

## **Short Heritage Statement**

# **HIGHBUILDING FARM BARN Piper's Lane, Balls Cross, West Sussex, GU28 9JU (Restoration of barn and relocation and replacement of residential building)**



**February 2021**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

This short Heritage Statement was commissioned in January 2021 by Mr Mark Stothert, the owner of Highbuilding Farm Barn at Balls Cross, to inform discussions about possible new development on the site. The statement was prepared (under the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 epidemic) by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd. The barn is not listed but is adjacent to a farmhouse (now in separate ownership) which is listed Grade II. All the buildings lie within the South Downs National Park.

## **2.0 Background History and Site Description**

Highbuilding Farm Barn (National Grid Reference SU 98379 26742) is a timber-framed barn, which originally formed part of a group of farm buildings associated with the adjacent Highbuilding Farm House, which is a Grade II listed building. The early development history of the site is unknown but the farmhouse is dated by the statutory list to the seventeenth century or earlier. The large barn probably dates from the eighteenth century, on the basis of its carpentry. In 1829 the farm was apparently in the ownership of the Rev John Peachey.<sup>1</sup> Already by the 1870s a number of additions had been made to the barn, with lower ranges of building stretching to the east and the south (see fig.1). There was also a detached outbuilding, rectangular on plan, a short distance to the east of the barn complex. The Ordnance Survey for the 1890s shows a pond immediately adjacent to the south west corner of the barn (see fig.2). In 1956 a large brick shed, described as a cowhouse with 24 stalls, was built a short distance to the north of the barn. It appears that by this date Highbuilding Farm was part of the Petworth Estate.<sup>2</sup> In more recent years in more recent years the farm has ceased to operate, the barn has been converted into a dwelling and passed into passed into separate occupation, and the cow shed has been converted to residential use.

The farm group lies at the end of Piper's Lane in a secluded location a short distance to the west of the centre of Ball's Cross. The farmhouse probably dates originally from the seventeenth century or earlier. It is two storeys high and is timber-framed with the members of the box-framing exposed in the external walls, and with brick nogging. The framing and

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<sup>1</sup> West Sussex Record Office, refs Par/77/7/1 and Add. Ms. 2021

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ref PHA 14105

nogging show clear signs of successive alterations. The building has an overall pitched hipped roof covered in brick tiles. The house is now visually separated from the former outbuildings to the north by planting.

Highbuilding Farm barn probably dates from the eighteenth century. It is also timber framed and comprises five bays, of which the narrower central bay was the midstrey. The exterior is clad in tarred weatherboarding and the overall roof has a half-hip at each end and is covered in brick tiles. Internally, the floor is concrete and the walls have vertical studding with a mid-rail. The principal trusses have jowled main posts with braced tie-beams and raking queen struts, a typically eighteenth century arrangement. A number of collars have been inserted. When the barn was converted for residential occupation the space was not subdivided but the interior walls and roof were lined between the main timbers and the midstrey openings were glazed. The narrow timber-framed and weatherboarded additions to the south and east of the main barn have been converted to provide a kitchen, utility room, bedrooms and other spaces.

The 1956 converted cowshed immediately to the north of the barn is rectangular on plan with a small projection at the south east corner. The external walls are of Fletton brick with metal framed windows and the shallow-pitched roof covered with a corrugated material, possibly asbestos.

To the east of the buildings is an area of open ground separated from the common entrance drive by a row of trees and from the field to the north by a mature hedge. Part of the ground is currently used for car parking but most is either laid to grass or cultivated as a kitchen garden. The only structure on the ground is a small modern timber garden shed.

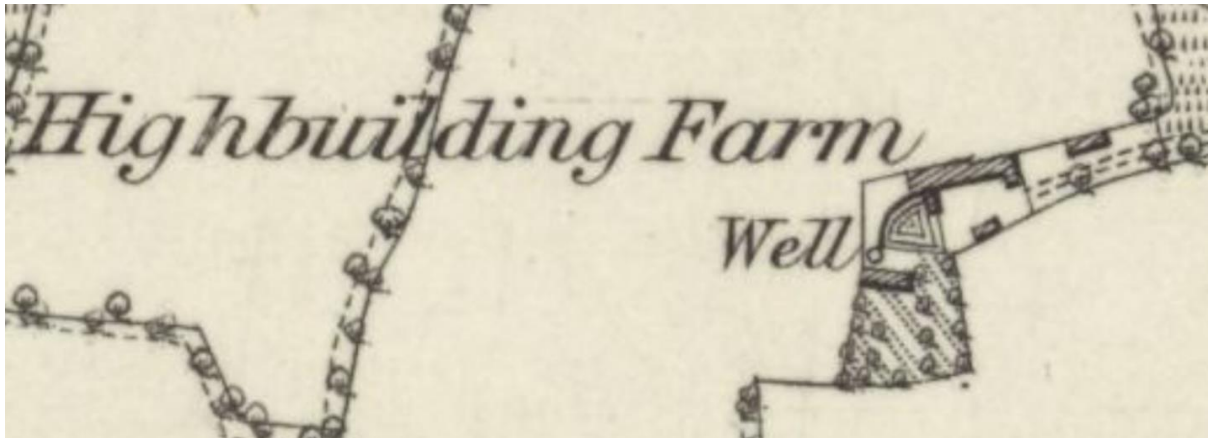


Figure 1: A detail from the 6":1 mile Ordnance Survey (Sussex XXII) published in 1877-80, showing the main barn with its eastern and southern additions and a detached structure to the east..

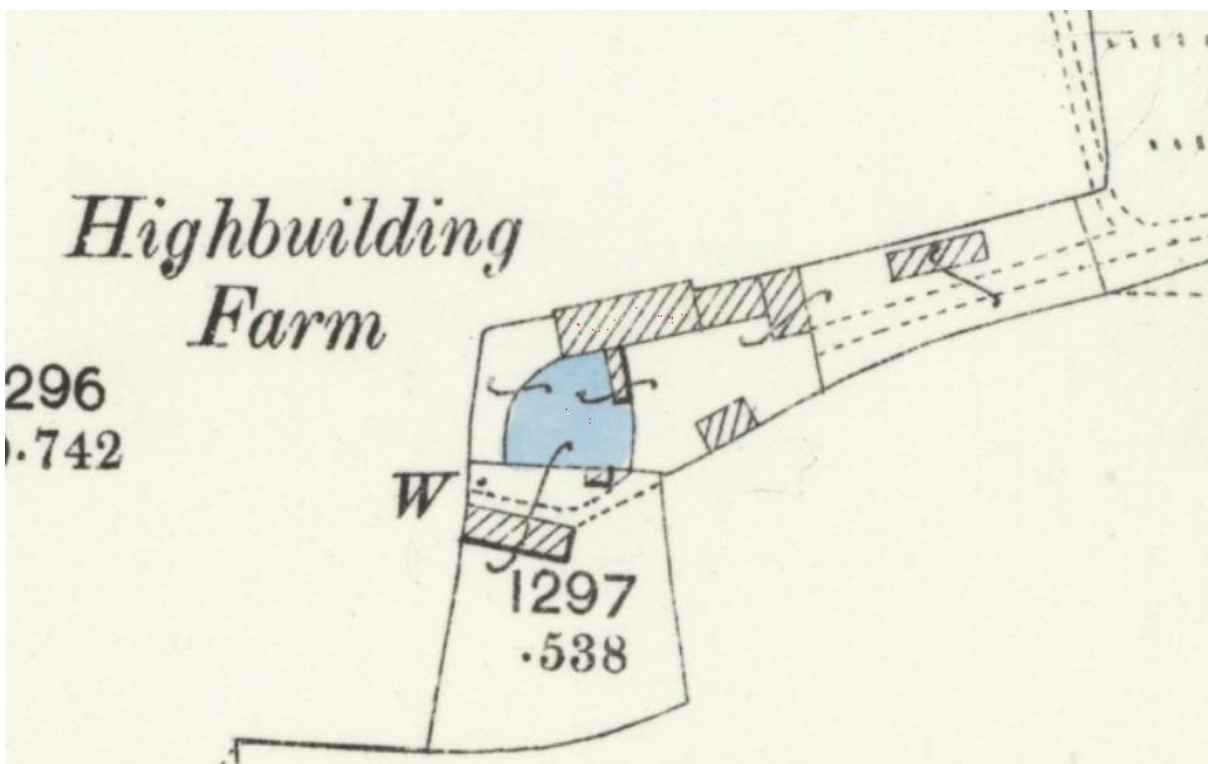


Figure 2: A detail from the 25":1 mile Ordnance Survey (Sussex XXII.4) published in 1897 showing the pond immediately to the south of the barn.

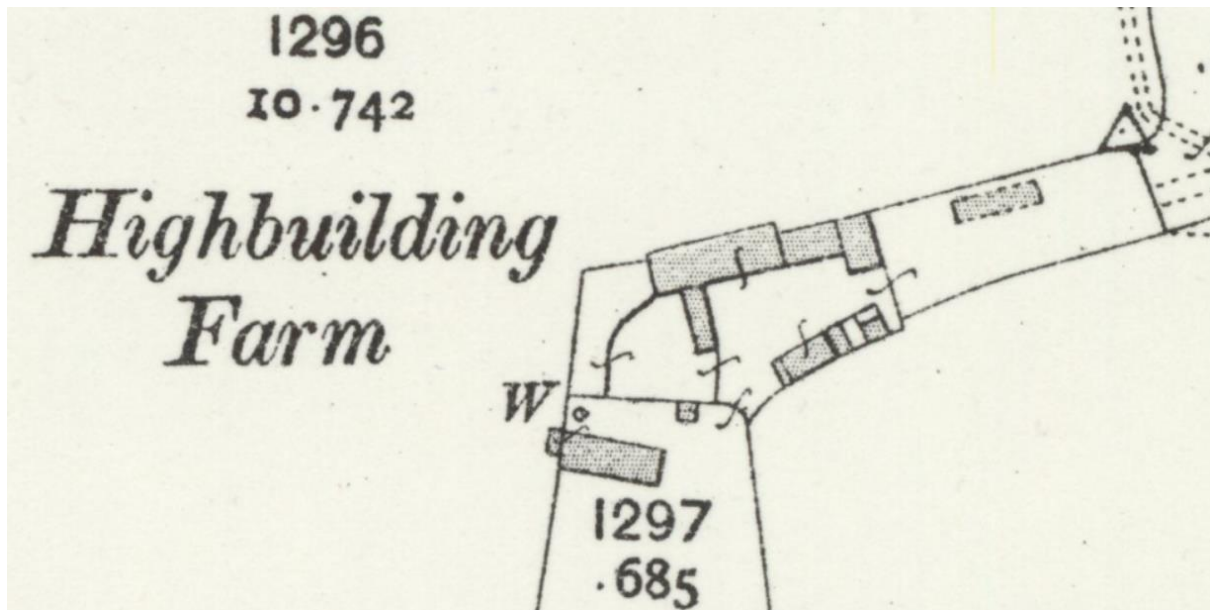


Figure 3: A detail from the 25":1 mile Ordnance Survey (Sussex XXII.4) published in 1912

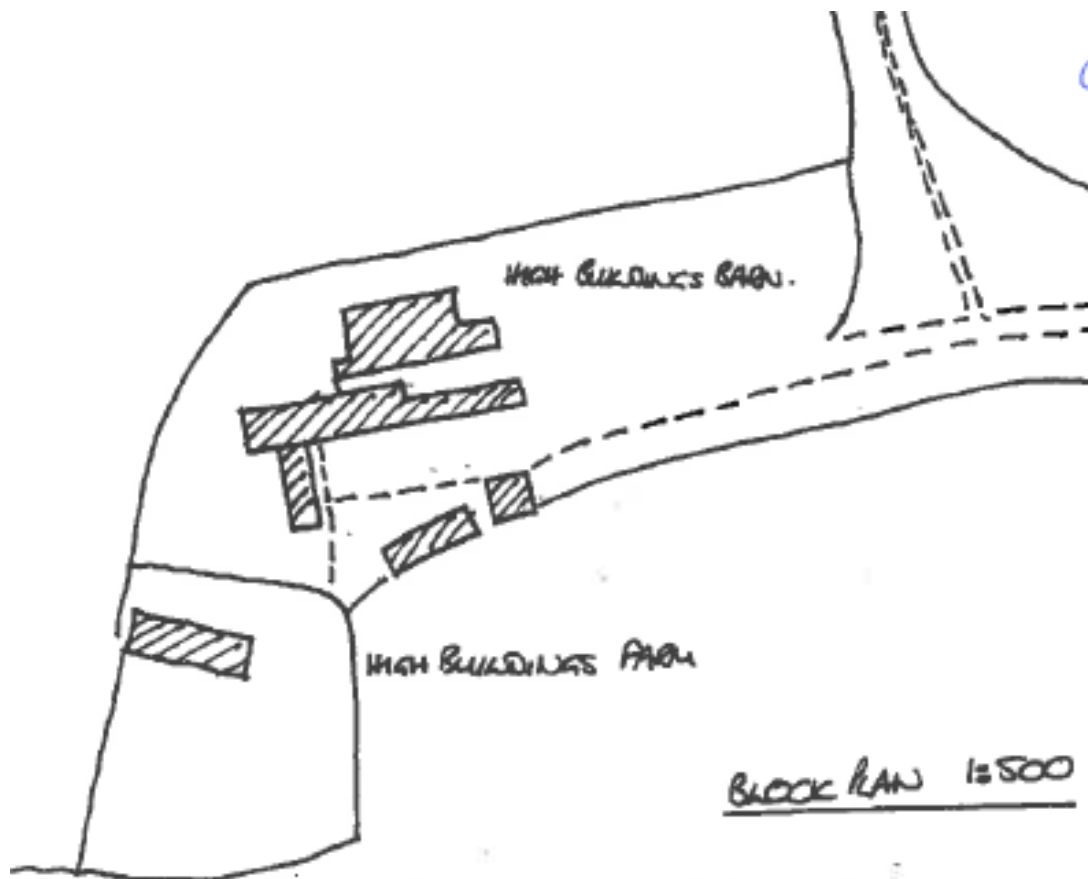


Figure 4: A sketch plan showing the current arrangement of buildings on the site (from an abortive planning application made in 2000)





Figure 5: Highbuilding Farm house in 2005 (Historic England)



Figure 6: Highbuilding Farm barn, south side





Figure 7: Highbuilding Farm barn interior



Figure 8: The complex of farm buildings from the north, with the barn rising behind the 1956 cowshed





Figure 9 : A view of the cowshed from the east, with the barn and additions to the left



Figure 10: A view of the eastern part of the site where new development is proposed.

### **3.0 The Significance of the Buildings and Site.**

The assessment of the significance of historic buildings and their settings is not an exact science; it is based on knowledge of the building type, comparison with what exists elsewhere, and the extent to which it may be distinctive or have special meaning for different groups of people.

Statutory designations provide some guide to the importance of historic buildings. Highbuilding Farm house was listed at Grade II in February 1955. Historic England guidance is that Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them. None of the other structures of the former farm is listed.

In 2012 the Department of Communities and Local Government issued the National Policy Planning Framework (slightly revised and updated in 2019) which suggests that for planning purposes, the significance of heritage assets should be assessed under the headings of *archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic* (which are closely related to the English Heritage values) and points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting. Heritage Significance is essentially a hierarchical concept, using descending levels of value. In this case the values employed are High, Medium and Low.

The main farmhouse is clearly of High Archaeological, Architectural and Historical Significance as an example of an early building type with evidence of successive alterations and marking the location of a farm settlement dating back at least to the seventeenth century.

The main barn partakes of the same kinds of significance as the farmhouse, but is later in date and has been converted to a residential use, erasing much of the archaeological evidence of its former use. It is therefore of lesser value and is of Medium Significance. The timber-framed additions to the barn date back at least to the 1870s and perhaps much earlier and should be considered as having the same significance. Although not listed, the barn and its attachments were in the same ownership as the farmhouse when it was listed and could be considered as being within the curtilage of the listed building and therefore subject to listed building control (see *Historic England Advice Note 10: Listed Buildings and Curtilage, 2018*)

The 1956 brick-built cowshed has little or no archaeological, architectural or historic interest or significance. As it dates from after July 1948 it does not count as a curtilage structure

#### **4.0 The Heritage Impact of the Proposed Works**

At present the proposal by Uberraum architects is only in outline. The proposal is for the site to be divided. The existing brick built cow shed would be demolished and replaced with a smaller residential building within the vegetable garden located to the east of the barn complex. The footprint of the new dwelling would be less than that of the demolished cowshed.

The principal heritage concerns in regard to the erection of any replacement building are the possible impact on the setting of adjacent listed buildings or curtilage structures, in particular the Grade II listed Highbuilding Farm house and the unlisted large barn. It is also a consideration that the site is located within the South Downs National Park.

The impact of the proposals on the setting of the adjacent buildings will need to be assessed under the principal headings suggested in the Historic England Good Practice Advice Note, *The Setting of Heritage Assets*, issued in 2017. These headings are: Location and Siting, Form and Appearance and Wider Effects.

##### **Location and siting**

It is proposed to site the replacement building more or less in the centre of the open ground to the east of the present barn complex and slightly to the north of the site of a previous structure shown on Ordnance Survey maps until the early twentieth century (figs. 1-3) but no longer existing. The replacement building would be a considerable distance from the Grade II listed farmhouse and would not be intervisible with it. The replacement building would be visible from the unlisted barn although there would be some physical separation between the two parts of the site, probably in the form of a hedge. The proposed location would not affect any important views towards or away from the listed building or the barn.

##### **Form and appearance**

The final form and appearance of the replacement building is not yet decided but it will probably be rectangular on plan, and traditional in appearance, with one or one and a half storeys and a double pitched roof. The exterior will probably be clad in timber with roof coverings of brick tiles, all to match the other buildings in the barn complex. The building will not be prominent, dominant or conspicuous. There will be a terrace on the north side of the house.



## **Wider Effects**

Wider effects can include such things as change to built surroundings and spaces, change to skyline, silhouette, noise, odour, vibration, dust, etc., lighting effects and 'light spill', change to general character (eg urbanising or industrialising), changes to public access, use or amenity, changes to land use, land cover, tree cover, changes to communication and car-parking, and changes to ownership arrangements. Clearly a new residential building would change the character of the site to some extent but the changes would all be minor and would have no adverse effects on the setting of the existing buildings.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed demolition of the 1950s cowshed would be a positive benefit to the character of the site. The proposed replacement structure would have a footprint less than that of the cowshed and would be a building of traditional appearance which would occupy more or less the same site as a previous agricultural building, long since demolished. The replacement structure would cause no harm to the setting of the Grade II Highhbuilding Farm house or to the unlisted barn and would have no adverse effect on the character and appearance of the South Downs National Park.



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