

# **Planning, Design and Access Statement**

**Land at Upper Pollicott, Ashendon, HP18 0HH**

**August 2021**

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## **1. Introduction & Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Tetra Tech Planning on behalf of the applicant, Thomas Betts and Co, in support of a full planning application to be submitted to Buckinghamshire Council for the conversion and extension of a range of agricultural barns to create five dwellings with access arrangements, vehicle parking, landscaping and all associated works on Land at Upper Pollicott, Ashendon, HP18 0HH.

1.1.2 This Statement provides an overview of the application site and surrounding area, including a detailed analysis of the planning history and the relevant planning policy context, demonstrating how the proposed scheme is appropriate whilst having regard to other technical considerations.

1.1.3 In addition to this Statement, the formal application comprises a comprehensive suite of documents intended to provide sufficient detail both for the LPA, consultees and neighbours to fully understand the proposals. In addition to this statement, the application comprises the following plans, documents and reports:

- Full set of plans and elevations prepared by Antony Thompson Architectural Services;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by Bernwood Ecology; and
- Bat Survey Report prepared by Bernwood Ecology

## 2. Site Description & Surroundings

- 2.1.1 The application site is located in the hamlet of Upper Pollicott, within the parish of Ashendon. The hamlet is formed of a cluster of farmsteads which are set out in a linear form, following the lane off Main Road, which runs parallel to the site's eastern boundary. The lane itself is punctuated by traditional agricultural workers dwellings of brick construction, converted barns and other agricultural buildings.
- 2.1.2 The application site comprises an arrangement of farm buildings in the open countryside, situated in the hamlet of Upper Pollicott, approximately 600 metres south of the village of Ashendon. The barns are setback from the main road which runs parallel to the site's eastern boundary, with an enclosed farmyard separating the barns and the road.
- 2.1.3 The site occupies a prominent position adjoining Main Road, with the residential dwellings of the hamlet located east of the site. The immediate surroundings comprise farmland to the east, two traditional farm buildings to the north and residential dwellings clustered around a courtyard to the west. The southern boundary of the site is delineated by the farm access route off Main Road. There are currently two gated access points from Main Road, a laid farm track to the south (mentioned above) which provides access to the rear of the dwellings to west and another access which serves the yard between the barn and Main Road.
- 2.1.4 The application site forms part of a long-established farm holding. The buildings have been in agricultural use since construction but have become largely redundant in recent years as the nature of modern farming and agricultural practice has evolved.

### 3. Planning History

3.1.1 A search of the Buckinghamshire Council online planning register identified the following historical planning applications at the subject site:

Application	Proposal	Decision
20/04293/COUAR	Determination as to whether prior approval is required in respect of transport & highway impact, noise, contamination risk, flooding and locational considerations for the conversion of agricultural barn into four dwellinghouses (Class Q(a)) and in relation to design and external appearance of the building (Class Q(b)).	Approved 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb. 2021
20/01562/COUAR	Determination as to whether prior approval is required in respect of transport & highway impact, noise, contamination risk, flooding and locational considerations for the conversion of agricultural barn into three dwellinghouses (Class Q(a)) and in relation to design and external appearance of the building (Class Q(b))	Refused 4 <sup>th</sup> Aug 2020
17/04875/COUAR	Determination as to whether prior approval is required in respect of transport & highway impact, noise, contamination risk, flooding and locational considerations for the conversion of agricultural barn into three dwellinghouses (Class Q(a)) and in relation to design and external appearance of the building (Class Q(b))	Approved 26 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2018
16/04551/COUAR	Determination as to whether prior approval is required in respect of transport & highway impact, noise, contamination risk, flooding and locational considerations for the conversion of agricultural barn into three dwellinghouses (Class Q(a)) and in relation to design and external appearance of the building (Class Q(b)).	Refused 9 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2017
85/01428/AV	Conversion of barn to dwelling	Refused 8 <sup>th</sup> Oct 1985
85/00394/AV	Conversion and extension of barns to form dwelling	Approved 11 <sup>th</sup> Apr 1985
84/01157/AV	Conversion of barn to dwelling	Approved 2 <sup>nd</sup> Aug 1984

## 4. The Proposed Development

4.1.1 The proposed development comprises the conversion of a barn to create a five dwellings, including a modest extension of new build development, access arrangements, vehicle parking, landscaping and all associated works on Land at Upper Pollicott, Ashendon, HP18 0HH.

4.1.2 The proposed conversion relates to the cluster of adjoined barns and former stable block which are of mixed stone, brick and framed construction dating from various time periods. The proposed building operations relating to the conversion elements of the scheme are detailed on the accompanying drawings and are summarised as follows:

- Installation of new/replacement of existing doors and windows;
- New roof coverings, with an emphasis on retaining existing materials where possible and only using reproduction clay tiles where required, roof works will utilise the existing roof trusses and supporting structure;
- Replacement and installation of new exterior walls;
- Installation of services (drainage, water, electricity and communications);
- Partial demolition of elements of the barns and stable structures which are considered unsuitable for conversion; and
- Internal alterations

4.1.3 The modest new build elements of the scheme will replace a previously open fronted structure which fell into a state of disrepair approximately 20 – 30 years ago. In its present state, only the rear and side walls remain standing. The proposed new build elements would see the reinstatement of the courtyard form of the buildings.

4.1.4 The proposed residential development can be summarised as follows:

- **Dwelling 1** – 3 bedroom, 2 storey dwelling extending to 202.4 sqm
- **Dwelling 2** – 3 bedroom, 2 storey dwelling extending to 128.4 sqm
- **Dwelling 3** – 3 bedroom, single storey dwelling extending to 99.7 sqm and comprises new build extension
- **Dwelling 4** – 2 bedroom, single storey dwelling extending to 83.7 sqm
- **Dwelling 5** – 2 bedroom, single storey dwelling extending to 79.4 sqm

4.1.5 The proposed development will utilise the two existing site access points from Main Road. The southern access will serve vehicular access to a parking area comprising 7 spaces and associated manoeuvring to serve units 3 and 5 and continuing onwards to a further two spaces serving unit 1 contained within the courtyard area. The northern access would serve two smaller parking areas of three spaces each to serve units 2 and 4 respectively.

## 5. Planning Policy Context

### 5.1 Local Level Policy

- 5.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, in the determination of planning applications, decisions are made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.2 The current Development Plan for Buckinghamshire Council (Aylesbury Vale Area) for the purposes of the proposed development consists of the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (Saved Policies, 2007).
- 5.1.3 The preparation of a new Local Plan is underway, and the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) is currently at examination, with a consultation on the further main modifications having just concluded prior to further hearing sessions being held. As the Plan has not yet been adopted, only limited weight can be awarded to its draft policies.
- 5.1.4 Other important material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), along with other relevant guidance by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and various adopted Supplementary Planning Documents.

#### **Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP)**

- 5.1.5 The Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (AVDLP) was adopted in 2004 and subsequently saved (in part) by the Secretary of State in 2007. However, AVDLP predates the NPPF and as such may only be given weight so far as its policies are consistent with the NPPF, as directed by Paragraph 215.
- 5.1.6 The following 'saved' policies of the AVDLP are considered to be relevant to this application:
- 5.1.7 Policy GP.8 Protection of amenity of residents seeks to ensure that proposed development would not unreasonably harm any aspect of the amenity of nearby residents when considered against the benefits arising from the development.
- 5.1.8 Policy GP.24 Car Parking guidelines states that new development will be required to provide vehicular parking in accordance with the Council's operative guidelines published as Supplementary Planning Guidance. It further states that the guidelines establish maximum levels of parking appropriate to the scale, type and location of development. Whilst broadly consistent with the NPPF's aims of maintaining safety and convenience on the highway network, the NPPF requires that policies ought not to be overly prescriptive in terms of design standards.
- 5.1.9 Policy GP.35 Design of new development proposals ensures that the design of new development respects and complements the physical characteristics of the site and the surroundings; the building tradition, ordering, form and materials of the locality; the historic scale and context of the



setting, the natural qualities and features of the area; and the effect on important public views and skylines.

- 5.1.10 This policy is considered to be in general conformity with the NPPF, identifying the need to secure high-quality design and good standards of amenity, which should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The policy is not considered to be unnecessarily prescriptive and can therefore be afforded weight accordingly.
- 5.1.11 Policy GP.39 and GP.40 Existing Trees and Hedgerows both relate to the retention of existing trees and hedgerows and require a tree survey of the site if applications may affect trees, and the imposition of conditions to ensure trees and hedgerows of amenity, landscape or wildlife importance are retained or replaced and protected during construction. These policies are considered to be partially in conformity with the NPPF, which seeks in Paragraph 8 that the planning system contributes to protecting and enhancing the natural environment and helps to improve biodiversity.
- 5.1.12 Policy GP.91 Provision of amenity requires new housing proposals to include suitable informal amenity open space which is appropriate to the character of the development.
- 5.1.13 Policy RA.8 Areas of Attractive Landscape indicates the proposal map defines such areas which have particular landscape features and qualities that are considered appropriate for particular protection. Development proposals in these areas should respect their landscape character. Development that adversely affects this character will not be permitted, unless appropriate mitigation measures can be secured. Where permission is granted the Council will impose conditions or seek obligations to ensure mitigation against harm caused to landscape interest.
- 5.1.14 Policy RA.11 Conversion of buildings in the countryside outlines that the Council endorses the re-use of buildings outside of the built-up area of settlements that are of permanent or substantial construction and generally in-keeping with the rural surroundings. Conversion works should not involve major reconstruction or significant extensions and should respect the character of the building and its setting. Permission for residential re-use is unlikely but may be granted exceptionally as part of an acceptable business conversion scheme.
- 5.1.15 This policy is only partially in accordance with the NPPF and should only be given limited weight. The NPPF encourages the re-use of underutilised or redundant buildings and land, it does not specify the use or state that residential re-use has to be part of a business conversion scheme. This part of the policy is overly prescriptive and out of date.
- 5.1.16 Policy RA.36 Development causing traffic adversely affecting rural roads states that within the Rural Areas the Council will have regard to the desirability of protecting the characteristics of the

countryside from excessive traffic generation from development proposals including the need to avoid traffic increases and routing unsuited to rural roads.

### **Emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (Further Main Mods 2020-2021)**

- 5.1.17 The emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) is currently at examination. Given the current stage to which VALP has progressed, some weight may be afforded to its policies, albeit having regard to the currently unresolved status of some objections. Main Modifications hearing have recently been undertaken in April 2021.
- 5.1.18 Coinciding with the NPPF, draft Policy S1 Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale requires all development to comply with the principles of sustainable development.
- 5.1.19 Draft Policy S2 Spatial strategy for growth sets out the spatial growth for the area, delivering a total of 28,600 homes within the plan period.
- 5.1.20 Draft Policy S3 Settlement hierarchy and cohesive development implies that the scale and distribution of development should accord with that set out in the settlement hierarchy. Development should not result in a negative impact on the identities of settlements or communities, leading to their coalescence, in rural areas in particular.
- 5.1.21 New residential development should provide a mix of sizes to meet current and future housing needs, as stated in draft Policy H6a Housing mix.
- 5.1.22 Draft Policy S7 Previously Developed Land indicates development will be expected to make efficient and effective use of land, encouraging the reuse of previously developed, brownfield land in sustainable locations.
- 5.1.23 Draft Policy T4 Delivering transport in new development states that new development will only be permitted if the necessary mitigation is provided against any unacceptable transport impacts which arise directly from the development. This can be achieved, as appropriate, through various mitigation factors.
- 5.1.24 Draft Policy T5 Vehicle Parking is relevant to parking within proposals, highlighting that development must provide an appropriate level of parking to take into account the mix and use of development. Garages will not be included within the allocation of parking spaces, unless they meet a minimum internal size. Vehicle parking standards are set out in the design SPD.
- 5.1.25 Draft Policy BE2 Design of new development states that all new development proposals should follow the guidance set out within the District Design SPD and shall respect and complement:
- The physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings including the scale and context of the site and its setting;
  - The local distinctiveness and vernacular character of the locality, in terms of ordering, form, proportions, architectural detailing and materials;
  - The natural qualities and features of the area; and
  - The effect on important public views and skylines.

- 5.1.26 Draft Policy BE3 Protection of the amenity of residents requires planning permission not to be granted where the proposed development would unreasonably harm any aspect of the amenity of existing residents and achieve a satisfactory level of amenity for future residents.
- 5.1.27 Draft Policy NE2 Biodiversity and Geodiversity requires even minor sites to provide a net gain in biodiversity.
- 5.1.28 Draft Policy NE5 Landscape character and locally important landscape requires development to recognise the individual character and distinctiveness of particular landscape character areas. Development in areas of attractive landscape should have particular regard to the character identified in the report 'Defining the special qualities of local landscape designations in Aylesbury Vale District and the Landscape Character assessment'. Development should consider the role of the landscape character area and meet all of the following criteria:
- a. be grouped where possible with existing buildings to minimise impact on visual amenity;
  - b. be located to avoid the loss of important on-site views and off-site views towards important landscape features;
  - c. reflect local character and distinctiveness in terms of settlement form and field pattern, topography and ecological value;
  - d. Carefully consider spacing, height, scale, plot shape and size, elevations, roofline and pitch, overall colour palette, texture and boundary treatment (walls, hedges, fences and gates);
  - e. minimise the impact of lighting to avoid blurring the distinction between urban and rural areas, and in areas which are intrinsically dark and to avoid light pollution to the night sky;
  - f. ensure that the buildings and any outdoor storage and parking areas are not visually prominent in the landscape;
  - g. not generate an unacceptable level and/or frequency of noise in areas relatively undisturbed by noise and valued for their recreational or amenity value.
- 5.1.29 The first stage in mitigating impact is to avoid the identified harmful impact. Where it is accepted there will be harm to the landscape character, specific on-site mitigation will be required and, as a last resort, compensation will be required as part of a planning application.
- 5.1.30 Draft Policy NE8 Trees, hedgerows and woodlands states that where tree loss is considered acceptable there should be adequate provision for replacement. The policy also states that developers should aspire to retain a 10m (minimum of 5m) natural buffer around retained and planted native hedgerows.
- 5.1.31 Draft Policy C1 Conversion of rural buildings outlines support for the re-use of an existing building that is of permanent and substantial construction and generally in keeping with the rural surroundings in the countryside, as long as the following criteria is met:
- a. Conversion works should not involve major reconstruction or significant extensions and

should respect the character of the building and its setting, except in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that dereliction was the result of severe accidental damage or accidental destruction in the past two years.

- b. Where the building is suitable for modern agricultural practice it would not give rise to a future need for another building to fulfil the function of the building being re-used.
- c. The long-term retention of a building that is by reason of its location, size, condition and appearance is harmful to the character of the countryside is not encouraged.
- d. The redundant or disused status of the building has been demonstrated and the re-use of the building would enhance the immediate setting.
- e. The existing building is inherently suitable, in terms of its size, design and construction for the intended re-use, and the proposed scheme enables the intended re-use to be achieved without the need for complete or substantial reconstruction.
- f. The existing building is located well away from existing settlements where utilities are not available.
- g. The existing building is not damaging to the surrounding character by virtue of a utilitarian appearance or cladding in unattractive materials.
- h. The proposed re-use of is a scale that would not have an adverse impact on its surroundings or the viability of existing facilities or services in nearby settlements.
- i. Any extension to the existing building included in the proposed scheme is modest in scale, ancillary in nature, subordinate to the main building and necessary to meet the essential functional requirements of the intended re-use.
- j. Any extension to the existing barn conversion is modest in scale, ancillary in nature, subordinate to the main building, in keeping with the rural character, designed with the sensitivity to the host building and will enhance the character and appearance of its immediate surroundings.
- k. Where the existing building is of designated or non-designated heritage assets or contributes to local character, the proposed scheme would retain significant historical features and not adversely affect the character and appearance of the building or its setting.
- l. Where any curtilage is required it should not be excessive in size and should relate well to the existing building and landscape.
- m. The proposed scheme would not give rise to ancillary uses that could not be accommodated within the site and does not include, or would not give rise to, ancillary uses within the site, such as open storage, that would be visually intrusive.
- n. Conversion works should not adversely impact upon wildlife using the structure. If impacts to nesting sites are unavoidable mitigation will be required (See Policy NE1).

## 5.2 National Level Policy

### National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 5.2.1 In addition to local policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Revised, 2021) and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) form important material considerations in the determination of applications.
- 5.2.2 The NPPF was originally published in March 2012 and was subsequently revised and reissued in July 2018 and has been subject to minor amendments in February 2019. The document establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 2 states that the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.2.3 Paragraph 8 confirms the three dimensions to sustainable development: economic (building a strong, competitive economy); social (providing the supply of housing required to meet needs and creating a high quality built environment); and environmental (protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment). Paragraph 8 confirms that these roles should not be taken in isolation and are mutually dependent.
- 5.2.4 It is a requirement within Paragraph 11 that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area and that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.
- 5.2.5 In terms of the determination of planning applications, Paragraph 38 sets out that it is a requirement that LPAs should approach decisions in a positive and creative way. This paragraph also states that LPAs should work proactively with applicants to ensure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions, whilst seeking to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.2.6 Paragraph 47 outlines that planning law requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It encourages that decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible.
- 5.2.7 Paragraph 54 states that conditions can be used to make a development acceptable, where it might otherwise be unacceptable, however, these should be kept to a minimum and only imposed if necessary.
- 5.2.8 Section 5 supports boosting the supply of homes, where it states that small to medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement. Paragraph 78 promotes sustainable development in rural areas, stating that planning policies should identify opportunities

for villages to grow and thrive whilst Paragraph 80 supports, inter alia, the reuse of redundant buildings in the countryside.

- 5.2.9 Section 9 relates to promoting sustainable transport and requires impact upon transport be assessed and for sustainable methods of travel to be sought.
- 5.2.10 Making effective use of land is a key consideration and is outlined in Section 11. Paragraph 119 specifically encourages and promotes the development of underutilised land, especially if this would help meet identified needs for housing.
- 5.2.11 Section highlights the importance of good design. Paragraph 126 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in the area, as long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings, as set out within Paragraph 134.
- 5.2.12 Section 16 outlines the importance of conserving and enhancing the historic environment and sets out the need to consider the significance and setting of heritage assets proportionately in determining planning applications. Any harm to heritage assets arising from proposed development is to be considered on the basis of the degree of harm and the benefits arising from the scheme.

#### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

- 5.2.13 The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was published online in March 2014 and is periodically updated. It advises that:

*"The National Planning Policy Framework represents up-to-date Government planning policy and must be taken into account where it is relevant to a planning application or appeal. If decision takers choose not to follow the National Planning Policy Framework, clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed. A development that is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework does not remove the requirement to determine the application in accordance with the development plan unless there are other material considerations that indicate otherwise."*

- 5.2.14 The Guidance advises that the statutory development plan is the plan for the future development of an area. It comprises:

*"Local plans – development plan documents adopted by local planning authorities, including any 'saved' policies from plans that are otherwise no longer current, and those development plan documents that deal specifically with minerals and waste.*

*Neighbourhood plans – where these have been supported by the local community at referendum and subsequently made by the local planning authority."*

- 5.2.15 Regarding how decisions on planning applications must be made, it advises that the National Planning Policy Framework stresses the importance of having a planning system that is genuinely plan-led. Where a proposal accords with an up-to-date development plan it should be approved

without delay, as required by the presumption in favour of sustainable development within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

- 5.2.16 Mirroring Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the PPG advises that where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, applications should be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

## 6. Planning Appraisal

### 6.1 Principle of Development

- 6.1.1 The primary policies concerning the principle of development relate to the re-use of buildings in the countryside. As highlighted above in the preceding policy review, Saved Policy RA.11 of the AVDLP indicates that in areas outside the built-up area of settlements the Council endorses the conversion and re-use of buildings that are of permanent and substantial construction which are generally in keeping with the rural surroundings. Furthermore, the scale of schemes should not conflict with the strategy of concentrating development in the main settlements. Conversion works should not involve major reconstruction or significant extensions and should respect the character of the building and its setting.
- 6.1.2 In accordance with Policy RA.11, the proposed development primarily comprises the conversion of a permanent and substantial collection of adjoining barns. The proposed scheme is entirely in keeping with the rural locale, demonstrated by the traditional design approach adopted, which utilises the existing vernacular to create a highly sympathetic and complementary proposal. In respect of scale, the proposed scheme primarily comprises conversion of the existing footprint and does not propose to drastically expand upon this. The conversion includes a modest element of new build residential floorspace which replaces a previously open fronted structure which fell into a state of disrepair approximately 20 – 30 years ago. In its present state, only the rear and side walls remain standing. However, the proposed new build element will see the restoration of the traditional courtyard form and reinstate the historic arrangement of the farmstead. Crucially the new build elements do not represent a major reconstruction, nor is it considered a significant extension, given the proposed scale of the scheme – adhering to the requisite policy.
- 6.1.3 A recent appeal decision which considered the approach to barn conversion schemes adopted under AVDLP policy RA11 (ref: APP/J0405/W/19/3222634) sets out that the degree of rebuilding or new construction should be considered as an overall proportion of the entire scheme and notes that the Council's approach adopts a maximum 50% threshold for any new build elements within a scheme for it to be considered a conversion. The extent of new build elements comprised in the proposed extension amounts to 147 square metres of 'new build' - comprising of areas of new walls, roofs or infilling of openings (see marked up elevations, drawing ref 031 rev C, which highlights the limited areas of new build and new openings for information). This compares to a total existing area of walls and roofs of 1072 square metres, so the additions/alterations are demonstrably modest, in accordance with the relevant policy, equating to a 14% new build to conversion ratio. This extension is therefore modest in the context of the overall scheme and the setting within the farmyard.
- 6.1.4 Draft Policy S1 'Sustainable Development for Aylesbury Vale' of the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan indicates all development must comply with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. The proposed development will see the re-use of an underutilised, brownfield site and is situated within the existing community of Upper Pollicott. Additionally, the



scale of the proposed five dwelling scheme will minimise impacts on the local community. On this basis, the proposed development is considered highly sustainable in accordance with Draft Policy S1. Additionally, draft Policy S7 'Previously Developed Land' indicates development will be expected to make efficient and effective use of land, encouraging the reuse of previously development, brownfield land in sustainable locations. As highlighted above, the proposals utilise an underutilised brownfield site and will see the reuse of a redundant property, in a sustainable location, therefore in accordance with Draft Policy S7.

6.1.5 Draft Policy C1 'Conversion of Rural Buildings' indicates support for the re-use of an existing building that is of permanent and substantial construction and generally in keeping with the rural surroundings in the countryside, providing it meets a comprehensive criterion. The schemes compliance to these relevant points is outlined below:

- The new build element of the scheme is modest in size and in keeping with the scale of the proposed barn conversion. Additionally, the design respects the character of the adjoining barns, nearby dwellings and surrounding rural setting. On this basis the proposals do not comprise major reconstruction or significant extensions.
- The existing barns are underutilised and will not lead to a future need for agricultural buildings on site.
- The retention of the barn structures are entirely in keeping with the rural setting and is not harmful to the character of the countryside.
- As previously highlighted the barns are in a sub-par condition and are displaying visual signs of deterioration. The re-use of the barns will see the barns become visually attractive, enhancing the rural setting.
- A building survey undertaken by Blackwell Structural Consultants in 2017 (previously submitted in support of the Class Q applications) has demonstrated the structural integrity and suitability of the barns for conversion to the proposed residential uses without the need for substantial reconstruction.
- The proposed scheme for five residential units is in keeping with the scale of nearby rural settlements and communities and services and facilities available. The residential re-use

of the barns would positively support the existing vitality and viability of the settlement by introducing new homes and additional residents in a sympathetic manner.

- The application site does not contain and designated or non-designated heritage assets.
- The residential curtilage associated with the proposed scheme is the established curtilage associated with the barns and is not excessive given the plot size nor would it appear out of keeping with the wider setting.

6.1.6 It has therefore been demonstrated the proposed scheme accords with the development criteria of Draft Policy C1, establishing a principle of development for the re-use and conversion of the barns.

## **6.2 Landscape & Design**

6.2.1 Policy GP.35 of AVDLP and draft Policy BE2 of the draft VALP seek to ensure new development proposals are of a high quality design, respect the local context in which they are located, and are appropriate in terms of scale and have an acceptable impact upon the surrounding landscape. These considerations are echoed by the NPPF, notably in Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places, which emphasises the importance of good design and consideration of local context.

6.2.2 The proposed dwellings have been designed to reflect the countryside setting of the site as well as the former agricultural use of the structures. The proposed modest extension will utilise a highly comparable palette of materials to the existing in order to ensure visual consistency and create a design which is both sympathetic and complimentary to the rural character of the site and its setting.

6.2.3 Draft Policy NE5 'Landscape Character and Locally Important Landscape' requires development to recognise the individual character and distinctiveness of landscape character areas. The proposed scheme utilises existing buildings and will therefore minimise impact upon visual amenity. As a result, the scheme will avoid the loss of any countryside views towards landscape features. It is considered the modest element of new build will bear no impact upon views. As highlighted above, the scheme relates to the conversion of barns, historically used for agricultural purposes. The proposals will retain the existing form and appearance of the barns, reflecting the local character and rural setting. The scheme utilises a complimentary palette of materials that relate to the existing materials employed in place at the barns to provide visual consistency and to ensure the proposals are not visually prominent in the countryside setting. It is considered the proposed residential use to be entirely in keeping with the surrounding hamlet of Upper Pollicott, especially given the nearby farmsteads and residential uses observed in the immediate locality.

6.2.4 Saved Policy RA.8 'Areas of Attractive Landscape' indicates development proposals in these areas should respect their landscape character. As highlighted above, it is considered the proposals respect the Area of Attractive Landscape through the adoption of a highly complementary and sympathetic approach towards design which ensures a scheme of

acceptable scale, massing and size that employs materials which blend seamlessly with the rural character and setting.

### **6.3 Highways, Access & Parking**

6.3.1 The proposed development will utilise the existing site access point to the south of the barn structures at the site's eastern boundary, from Main Road. The existing internal access route will lead to the car parking spaces which are set out to partly adjoin the barn structures south facing elevation and the yard to the east of the barn structures. Seven car parking spaces will be provided, an appropriate provision for the proposed five residential dwellings, adhering to draft policy T5 and adopted policy GP.24. Given the small scale of the proposals it is considered the development will not lead to traffic adversely affecting rural roads – in accordance with adopted Policy RA.36.

### **6.4 Heritage**

6.4.1 The National Heritage List England indicates there are no listed buildings or scheduled ancient monuments within the application site or adjoining the site. The nearest listed building is White House, a grade II listed cottage situated approximately 122 metres east of the proposed development. However, the proposals are visually separated from the listed asset and will not impact the setting of the listed building.

### **6.5 Ecology**

6.5.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared by Bernwood Ecology in support of the application. The survey evaluated the habitats onsite within the site boundary as generally of having a negligible to low ecological value and are common and widespread in the local area, with the exception of a fruit tree, which is worthy of retention due to its mature age and apparent good condition.

6.5.2 In respect of designated site, there are no protected sites, nor priority habitats within the search radius applied. Therefore, there are no anticipated impacts on sites of ecological importance as a consequence of the proposed development.

6.5.3 The hedgerows around the site are in poor condition, fragmented and consisting of primarily elder, elm and bramble. The redevelopment of the site provides opportunities to create hedgerows of higher ecological value through the planting of new hedgerows containing a diversity of native species, which once mature will assist site connectivity into the wider green infrastructure network.

6.5.4 Evidence of bat use of the building was noted with confirmed results from DNA analysis of common pipistrelle and Natterer's bats. The Appraisal provides a recommendation for further surveys relating to bats which have also been undertaken and a report submitted.

6.5.5 In respect of invertebrates, the site is unlikely to offer any high-quality invertebrate habitat. The redevelopment of the site provides an opportunity to create new habitats which can offer higher quality invertebrate habitats than currently exists on site.

6.5.6 In respect of amphibians, there are no historical records of great crested newts within the 1km search area radius. There are two waterbodies evident on Ordnance Survey maps at 1:10,000; Pond 1 and Pond 2. Pond 1 was dry at the time of the HSI in May 2021, despite heavy rain in the preceding days. Pond 2 has access constraints, a 'poor' suitability for supporting great crested newt and is of sufficient distance from the site at 420m away to be discounted from further considerations.

6.5.7



6.5.8 In respect of wild birds, there are a small number of species of birds included within the search results, including barn owl and red kite. Bird pellets were noted under the trusses of Building B1 which are consistent with being from red kite. There was no evidence of use of the buildings by barn owl or any other Schedule 1 species of bird for nesting. It is therefore likely the use of Building B1 is limited to night roosting/ perching. The use of the buildings for nesting by other non-Schedule 1 species is very likely. Nests were evident inside Building B2a and B2b, inactive at the time of the survey (mid-October). The buildings contain opportunities for supporting a diverse range of birds for nesting and therefore advice on the avoidance of damage or destruction of active birds' nests is provided.

## 6.6 Trees & Hedgerows

6.6.1 The application site is bound by hedgerow on its eastern boundary, including a small number of trees at the site's south eastern boundary. As the proposals represent the conversion of the existing barn structures and only a small volume of new build extension, it is envisaged the scheme will not result in a detrimental impact upon the hedgerows and trees which line the eastern boundary. Furthermore, the existing access point at the eastern boundary will be retained, allowing the hedgerow features to be maintained and conserved. In summary, the proposals will not lead to a loss of trees or hedgerows in accordance with Draft Policy NF8 and adopted policies CP.39 and GP.40.

## 6.7 Flood Risk & Drainage

6.7.1 There is no anticipated risk of flooding as the site is located within Flood Zone 1. Details of the proposed drainage design for the proposed development can be secured by way of appropriately worded condition to ensure the site will be suitably and appropriately drained in accordance with local and national policy.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Tetra Tech Planning on behalf of the applicant, Thomas Betts and Co, in support of a full planning application to be submitted to Buckinghamshire Council for the conversion of an agricultural barn to create a five dwelling scheme with a modest element of new build development, access arrangements, vehicle parking, landscaping and all associated works at Land at Upper Pollicott, Ashendon, HP18 0HH.
- 7.1.2 This Statement provides an overview of the application site and surrounding area, including a detailed analysis of the planning history and the relevant planning policy context, demonstrating how the proposed scheme is appropriate whilst having regard to other technical considerations.
- 7.1.3 This Statement, and the accompanying suite of documents to which it refers, demonstrates that the proposed scheme is technically sound in all aspects and would therefore accord with relevant policies in the adopted development plan and the NPPF in these respects. It further demonstrates that the proposed development represents high quality design, as encourage in the NPPF, which would respect and complement the character and context of the local area, and would provide a suitable standard of amenity, in accordance with both local and national policies and also other relevant guidance.
- 7.1.4 The proposed layout offers an appropriately designed scheme which is of appropriate scale, design and character to be in-keeping with the existing site and the surrounding area. The proposal would retain the agricultural character of the retained buildings.
- 7.1.5 In summary, the proposal would make provision for five new dwellings providing both social and economic benefits, which should be afforded significant weight, whilst also enhancing the immediate setting of these redundant barns. Accordingly, it is politely requested the application be positively determined and granted permission without delay.