



PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

on behalf of Bedingfield Hall Farms Ltd.

Change of use of part of an agricultural building to canine hydrotherapy centre (sui generis)

at Bedingfield House Farm, Bedingfield

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For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

Brown & Co is a leading provider of agency, professional and consultancy services across the whole range of rural, commercial, residential, and agricultural markets.

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Reference: 21/036627

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Brown & Co to support a planning application submitted on behalf of Bedingfield Hall Farms Ltd. for the change of use of part of an agricultural building to a canine hydrotherapy centre at Bedingfield House Farm, Bedingfield.

1.2 Bedingfield Hall Farms Ltd is a second generation farming business, whose operations consist of arable, livestock and contract farming. The business currently farms around 350 hectares of its own land, as well as farming a further 325 hectares through contract farming agreements. The business employs two full-time staff, as well as a further two casual employees over the harvest period. The farm business currently operates from two sites: adjacent to Bedingfield House and off Hall Road.

1.3 The purpose of this statement is to set out the background to the Applicants' proposal and the key planning issues raised by this. The statement is structured as shown below:

- **Section 1:** introduction
- **Section 2:** describes the physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings;
- **Section 3:** outlines the proposed development;
- **Section 4:** summarises the relevant national and local planning policy context;
- **Section 5:** provides a planning assessment of

the key considerations raised by the proposal; and

- **Section 6:** sets out in brief our overall conclusions on the proposal.

1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the following documents submitted as part of the application:

- Application form;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.001—Site Location Plan;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.002—Existing Site Plan;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.003—Proposed Site Plan;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.006—Existing Floor Plans;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.010—Existing Elevations;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.106—Proposed Floor Plan;
- Drawing No. 21.036627.110—Proposed Elevations.

2. SITE & SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The application site comprises the south eastern end of a redundant single storey piggery building at Bedingfield House Farm. The farm comprises a series of traditional and modern agricultural buildings, an equestrian building with associated menage, and dwelling.

2.2 The farm is located to the south west of Bedingfield Road approximately 1 mile south-west of Bedingfield and 4.5 miles south-east of Eye. The farm is surrounded by agricultural land, with most nearby uses also being agricultural.

2.3 The application site forms red brick building to the southern end of the cluster of development at the farm. A further storage building is located a short distance to the east, however the main farm yard is located to the north. The farm yard is surrounded by arable fields, with access by way of a long drive extending southwards from Bedingfield Road.

2.4 A further access extends westwards from the yard to meet Bucks Green, this passes to the west of the application site before moving round to the south east and serving the adjacent storage building. The track is a bridleway which continues eastwards over the fields.



Figure 1: Site location (Source: Google Maps)

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 It is proposed to convert the south eastern half of the former piggery building, so as to allow for the relocation of K9 Hydro Services, a local business. The remainder of the building would be retained for agricultural storage purposes.

3.2 The main structure of the building would be retained, with alterations to the number and arrangement of openings. To the east elevation the existing openings would be partially infilled in order to create four windows, to the southern elevation two new windows and a door would be created. Whilst to the west, two openings would be retained to create doors, one would be infilled, and two new windows would be created.

3.3 It is proposed to re clad the building in light grey timber, and to replace the current asbestos-fibre sheet roofing with new corrugated sheet roofing in anthracite grey.

3.4 A one way system would operate within the building, with access to the south and an exit to the north. Internally, a viewing corridor would open out on to the dry clinic and pool room. An office with separate access would be provided to the south east corner, and a plant room to the north end. Toilet and shower facilities would be provided to the southern end.

3.5 The site would be accessed by way of the existing access from Bucks Green to the west, and a small car park comprising four spaces would be provided to the south west of the building.

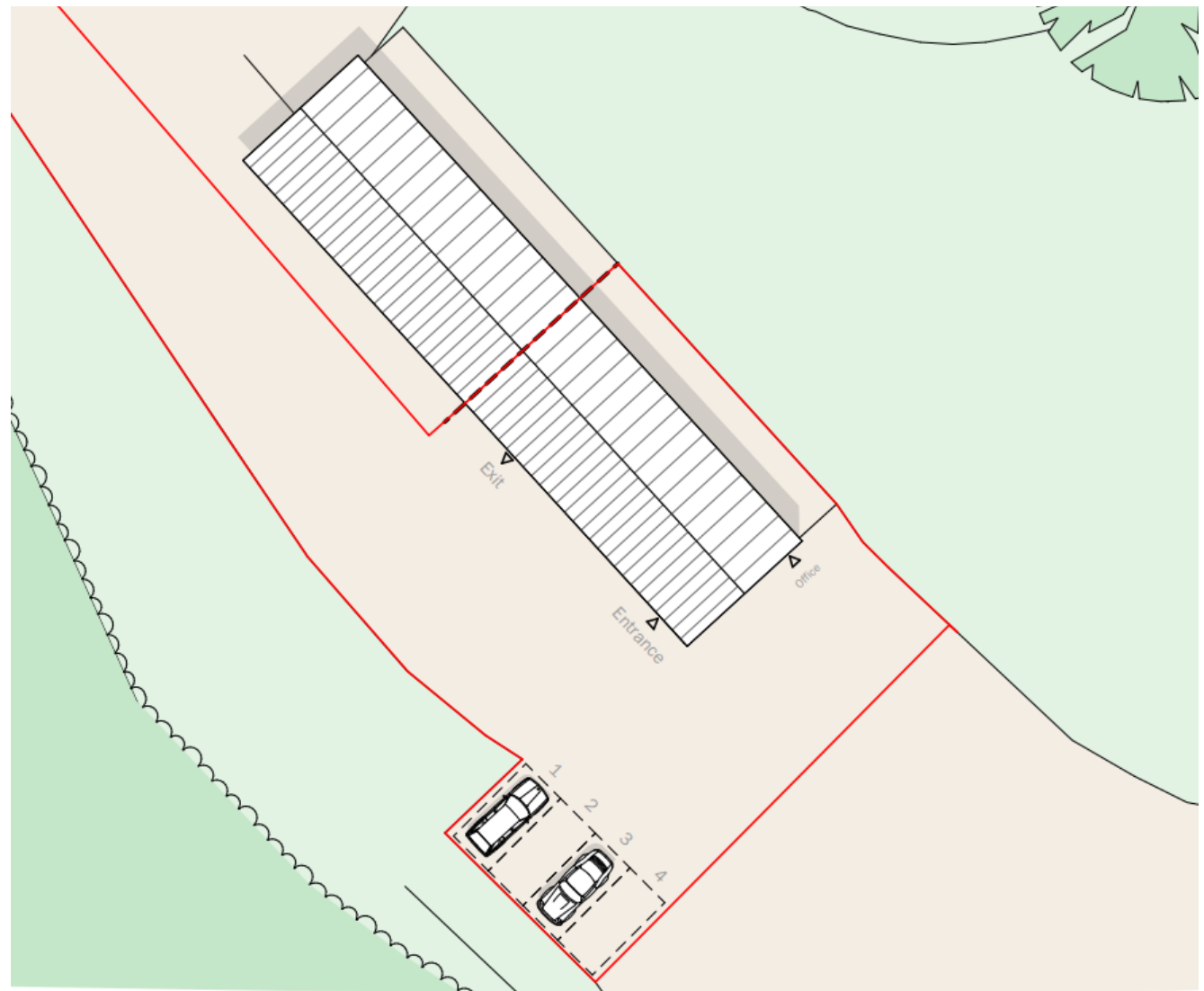
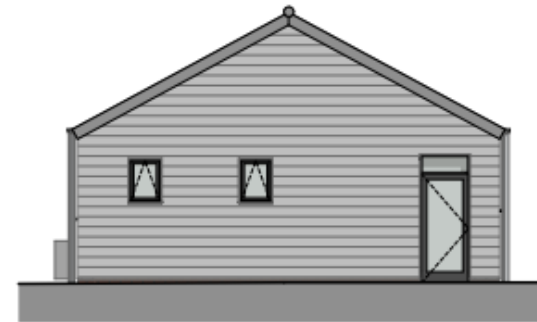


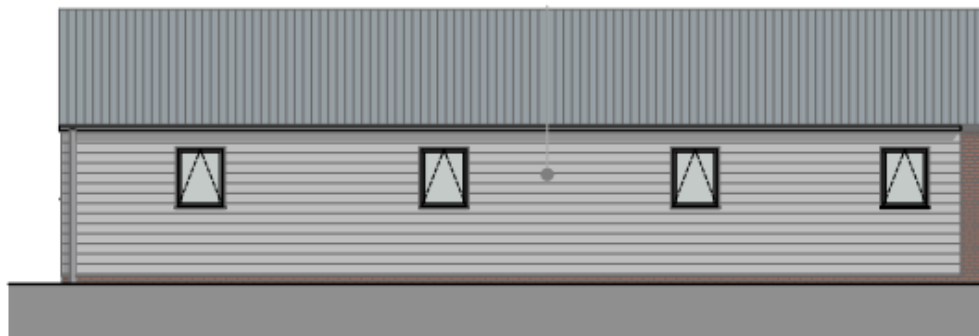
Figure 2: Proposed Site Plan (Source: Drawing No. 21.036627.003)



West Elevation



South Elevation



East Elevation

Figure 3: Proposed Elevations (Source: Drawing No. 21.036627.110)

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Development plan policies

4.1 Planning law requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consequently, the development plan is the starting point for the assessment of all planning proposals.

4.2 For the purposes of this application, the Development Plan for Mid Suffolk District Council comprises:

- Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998);
- Mid Suffolk Local Plan First Alteration (2006);
- Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008); and
- Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012).

4.3 Policies of relevance to this application are summarised in the inset box to the right.

Emerging Local Plan

4.4 Mid Suffolk District Council, together with Babergh District Council, is currently preparing the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Local Plan for the period 2016 - 2036. The Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State and is currently going through the Examination process. For the purposes of this proposal, it is noted that emerging policies are broadly similar to those already in place.

Core Strategy Focused Review Policies

FC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development—which states that the Council will apply the presumption in accordance with the NPPF.

FC1.1: Mid-Suffolk Approach to Delivering Sustainable Development—which states that development proposals should align with the principles of sustainable development.

FC3: Employment—which states that in rural areas support will be given to economic development proposals where they are appropriate to the setting.

Core Strategy Policies

CS1: Settlement Hierarchy—which states that in the countryside development will be restricted to support the economy.

CS2: Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages—which states that in the countryside the re-use of buildings for appropriate purposes will be supported.

CS5: Mid Suffolk's Environment—which states that development should maintain and enhance the environment.

Local Plan Policies

GP1: Design and Layout of Development—which indicates that proposals of poor design and layout will be refused.

H16: Protecting Existing Residential Amenity—which states that proposals will be refused if the development would negatively impact the amenity of the surrounding area or nearby residences.

CL17: Principles for Farm Diversification—which states that changes of use will be permitted provided it there are no adverse effects on the surrounding area.

CL18: Changes of Use for Agricultural and Other Rural Buildings to Non-Residential Uses—which states that proposals will be supported where it is appropriate to the character and appearance of the area.

E11: Re-use or Adaptation of Agricultural and Other Rural Buildings for Industrial or Commercial Use—which states that conversion will be permitted where the use and design of the conversion are sympathetic to the surrounding area, and that the application doesn't relate to a recently constructed agricultural building.

T9: Parking Standard—which states that change of use proposals will normally be required to include provision of parking and manoeuvring spaces for vehicles.

T10: Highway Considerations in Development—which requires proposals to demonstrate safe and suitable access without adverse impacts upon the wider road network.

RT12: Footpaths and Bridleways—which states that footpaths and bridleways are to be safeguarded.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.5 The Government's planning policies, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), are a significant material consideration in deciding planning applications.

4.6 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Three objectives of sustainable development are identified: economic, social and environmental.

4.7 Economic considerations include ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. Social considerations include supporting vibrant communities by ensuring a sufficient range of homes can be provided to meet needs. Environmental considerations include protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environments, and moving to a low carbon economy.

4.8 Other guiding principles set out in the NPPF of particular note include that planning should:

- Encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings;
- Enable and support healthy lifestyles;

- Create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt;
- Place significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity;
- Ensure appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable development are taken up;
- Seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all;
- Support the transition to a low carbon future;
- Contribute to conserving the natural environment; and
- Contribute to conserving the historic environment.

4.9 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-making this means approving developments which accord with the development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or those most important for determining the application are out-of-date, then permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

National Planning Practice Guidance

4.10 The NPPG provides a web-based resource of national planning guidance covering a wide range

of topics. Of particular relevance to this application is the guidance relating to design, the natural environment, climate change, and the effective use of land.

5. ASSESSMENT

Principle of development

5.1 The proposal site falls outside of any settlement boundary as defined on the Local Plan Policy Maps, and is not allocated for development. It is therefore located within an area designated as Countryside for planning policy purposes.

5.2 Local Plan Policy CS1 indicates that in countryside locations development will be restricted to that which supports the rural economy, amongst others. Local Plan Policy CS2 sets out those defined categories of development which will be permitted within the countryside, including the re-use and adaptation of buildings for appropriate purposes.

5.3 Local Plan Policy CL18 states that the change of use of agricultural buildings will be considered favourably where a number of criteria are met, including that:

- The conversion would respect the design and structure of the original building, retaining any important features;
- The proposals would not involve the conversion of a recently constructed building; and
- The proposed use would not result in significant adverse impacts upon residential amenity, highway safety, wildlife features, or the environment.

It notes that the need to accommodate rural

businesses which contribute to the rural economy and employment will be a material consideration in determining applications.

5.4 Further to this, Local Plan Policy E11 indicates that proposals for the conversion of agricultural buildings to provide commercial uses will be permitted where:

- The building is sound, and appropriate for the intended use without significant structural alteration;
- The design is sympathetic to the character of the building and its setting;
- The proposed development would not adversely impact amenity, highway safety, or wildlife features;
- The proposals would not cause pollution to watercourses; and
- The development does not involve the conversion of recently constructed agricultural buildings.

5.5 This is consistent with paragraph 120(d) of the NPPF which states that planning policies and decisions should “*promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings*”.

5.6 It is proposed to convert part of a former piggery building so as to allow for the relocation of a small local business. K9 Hydro Services are a team of qualified physiotherapists specialising in

both land and water based rehabilitation and fitness for canines.

5.7 The business currently operates out of a former agricultural building at Earl Soham, circa. 5.5 miles south east of the application site. However, the owner has terminated the lease as part of wider redevelopment proposals and so the business requires new premises. In order to serve their existing client base it is imperative that they relocate within the locality.

5.8 The nature and needs of the business restrict the number of spaces suitable. Size and access requirements lead to agricultural or industrial units being the most suitable premises. However, as a small business a smaller unit is required so as to not adversely impact upon viability.

5.9 The application site would meet the needs of the business in terms of location, accessibility, scale, and configuration. Whilst the proposed use is considered appropriate for the scale and nature of the building, and the wider setting.

5.10 The former piggery building is considered to be structurally sound, and suitable for the proposed use. The main form and fabric of the building would be retained, however it is proposed to re-roof so as to replace the asbestos fibre-cement sheets. In order to appropriately split the building it is proposed to install a new internal dividing wall, and reconfigure a number of the existing openings.

5.11 It is also proposed to re-clad the building so as to enhance its appearance. The materials proposed would be in keeping with the wider rural landscape and would therefore retain the character and appearance of the application site.

5.12 The building has not been constructed recently, and for the reasons as set out below it is not considered that the proposed development would result in significant adverse impacts upon amenity, highway safety, or the environment.

5.13 The proposed development would support an existing small rural business and the contribution that it makes to the wider rural economy. The proposals would also help to diversify the revenue stream for the farm, which is of particular importance given fluctuating farm incomes and as changes are made to the agricultural grant system.

5.14 Local Plan Policy CL17 indicates that support will be given to proposals that amount to farm diversification where:

- There is no materially detrimental effect on neighbour amenity;
- The proposals would benefit the rural economy;
- They are compatible with the protection of the countryside;
- It would not result in the permanent loss of Grade 2 or 3 agricultural land; and

- There would not be excessive traffic generation, or adverse impacts upon the free flow and safety of traffic.

5.15 The proposals would help to support the viability of the existing farm business, as well as facilitating the relocation of a small rural business, the jobs it provides, and the contribution it makes to the rural economy. It would facilitate the re-use of a redundant agricultural building and would not result in the loss of productive arable land.

5.16 As discussed below, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in adverse impacts upon neighbour amenity, highway safety, the local landscape, or the wider environment.

5.17 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would accord with Local Plan Policies FC3, CS1, CS2, CL17, CL18, and E11, and Sections 6, 11, and 14 of the NPPF, and is suitable in principle. The proposed development would therefore represent sustainable development to which the presumption in favour applies, and permission should be granted without delay.

Local character

Landscape

5.18 The site is located within the Plateau Claylands Landscape Character Area, as defined by the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment.

The area is characterised by a gently rolling plateau landscape with dispersed farmsteads, substantial hedgerows and almost no woodland. The proposal would conserve the sparse settlement pattern and enhance the simple rural landscape through the conversion of a redundant piggery.

5.19 The site forms part of the cluster of buildings at Bedingfield Farm, which is detached from the main built form of Bedingfield and Bedingfield Street, and located in the open countryside surrounded by arable fields.

5.20 Whilst the barn would have a more domestic character than it does as present, this would only be apparent in the immediate vicinity, where the converted barn would be seen in the context of the surrounding development. Long range views of the site are largely screened by way of existing trees and hedging to the boundaries of the farmyard, as such only glimpses of the site are available.

5.21 The access track which serves the site is a designated bridleway (E-134 014/0) as such public views of the site would be available within its immediate vicinity. However, the building would be re-clad in traditional rural materials, and would therefore its character or that of the wider rural landscape would not materially alter. Furthermore, views would be experienced in the context of the surrounding buildings, which are of varying materiality.

5.22 As such it is not considered that the proposed development would have a significant adverse impact upon the rural character and appearance of the area. Long range views of the building would be largely screened, and where available would be transient glimpses. Views achievable by traversing the bridleway would be experienced in the context of the surrounding development, and would be well contained to the immediate vicinity. The building would retain its rural character and appearance, and its contribution to the rural character and appearance of the area.

5.23 Therefore, the proposed development would align with the provisions of Local Plan Policies FC3, CS5, GP1, CL17, CL18, and E11, and Section 15 of the NPPF.

Design

5.24 The proposed development has sought to largely retain and alter existing openings within the building, whilst the new openings have been kept minimal. Their simple form and design, and regular pattern would maintain the balanced appearance of the building.

5.25 Good quality materials and finishes would be utilised throughout the proposed development. The use of corrugated sheet roofing, and timber cladding would maintain the rural appearance of the building, and prevent it from becoming prominent or dominant within the landscape.

5.26 Therefore the proposed development would accord with Local Planning Policies GP1, CL18, and E11, and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Access

5.27 Access to the proposed development would be gained via the existing access for the farm yard which extends westwards to Bucks Green. Good visibility onto the road is available in either direction for emerging vehicles.

5.28 It is not anticipated that traffic generated by the proposed development would be high, particularly when compared with that which could be generated if the building were return to use as a piggery. The business employs three members of staff, and operates on a one-in-one-out policy for clients, so associated traffic movements would be small and regularly spaced. As such it is considered that the impact upon the local road network would be small, and that proposal would not give rise to additional hazards on the local road network.

5.29 Whilst the site is located within the open countryside the NPPF, at paragraph 85, recognises that sustainable transport options will vary in rural locations, and states that:

Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may

have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements.

5.30 The site is well located within the catchment area of the business so clients, and staff, would not have to travel significant distances to attend. The business operates between 8am and 6pm, ordinarily 6 days a week depending on demand.

5.31 It is not considered that the proposed development would adversely impact upon the use of the bridleway by virtue of the nature and scale of the business, and the former traffic generation associated with the operation of the piggery.

5.32 A total of four car parking spaces would be provided at the site, to the south east of the access track. This would be more than adequate given the number of staff and the manner in which the business operates.

5.33 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would comply with Local Plan Policies CL17, CL18, E11, T9, T10, and RT12, and Section 9 of the NPPF.

Residential amenity

5.34 The proposed change of use would not be inherently noisy and would not result in adverse impacts upon the amenity of the farm house, by virtue of the distance of separation, intervening buildings and landscaping, and the scale and nature of the business.

5.35 The proposed use is considered compatible with the wider agricultural uses, and so adverse impacts upon the amenities of the business, or the wider farm are not anticipated. Therefore the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policies CL17, CL18, and E11 and paragraph 130 of the NPPF.

Ecology

5.36 The site is located approximately 5.3 km from the nearest designated nature conservation site (Mickfield Meadow SSSI). It is not considered that the proposed development would result in any material impact upon the sites by virtue of the separating distance, intervening development, and the nature and scale of the use proposed.

5.37 Indeed, the proposed scheme would provide an alternative to dog walking, or dogs swimming in local water bodies. This would be make a small contribution to alleviating pressure on both designated and non-designated sites and species. The proposed development would therefore accord with Local Plan Policies CS5, CL17, CL18, and E11 , and Section 15 of the NPPF.

Flood risk & Drainage

5.38 The Environment Agency's flood zone maps show the site to be located within Flood Zone 1, and it is therefore considered to be at low risk of pluvial flooding. The flood risk maps further indicate that

the site is at very low risk of surface water flooding.

5.39 Suitable surface water drainage measures would be introduced, including the use of permeable surfacing. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is consistent with Local Section 14 of the NPPF.

Ground conditions

5.40 The barn has not been used in the past for the storage of agricultural chemicals or fuel oil. The Applicants are not aware of any chemical or pollutant spills having taken place in the past.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 It is proposed to convert part of a former piggery building to allow for the relocation of a canine hydrotherapy and physiotherapy business at Bedingfield Hall Farm, Bedingfield.

6.2 The site is located outside of any recognised settlement boundary, and in an area designated as countryside. However, local planning policies permit the conversion of buildings to non-residential uses in the countryside where they are suitable and would not result in significant adverse impacts.

6.3 The proposed development would help to meet the needs of an existing small rural business, and therefore secure the jobs it provides and the contribution it makes to the rural economy. The proposals would also help to support the continued viability of the wider farm, through the diversification of revenue resulting from the renting out of a currently non-productive building no longer suited to the day-to-day operations of the farm.

6.4 The building is suitable for conversion without the need for substantial alterations. It is proposed to replace the asbestos roofing sheets, reclad the building, and to reconfigure a number of openings. However, the use of rural vernacular materials and balanced arrangement of openings would retain the character and appearance of the building, and its contribution to the wider rural landscape.

6.5 The site is well contained by the surrounding development and existing landscape features. As

such views of the site would largely be contained, where glimpses are possible these would be transient in nature.

6.6 The proposed development would utilise an existing access, with good visibility achievable in either direction along Bucks Green. The proposals would not adversely impact upon public use of the track as a bridleway as a result of the nature and scale of associated vehicular movements, particularly when compared with those associated with the use of the building as a piggery.

6.7 There would be no adverse amenity impacts upon neighbouring dwellings as a result of noise and disturbance. The site is not considered to be at risk of flooding, and the proposals would have no significant adverse impacts upon designated or non-designated sites, or protected species.

6.8 For these reasons, and those outlined above it is considered that the proposal complies with both local and national policies, and would amount to sustainable development to which the presumption in favour applies.