancing wildlife habitat along the river.

The current Preston Farm dates back to the early 19th century.



Samuel Palmer, The Weald of Kent, 1833



Darent Valley path between Eynsford and Lullingstone



Darent Valley

The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership area

2.4 Landscape Character Context

Preston Farm lies on the eastern bank of the River Darent as it cuts through the chalk downlands of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is a nationally protected landscape, valued for its natural beauty and stunning views. The current landholding extends from the river valley to the lower slopes of the chalk downland.

The Landscape Character of the Darent Valley is described in a number of published landscape character assessments covering the Kent Downs, Kent and Sevenoaks District. The valley has a rich landscape and built heritage which has influenced the use, character, biodiversity and beauty of the landscape we see today.

These published assessments describe the meandering character of the river, flowing through a predominantly flat river floor with wet pasture, traditional crops such as hops, fruit and arable and more recent introductions such as lavender and vineyards on the lower valley sides, leading onto areas of grazing and woodland cresting the downland.

Preston Farm is located at the heart of the southern end of the Darent Valley where the landform abuts the Greensand Ridge. The landscape pattern of the landholding associated with the Farm is typical of the wider character of the valley, with smaller irregular fields bordering the river giving way to larger, more open regular fields on the valley sides. The majority of the landholding associated with the Farm is now pasture providing grazing for the livery horses.

The upper slopes of the surrounding downland comprise areas of chalk grassland and scrub with woodland crowning many of the hill tops. The river is bordered by belts of riparian woodland and scrub, mostly of alder and willow. There are a few larger blocks of woodland including a poplar plantation to the north west of the Farm and a tree belt on the southern Farm boundary.

A review of the historic mapping shows that, although much of the Farm landscape remained fairly open, there was more woodland cover on the Farm, in particular around the farmyard and along the river corridor.

The more recent road and rail links cut across this landscape; the railway in particular providing a strong linear element. These direct routes contrast with the network of narrow country lanes set into the landscape, in particular on the western sides of the valley.

There are open expansive views over this landscape from parts of the valley sides, together with long views north and south along the valley.



View to Preston Farmhouse



View to the Cross



River Darent



Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, 2014 - 2019

There is an extensive network of public rights of way, much enjoyed by local people and the many visitors. These include the Darent Valley Path which follows the river from Westerham to Dartford and runs to the west of Preston Farm, and Footpath SR19 which runs through the Farm.

The Farm reflects a number of the characteristics described in published landscape character assessments such as the transition from wetland to chalk downland reflected in field pattern, although key features such as hedges are in mixed condition, with frequent gaps and few hedgerow trees. The wetlands and river channel flowing through the Farm are a vital link in the ecologically rich river valley corridor. Much of the traditional layout of the Farm buildings has also been lost.

Work has already begun to restore the Farm landscape as part of a wider Farm Management Strategy. This includes restoration of the wetlands in association with Kent Wildlife Trust and the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership. A native woodland tree belt was planted along the eastern edge of the Farm in 2019 and works to restore the hedges are planned for 2021.

There is enormous potential to extend these works to further restore the historic character of the Farm landscape, enhance the setting to the farmyard as part of Hatchery and to bring the land back into productive use.



Farm View in summer



Down to Earth Tree Commercial Yard



Farm View in winter



Pyramidal Orchid



Viewpoint Plan

2.5 Landscape Views Context

A comprehensive views assessment has been carried out as part of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for Hatchery and as part of the Farm Management Strategy. Surrounding rights of way have been walked both in winter and summer in order to view the Farm from the surrounding area and to inform an assessment of the potential effects of change and the design process. This section of the document provides an overview of this Appraisal and the key views identified.

Preston Farm occupies a location at the heart of the upper Darent Valley. The land rises on the western and eastern sides of the valley. Despite this, the Farm and its setting in the valley is only really perceived from the open high ground above Shoreham village on the south western side of the valley, in the vicinity of the Cross (see Viewpoint 1).

Much of the higher downland on both the eastern and western valley sides is crowned by woodland. Preston Hill overlooks the Farm but there is currently limited public access to this land, although it has been accessible in the past.

Tree belts, woodlands (including the Pumping Station plantation) and hedges on the lower slopes also limit more open views across the valley from the west. These tree belts and the woodland along the river restrict views to the Farm from the Darent Valley Path to occasional glimpsed views (see Viewpoint 2). There are also glimpsed views from local roads to the west, including Castle Farm Road, but the Farm is seen through or above tree cover.

- 1. View to the Farm from Shoreham Cross
- 2. View from Darent Valley Path immediately west of the Farm
- 3. Near view from Footpath SR19 to south of Farm
- 4. View from SR19 immediately south of the Farm
- 5. View to Farm from Footpath SR19 by Preston Farm Cottages
- 6. View down Dairy House and Yard Access Track



Viewpoint 1



Viewpoint 2

The Farm is an important feature in longer distance views along the valley, in particular from footpath SR19 to the north and also more transient views from the A225 (see Viewpoints 3, 4 and 5). Preston Farmhouse is an important local landmark (Viewpoint 6).

The Farm contributes to the character and appearance of these views; typical of many medium sized farms within the valley. These views show how the buildings and farmyard are set into the shallow hillside, but within an open setting. At a local level this has resulted in a fairly artificial landform around the farmyard with land pushed back or re-graded to create level areas for buildings, horse maneges and parking. Historically the Farm benefited from a more enclosed wooded setting, but much of this cover has been lost over the years.

Land uses associated with the livery have sprawled south of the Farm with unmanaged areas of parking and two maneges.

Although the layout of the original farmyard has changed substantially, the Farm retains the scale of a medium scale farm within the valley, in particular in longer distance views, from which the massing of the buildings is more apparent than the yard layout. The existing built form appears as a cluster of buildings of little defined character in longer distance views. There are visually obtrusive elements associated with the livery, in particular the spread of vehicle parking to the south and the two maneges cut into the landform. The buildings themselves are functional, with little architectural merit, albeit typical of a rural landscape.



Viewpoint 3



Viewpoint 4



Viewpoint 5



Viewpoint 6

2.6 Building Heritage

The Darent Valley has a rich heritage spanning from the first human settlement more than 400,000 years ago to gunpowder and paper mills surviving into the early 20th century.

The River Darent and hence its surrounding valley was an important Roman feature in Roman Kent. The River was an important Roman supply route, probably carrying grain downstream and possibly bringing back materials for construction and other purposes. Archaeologists are already aware of at least eight Roman villas along the valley. The best known and most notable example is the villa at Lullingstone which is in the ownership of English Heritage and is a popular tourist attraction within the valley.

The legacy of the Darent Valley's heritage is considerable: 28 Scheduled Monuments, 5 registered parks and gardens, 16 conservation areas, 13 Grade I listed buildings and several hundred others at lower grades.

The Darent Valleys built heritage includes the flint-walled Eynsford Castle, the Lullingstone Castle Tudor gatehouse and the Archbishop's Palace at Otford that once rivalled Hampton Court Palace.

The River Darent was once a source of power for numerous mills, making flour, paper, fabric and gunpowder. These all provided local employment, expanding the villages and in turn enabled the exploitation of natural resources. The result was that the River Darent itself was manipulated and its course much changed to provide the heads of water to supply the mills. It also enabled the land beside the river to be used in new ways and consequently shaped the valley's landscape.



Farningham Mill, Farningham



Archbishop's Palace, Otford



Eynsford Castle, Eynsford



Lullingstone Castle gateway, Eynsford

2.7 Site History

The site exists within a productive farming landscape where wheat, hops, lavender, apples and grapes are grown. Cattle, sheep and goats graze the meadows.

Historical records of Preston Farm dates back to the 19th century.

The 1871-1890 historic mapping shows a relatively open character to the Farm with four larger, relatively regular shaped fields to the north and south of the Farmyard. The layout of the Farm and buildings shows a fairly typical 'loose courtyard' arrangement of the Farm buildings, which was characteristic of farms in the Darent Valley during the later nineteenth century. The mapping suggests a tree lined approach to the Farm with a large block of trees, possibly an orchard immediately to the south of the Farmyard.

The 1900 mapping shows the location of the tree belt which now forms the southern boundary to the Farm. The mapping also shows a more substantial belt of woodland along the river diversion channel than exists today. The tree lined approach to the Farm is not shown on later mapping. The mapping shows that much of the more traditional layout to the Farm buildings remained until after the Second World War.

After the war, a large modern enclosed barn was built within the former courtyard. It is evident that a larger farm building which enclosed the southern side of the courtyard has been removed.

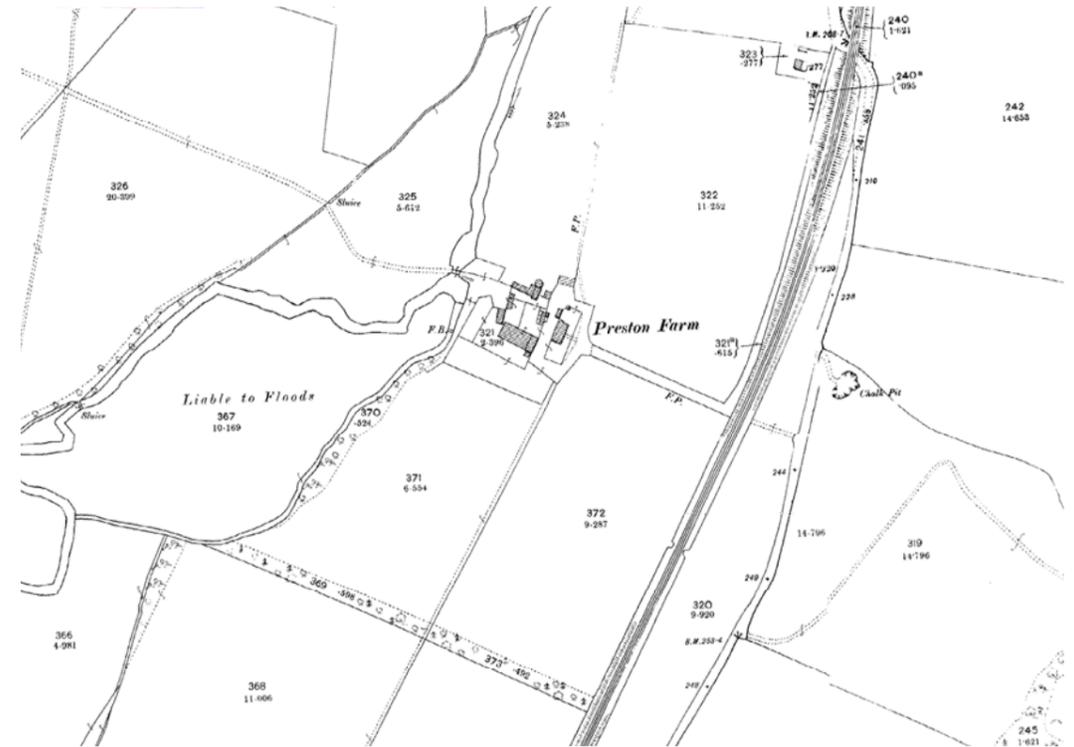
The 1985 photograph shows a significant modern barn to the south that has since been removed. An open surfaced area remains on the former site of this large building.

Today the farmyard has a more enclosed character with no outward views. The historic loose courtyard character has also been lost over time.

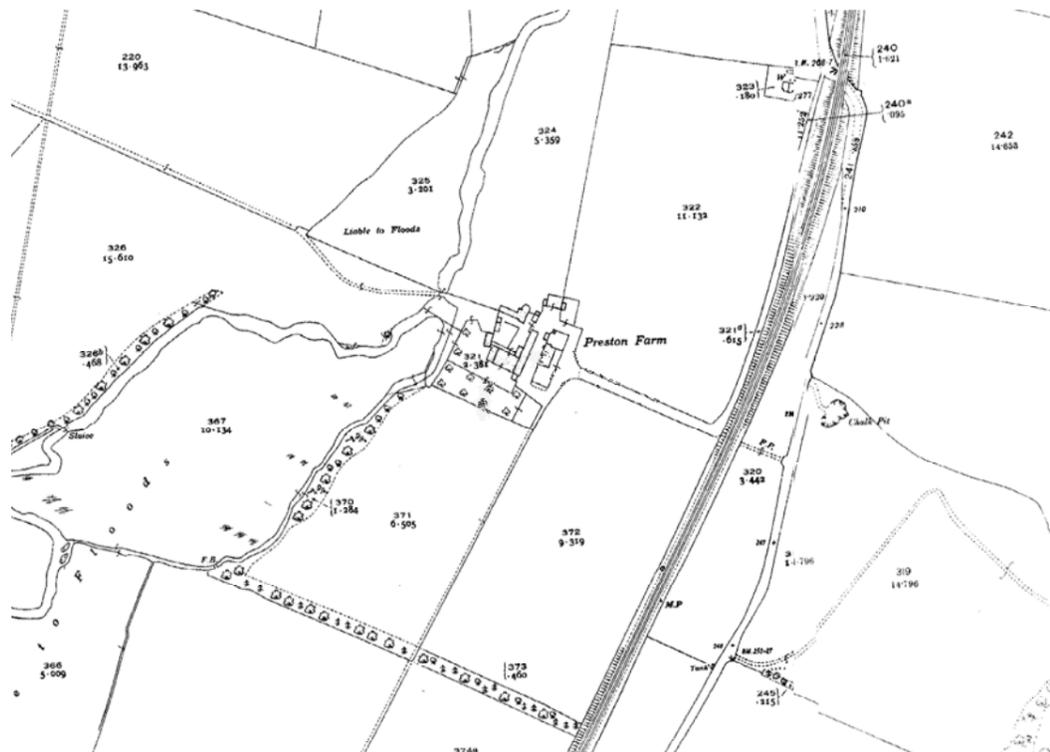
The current livery uses have sprawled beyond the yard area with buildings, parking areas and ménages to the south.



Preston Farm 1871 - 1890



Preston Farm 1897 - 1900



Preston Farm 1925 - 1952



Preston Farm 1944 - 1967



Preston Farmhouse View, Present



Preston Farm Aerial View c.1985

PRESTON FARM · SHOREHAM



Photo: ANCKORN, HALSTEAD.

THE FARMHOUSE

A red brick two storey building, with double gabled and tiled roof, affording the following accommodation :

1st Floor :

- (PRINCIPAL ROOMS) Bedroom (E) 13ft. 6in. x 13ft. 6in. fitted 2 cupboards.
- Ditto (E) 12ft. x 13ft. 6in. fitted 2 cupboards
- Ditto (S & W) 13ft. 6in. x 15ft. 6in. fitted 1 cupboard
- Ditto (W) 13ft. x 10ft. 6in. fitted 3 cupboards
- Bathroom 6ft. x 10ft. 6in. fitted panel bath, basin (h. & c.) & W.C.
- Landing 9ft. 6in. x 6ft. with door to secondary back staircase.

1st Floor :

- (SECONDARY ROOMS) Apple storage room and passageway from main landing.
- Attic Room 17ft. x 16ft. (extreme measurements).

Preston Farmhouse Sales Brochure, 1958



2.8 Existing Buildings

Preston Farm is a former dairy farm. Current uses include the offices and service yard for 'Down to Earth Trees' tree surgeons (DTET) and a commercial livery yard.

The Farm and livery buildings comprise a combination of older buildings with more recent additions, including a large, open sided black Dutch barn. A large, modern enclosed barn sits within the former courtyard of the Farm. The farmhouse itself is currently unoccupied and undergoing renovation. The present owners reside in the Dairy House, a more recent addition to the Farm, whilst renovation is carried out.

The barns, stable and livery buildings are in a state of disrepair. Without a substantial repair and upgrade, including full decontamination treatment, they will not be suitable to convert into inhabitable accommodation that meets modern standards.

A significant number of large livery vehicles are parked on an open surfaced area to the south of the farmyard. There are two maneges with black rubberised surfacing to the south and south west of the Farm.

- 1-3. Livery Building
- 4a. Stable Block
- 4b. Livery Building
- 4c. Livery Building
- 5. Workshop Building
- 6. Dutch Barn
- 7. Stable Block
- 8. Stable Block
- 9. Livery Office
- 11. DTET Office
- 14. Barn

Existing Buildings Key Plan



Barn (14)



Farmhouse (Dwelling)



DTET Workshop Building (5) and Commercial Yard



DTET Office (11)



Livery Buildings (1-3, 4a, 4b)



Dutch Barn (6) and Stable Block (8)



Stable Block (8), Dutch Barn (6) and Stable Block (7)



Dutch Barn (6) and Livery Building (4c)



Stable Block (8) and Parking Area (Hardstanding)



Stable Block (8), Dutch Barn (6) and Livery Buildings (4b, 4c)



Outdoor Horse Arena



Stable Block (8), Livery Buildings (1-3, 4a, 4b), Parking Area (Hardstanding) and Farmhouse (Dwelling)



Stable Block (8) Building Condition



Stable Block (8) Building Condition



Dutch Barn (6) Building Condition



Livery Buildings (4b, 4c) Building Condition