

# Planning Statement in Support of a Prior Notification for the Change of Use of an Agricultural Building to Residential Use

## College Farm, Earls Green

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Opus House  
Elm Farm Park  
Thurston  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk  
IP31 3SH

**T** 01359 233663  
**E** [enquiries@evolution-planning.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@evolution-planning.co.uk)  
**W** [evolution-planning.co.uk](http://evolution-planning.co.uk)

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## College Farm, Earls Green

### Client: David Black and Son

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## **1.0 Introduction and Summary**

- 1.1 This Planning statement is written in support of a Prior Notification Application for the change of use of a barn and its curtilage land, from its present agricultural use to 5 houses using the permitted development rights afforded under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q.
- 1.2 The applicant, David Black and Son, rents out a number of houses to local residents and are renowned as a good local landlord who provides high-quality, well-equipped houses. As a result, they have a long waiting list of tenants seeking houses who live and work in the local area, therefore there is a clear need for additional housing.
- 1.3 The proposal will create 5 single-storey houses (3 larger and 2 smaller dwellinghouses), together with car parking in the hamlet of Earls Green which is an established residential location.
- 1.4 The building was originally constructed to house livestock however due to its size and proximity to nearby houses it has only been used to store spare agricultural equipment in recent years. This use is not an efficient use of this building which could be put to better use as houses. This use would be more in keeping with the barn's surroundings which is an established residential hamlet.
- 1.5 It is proposed that three larger houses are created, with a cumulative floor area of 364.86sqm square meters, and two smaller houses with floor areas of 75.73sqm and 75.56qsm are created as permitted under the Class Q Permitted Development rights criteria.
- 1.6 This statement assesses the site against the criteria of the Class Q permitted development requirements and finds that the building conforms to the requirements set out.
- 1.7 Existing and proposed plans as well as a structural survey accompany this submission. This report describes the proposed building operations required to carry out the conversion, confirms that the building is in a sound state which is capable of conversion and that the proposal conforms to the requirements of Class Q.

## 2.0 Site Location, Description and Proposals

2.1 The application site is located in the Hamlet of Earls Green in Mid Suffolk which is an established residential location with 10 houses in its immediate setting.

2.2 Figure 2.1 shows the barn and its surroundings.



**Figure 2.1 - Application Site and Surrounding Area**

2.3 The barn is positioned next to an existing house, College Farmhouse, and there is a line of houses on the opposite side of College Road. 8 of the surrounding houses are owned by the applicant David Black & Son which are part of their rental business, this includes the properties on either side of the barn, College Farmhouse and Fresh Winds. The applicant has a long waiting list for their properties, so this application will meet this local need.

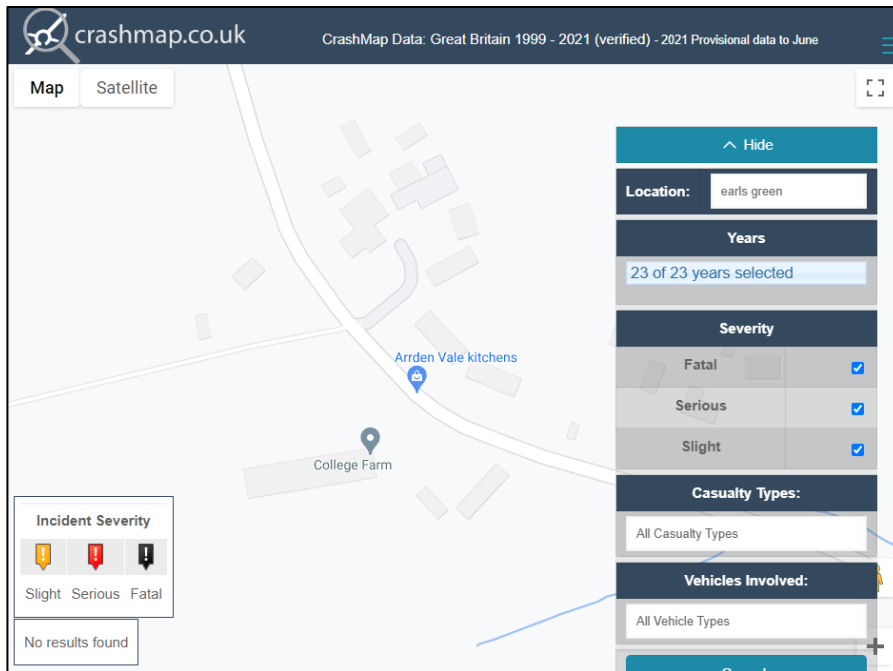
2.4 The barn was originally constructed to house livestock, but due to its small size and location away from the other farm facilities and close to the nearby houses, this use is no longer appropriate and the barn has been used for the storage of spare agricultural equipment in recent years. This occasional storage function is not an efficient use of the building, therefore a new use for the barn has been looked into and a residential use has been deemed the most appropriate use for a building in this location.

2.5 An image of the barn as it currently stands can be seen in Figure 2.2 from College Road.



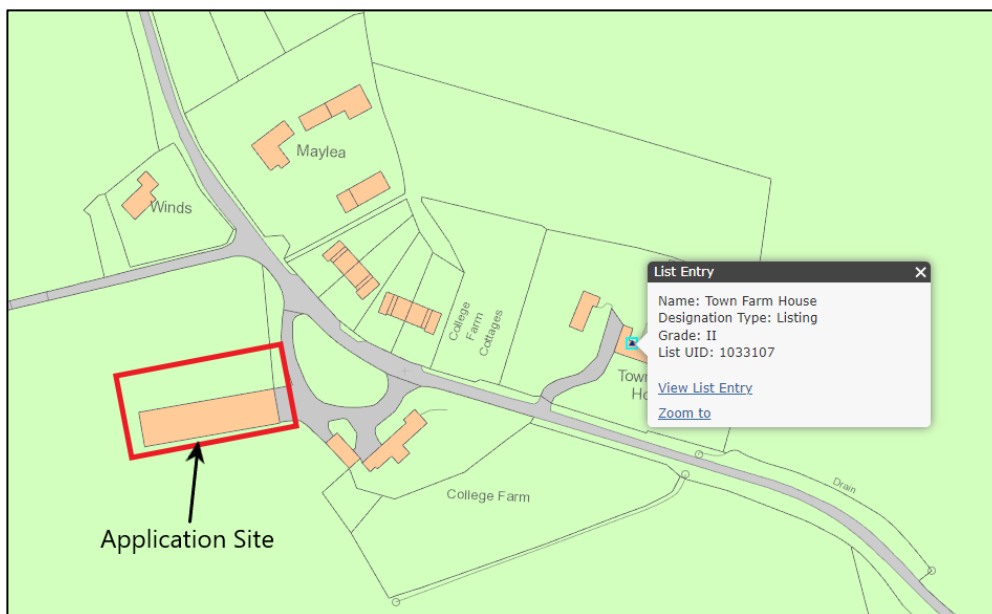
**Figure 2.2 - Barn Proposed for Conversion**

- 2.6 The barn is a single-storey building. A structural survey of the building has been undertaken which has confirmed that it is structurally sound and capable of conversion.
- 2.7 The barn is ideally positioned within a peaceful residential setting. This existing close relationship to houses demonstrates that there is already a satisfactory level of residential amenity and there are no nearby uses which will make it undesirable or impractical for residential use. To the south and west of the barn are agricultural fields, and to the north and east are houses.
- 2.8 The access for the houses will connect to the existing access track to the east which has served the barn in the past as well as the neighbouring property College Farm House. This provides two accesses onto Collage Road. The accesses onto Collage Road have good visibility and this change of use will not have a detrimental effect on highway safety. A crashmap extract can be seen in Figure 2.3 which shows that there have been no crashes in the past 23 years.



**Figure 2.3 - Crashmap Extract**

2.9 The site is not within a conservation area and there are no listed buildings or protected trees on the site. The only nearby listed building is Town Farm House, which is a grade II listed building, set back on the opposite side of College Road, approximately 120 metres from the prior notification site. The form and character of the barn will be maintained through this change of use application so there will be no impact on the setting of this listed building.



**Figure 2.4 - Nearby listed buildings**

2.10 The application site falls within flood zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding.

### **Proposals**

2.11 This prior notification proposes that the barn is converted into 5 houses in line with the criteria of the Class Q Permitted Development Rights.

2.12 The conversion will result in three larger houses, with floor areas of 131.82sqm, 127.51sqm and 105.53sqm, each with two bedrooms. The cumulative floor area of the larger dwelling houses is 364.86sqm. The conversion will also create two smaller houses with floor areas of 75.73sqm and 75.56qsm, which will be one-bedroom properties.

2.13 The barn already has a number of suitable openings to create doors and windows. Most of the window openings will be utilised for the new property with a small number of the roof lights being removed.

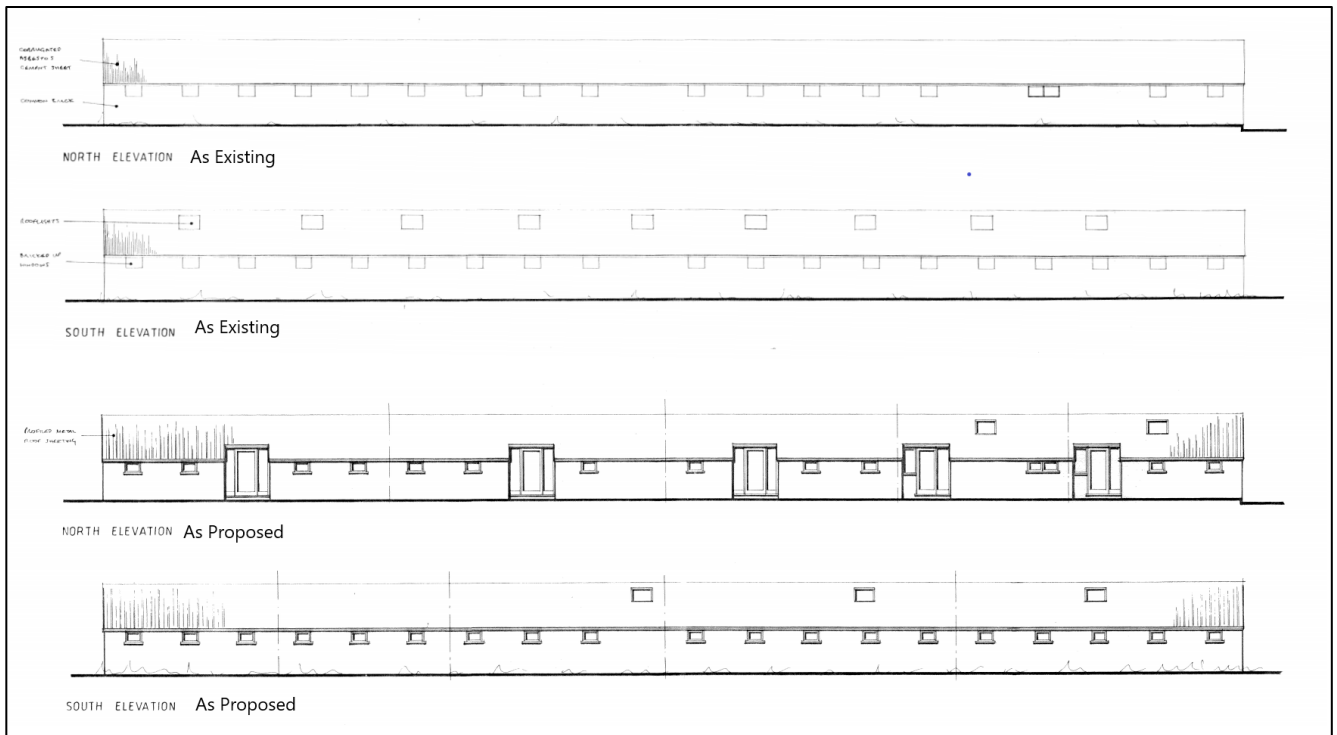
2.14 The existing stalls within the barn will be utilised to form the dividing walls for the houses and the rooms of the property.

2.15 The change of use will require a small number of works to the barn as allowed within the Class Q permitted development rights, which is limited to the installation or replacement of windows, doors and the roof covering as allowed under sub heading Q.1 i) i) (aa). None of the building work is structural.

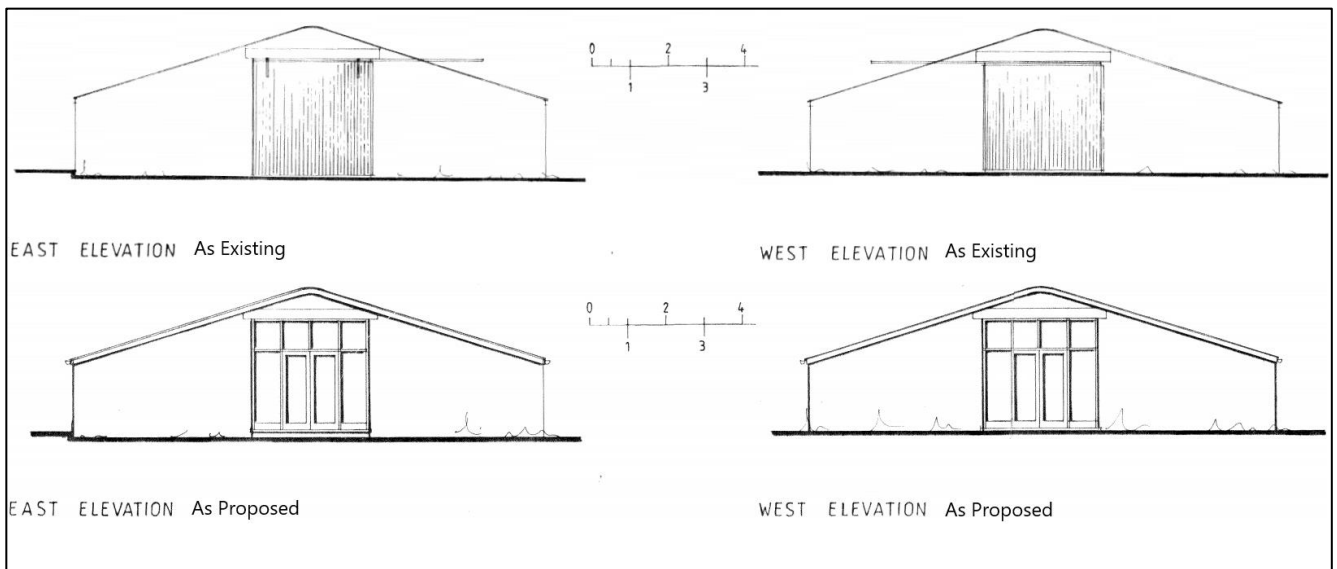
2.16 The roofing material will be replaced with profiled metal sheeting which is in keeping with the agricultural style of the building. The structural report which is submitted with this application has confirmed that the building is capable of supporting this new roof covering.

2.17 A comparison of the before and after elevations can be seen in Figures 2.5 and 2.6.





**Figure 2.5 - North and south elevations as existing versus as proposed**



**Figure 2.6 - East and west elevations, as existing versus as proposed**

- 2.18 These changes do not extend the external dimensions of the building beyond the existing external dimensions at any point.
- 2.19 Parking areas are set out to the north of the new houses. 2 parking spaces have been provided for each of the houses, this is in excess of the requirements set out by Suffolk County Council Highways Guidance.

2.20 The change of use will tidy up and improve the outlook of this existing barn which is currently not being used efficiently. This will have a positive effect on the outlook of the surrounding houses and will provide a collection of 5 high-quality homes for local people.

### 3.0 Class Q.1 Criteria

3.1 None of the exclusions set out in Q.1 Class Q of the GPDO apply:

(a) The building remains solely in agricultural use as part of an established agricultural use and was on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

(b) (i) (aa + bb) this application proposes 3 larger dwelling houses with a cumulative floor area is 364.86sqm, well below the maximum cumulative floor area of 465sqm.

(c) (aa + bb) there are 2 smaller dwelling houses proposed, each of which falls below the 100sqm floor area limit.

(d) (i + ii) within the established agricultural unit, the larger dwelling houses do not have a floor area of 465sqm, and the cumulative number of separate dwelling houses is 5 as permitted.

(e) The site is not occupied under an agricultural tenancy.

(f) no agricultural tenancy's have been terminated within the past year, nor has an agricultural tenancy been terminated for the purpose of carrying out the development under Class Q.

(g) no development under Class A or Class B of Part 6 of Schedule 2 of the GPDO has been carried out since 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

(h) the development does not result in the external dimensions of the building extending beyond the external dimension of the existing building at any given point.

(i) (aa) The building operations are limited to the replacement and installation of windows and doors, as well as (bb) water drainage, electricity, gas or other services.

(j) the site is not on article 2(3) land.

(k) the site does not form a (i) site of special scientific interest; (ii)a safety hazard area; or (iii) a military explosives storage area.

(l) the site is not, nor does it contain a scheduled monument or (m) listed building.

## **4.0 Class Q.2 (1) Conditions**

- 4.1 (1) the development proposed is under Class Q (a) together with Class Q (b). As such the Local Planning Authority's determination is required regarding the topics set out in Class Q.2 (1) & (2) 'Conditions'.
- 4.2 The General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) states that regard must be had to the NPPF as if this were a planning application but only so far as is relevant to the subject matters in Class Q.2(1) in relation to Class Q(a) development and Q.2(2) in relation to Class Q(b) development.
- 4.3 Class Q.2.(1) states that the provisions of paragraph W of Part 3 of Schedule 2 apply to these topics. The relevant considerations of Paragraph W are set out under topic headings below.

### **Transport and Highways Impacts of the Development (Q.2(1)(a))**

- 4.4 As set out in Section 2 of this report, the barn is served by two established vehicular accesses off College Road. There have been no road traffic incidents near the accesses in over 23 years between 1999 and 2021 indicating that the road has no known safety concerns.
- 4.5 There is good visibility from both of the accesses in either direction. The accesses have been used for the neighbouring property, College Farmhouse, as well as any agricultural vehicles accessing the barn and are suitable for cars.
- 4.6 Parking in excess of the requirements of County Council standards is provided immediately to the north of the barn within the red line area of this prior notification submission. A short access leads from the parking spaces to the existing access road. This access road also falls within the red line area of the application.

### **Noise (Q.2(1)(b))**

- 4.7 There are no sources of noise near the barn that would preclude its conversion to houses. There is an existing house within 30 metres of the barn, as well as the other houses nearby which make up Earl's Green. The location is a residential setting which will provide the future residents with a peaceful location.
- 4.8 The nearest agricultural buildings are over 300 metres to the west which form part of Red House Farm. These buildings are far enough away that they will not create any disturbance to the new houses.

4.9 The noise impacts of this development are acceptable and do not require prior approval.

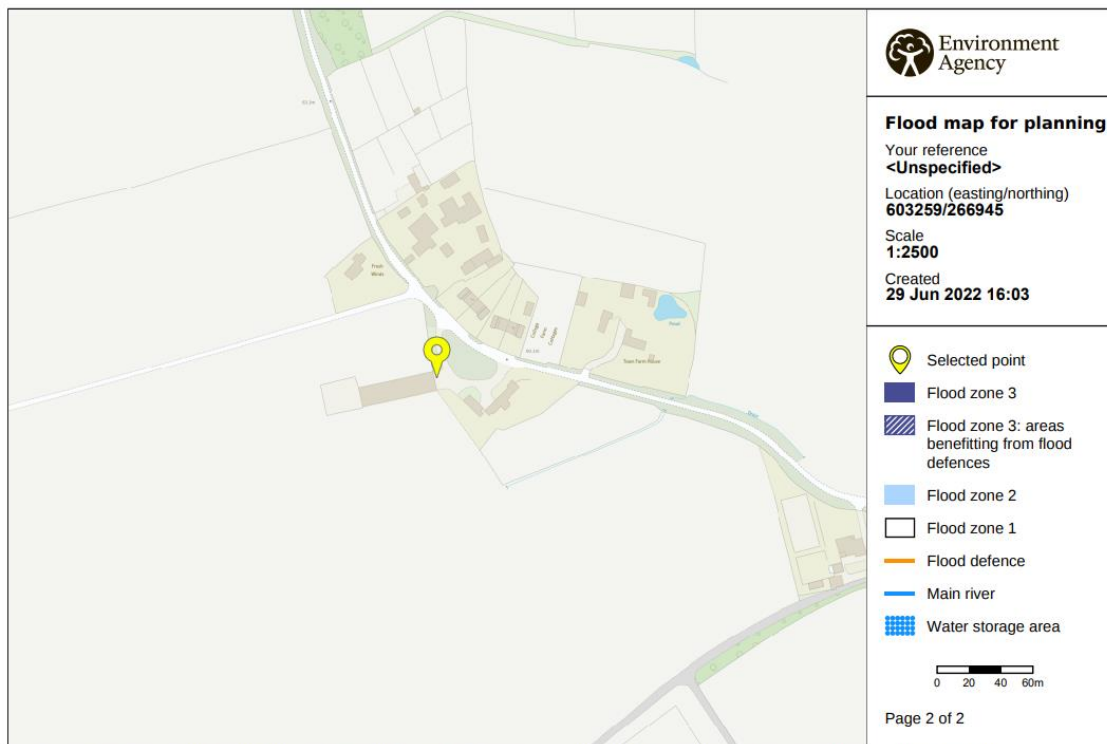
### Contamination (Q.2(1)(c))

4.10 This prior notification is supported by an Envirocheck Report for the site. This report does not highlight any areas of concern.

4.11 The barn has been used for agricultural storage in recent years from which there have been no uses which would have an impact on any future residents of the site.

### Flood Risk (Q.2(1)(d))

4.12 The site is not located in an area at risk of flooding and is suitable for housing. This is shown on the plan below which is an extract from the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning.



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Figure 4.1 - Flood map for planning

### Location and Siting (Q.2(1)(e))

4.13 The NPPG has clarified Class Q insofar as the desirability and practicality of the location and siting matters are concerned. The NPPG states that:

*'Impractical or undesirable are not defined in the regulations, and the local planning*

*authority should apply a reasonable ordinary dictionary meaning in making any judgment. Impractical reflects that the location and siting would “not be sensible or realistic”, and undesirable reflects that it would be “harmful or objectionable”.*

- 4.14 The NPPG goes further in clarifying that just because a farm building is in a location where the LPA might not normally grant residential use is not reason enough to refuse prior approval:

*‘When considering whether it is appropriate for the change of use to take place in a particular location, a local planning authority should start from the premise that the permitted development right grants planning permission, subject to the prior approval requirements. That an agricultural building is in a location where the local planning authority would not normally grant planning permission for a new dwelling is not a sufficient reason for refusing prior approval.’*

- 4.15 The NPPG helpfully gives examples of the sorts of locations which could rightly be considered unsuitable and without options for mitigation. These include:

*‘for example ... an agricultural building on the top of a hill with no road access, power source or other services’*

Or a building in a location which is;

*‘adjacent to other uses such as intensive poultry farming buildings, silage storage or buildings with dangerous machines or chemicals’.*

- 4.16 Specifically, the NPPG does not require LPAs to apply location tests from the NPPF, *‘except to the extent these are relevant to the subject matter of the prior approval.’*

- 4.17 In light of the NPPG guidance, the location of this barn should be considered suitable for the residential conversion, as the location is not impractical or unrealistic, nor will it result in harmful or undesirable housing. The conversion will create a small number of additional houses within an existing hamlet and is a more appropriate use of this building than its previous agricultural use given the setting.

- 4.18 The location and siting of the barn is not impractical or undesirable in any way. It will result in a peaceful and desirable location for housing, closely related to existing houses in the area.

- 4.19 All necessary services are available as would be expected in an established residential area such as Earls Green.

### **The Design or External Appearance of the Building (Q.2(1)(f))**

- 4.20 The proposed development will improve the external appearance of the building by tidying it up and giving it a more efficient use, which will result in better upkeep and maintenance of the building.
- 4.21 The proposed changes are modest and other than replacing the sliding end doors with large windows and doors, and the creation of the new entrance areas the agricultural character of the barn will be retained.
- 4.22 The barn is constructed from red brick with corrugated sheet roofing. The roofing will be replaced with profiled metal roof sheeting which will retain the agricultural character of the building.
- 4.23 The new entrance areas created will provide visual interest for the building by breaking up the mass of roof along the front elevation and will also provide private entrances to each of the houses.
- 4.24 Each of the houses are well appointed with large, open-plan living areas. The floor areas proposed are in excess of the nationally prescribed space standards.

### **The Provision of Natural Light in all Habitable Rooms (Q.2(1)(g))**

- 4.25 As can be seen in the submitted floor plans, every habitable room has several windows and skylights providing natural light. The entrance to each unit also has large windows on either side.
- 4.26 The units at either end of the building also have large, floor-to-ceiling windows which will provide a significant amount of light.

### **Nationally Described Space Standards**

- 4.27 The proposed houses all easily exceed the nationally described space standards, which for a 1-bed single storey house requires a floor area of 37sqm, and for a 2-bed single storey house a floor area of 70sqm.
- 4.28 The smallest 1-bed house is 75.56sqm, nearly double the required space, and the smallest 2-bed house is 105.53, significantly above the requirements.

## **5.0 Class Q.2(1) Condition Design and External Appearance Building operations required and notified to the LPA**

- 5.1 Class Q(b) permits building operations 'reasonably necessary' to convert the existing building to residential (use class C3) use. This notification provides the Local Planning Authority with the requisite information and architectural drawings.
- 5.2 BHA Consulting Structural Engineers are satisfied that the existing structure is sound and capable of being converted in the manner set out in the submitted drawings within the constraints of Class Q development. They have extensive experience in this field and have delivered many successful barn conversion projects across East Anglia. As such, we are confident of the deliverability of this scheme and also the high quality of the finish. A site visit will easily confirm that the buildings are structurally sound and are not dilapidated. The building can be serviced as there are services to the neighbouring homes.
- 5.3 The design makes minimal changes from the existing building form, with some new openings created and some blocked up. A residential conversion will mean that the use of the barn is more compatible with the surrounding area. Therefore, there should be no concerns about the design of the proposal.
- 5.4 The conversion is a practical reuse of the barn which is desirable. There are no structural obstacles to this project and the Prior Approval should not be denied.



## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 This report demonstrates that the change of use of the existing barn and associated land (edged in red on the site and other plans) conforms to the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) and the prior approval of the District Council for the permitted change of use from agricultural to five houses (Class C3) should be granted.
- 6.2 Paragraph W(11) restricts the commencement of the development until the Local Planning Authority has either:
- Decided that Prior Approval is not required
  - Given Prior Approval with or without planning conditions
  - Allowed 56 days to pass without prior approval being given or refused
- 6.3 We look forward to receiving confirmation that the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority is not required for this permitted development to go ahead.