

Planning Statement: Application for Replacement Straw Barn

**Slate Hall Farm, Pale Green, Helions
Bumpstead, Braintree**

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Slate Hall Farm, Pale Green, Helions Bumpstead, Braintree

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1.0 Introduction and Summary

1.1 This Planning Statement is provided in support of a planning application for a replacement straw barn at Slate Hall, Helions Bumpstead, Essex.

1.2 The proposal is to replace the existing twentieth century open sided barn with a secure, smaller and more traditional barn on the edge of the existing farm. The site forms part of an active pig farm and the new barn will provide more secure tractor storage and straw storage.

Site Background

1.3 The application site is located to the north of the residential dwelling, Slate Hall, which was the original Farmhouse at the site. Slate Hall Farm is located approximately 0.5km to the northeast of the village of Helions Bumpstead.



Figure 1.1 Location of Slate Hall Farm

1.4 The application site itself sits within the existing farmstead and is accessed via the existing farm access onto Haverhill Road.



Figure 1.2 Application Site

- 1.5 This report accompanies a full planning application to replace the existing twentieth century barn on the application site with a timber frame, secure barn.
- 1.6 This report is structured as follows:
- Site Description & Background
 - Description of Proposals
 - Planning Policy Review and Planning Assessment
 - Conclusions

2.0 Site Description & Proposals

- 2.1 The application site is located to the north of the residential dwelling, Slate Hall, which was the original Farmhouse at the site. The application site is located to the west of the main pig barns and forms the most westerly part of the existing farmyard. The farm has been in use as a farmyard for over 180 years, with Slate Hall first listed as a 'homestead and plantation' on the tithe award in 1841.
- 2.2 The application site itself is located just over 500m from Helions Bumpstead, as set out in section 1. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (and is at the lowest risk of flooding) and is not within a Conservation Area.



Figure 2.1 Environment Agency Flood Map, Helions Bumpstead

- 2.3 The site is not within a Conservation Area, but is within reasonable proximity to existing Listed Buildings, including Slate Hall Farmhouse itself and Krikseys opposite the site entrance.

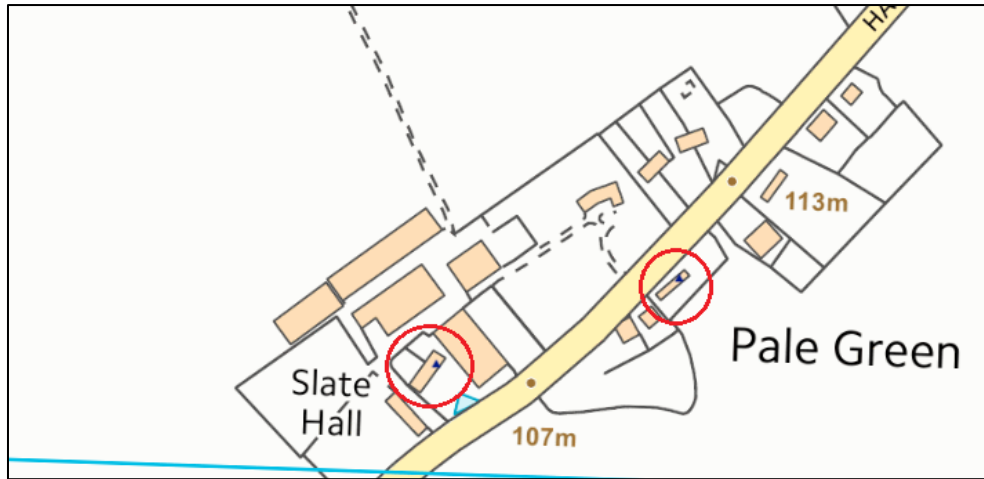


Figure 2.2 Listed Buildings Within The Vicinity Of The Application Site

- 2.4 The existing straw barn forms part of the setting of Slate Hall Farmhouse, which is described as follows in the Grade II Listing:

'House, C17, extended in early C19. Timber framed, roughcast rendered, roofed with handmade red clay tiles; extension red brick in Flemish bond, with slate roof. 4 bays aligned approximately NE-SW, aspect SE, with axial chimney stack in second bay from SW end, and wing to rear of it. Chimney stack at NE end, and early C19 extension beyond. External chimney stack at SW end, C19. Conservatory in W angle, C20. 2 storeys. C20 glazed door at front of tiled gabled porch, 3 C20 casement windows on each floor. NE extension has 6-panel door with upper 4 panels glazed, fanlight with radiating tracery in segmental brick arch, one double-hung sash window of 16 lights, all early C19. First floor has one double-hung sash window of 16 lights, early C19, and one C20. The interior of the original building has plain-chamfered transverse beams above the ground floor, and above the first floor transverse and axial beams plain-chamfered with lamb's tongue stops. The wallplates have face-halved and bladed scarfs.'

- 2.5 Slate Hall Farmhouse is shown below:



Figure 2.3 Slate Hall Farmhouse From The Front Elevation, Grade II Listed



Figure 2.4 Slate Hall Farmhouse From The Rear Elevation, Grade II Listed

- 2.6 The application site is approximately 50m from the rear elevation of the Listed Building.
- 2.7 Located on the application at present is a modern open sided, steel frame straw barn. This is a utilitarian construction which is 9m in height, measuring approximately 37m x 16m, and forms a significant feature on the landscape, since this effectively forms part of the edge of the existing farmyard.



Figure 2.5 Existing Straw Barn, Northern Elevation



Figure 2.6 Existing Straw Barn, Western Elevation

- 2.8 This was built in the 1990s.
- 2.9 As can be seen from the image below, the straw barn is taller than the barn it immediately adjoins and it, thus, forms part of a continuous and utilitarian edge to the farmyard.



Figure 2.7 Straw Barn And Adjacent Buildings

2.10 This barn, being positioned on high ground, is highly visible from within the landscape surrounding the farm. We have viewed the barn at the positions marked below, and provide photographs from each of these footpaths, at the points marked 1-12, at Appendix A. As can be seen from the images at appendix A, the straw barn is most visible from points 1, 2, 9, 10 and 11. But it is also visible in the distance at points 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

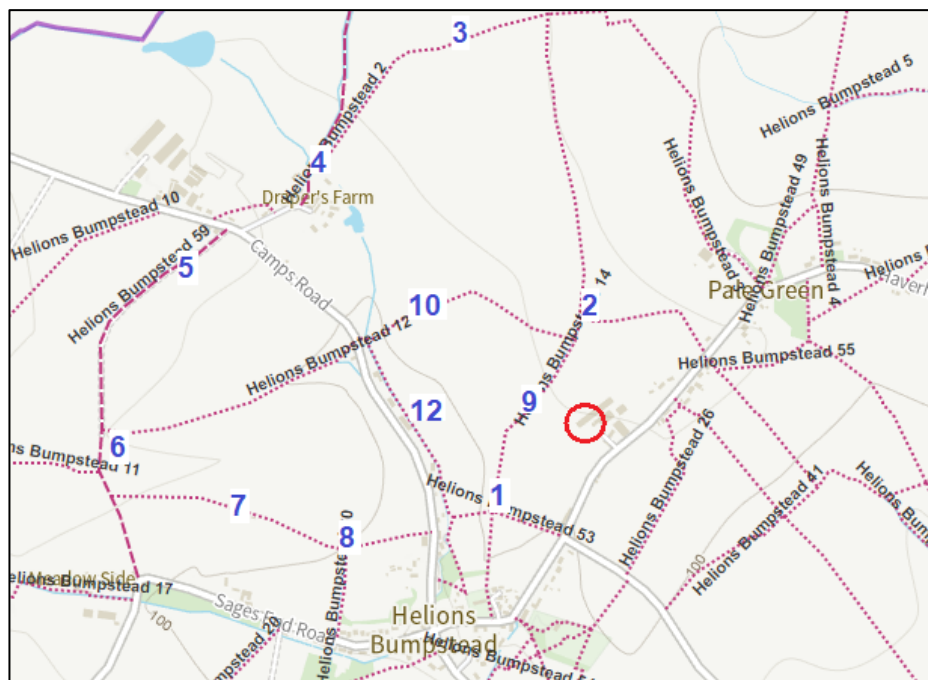


Figure 2.8 Surrounding Public Rights Of Way, From Which The Application Site Is Visible

- 2.11 From walking the paths surrounding the application site, it is clear that the existing barn is very visible within the countryside and the existing straw barn represents a dominant feature on the landscape.
- 2.12 Given how dominant the existing straw barn is, the application site offers an opportunity for visual improvement in both the setting of the Listed Building and the impact it has on the wider countryside.

Application Proposals

- 2.13 This application seeks planning permission to replace the existing utilitarian straw barn with a more traditional smaller scale, secure timber framed barn as shown in the application drawings, copied below for ease of reference.



Figure 2.9 Proposed Site Plan

- 2.14 The proposed barn would be located on the site of the existing straw barn, but would only take up approximately half of the existing footprint of the straw barn. The new barn would also be lower in height (8m in height at the ridge, rather than 9m in height) and would be reduced in its overall massing, being part single storey and with much lower eaves. The eave height of the main part of the barn would be just 3.6m, compared with 6.77m on the existing barn. The eaves for the single storey part of the barn would be even lower, at just 2.5m in height. Overall, the massing, volume, and, thus the visual impact of the proposed barn, would be significantly reduced, compared with the existing barn. The volume of the existing straw barn is over 4,500m³, but the new replacement barn will have a much reduced volume (and therefore visual impact)

at just under 1000m³.

2.15 Much less straw storage is now required at the farm, since the farmer does not produce his own straw, but buys straw from a supplier. As such, straw can now be delivered in lower quantities and can be stored on site in much lower quantities, with slightly more deliveries per year. This has reduced the need for such a large straw store, and as such, the farmer would prefer to have a secure barn on the site, offering the opportunity to store animal feed and machinery, in addition to the ongoing need for straw storage.

2.16 The proposed timber frame barn is shown below:

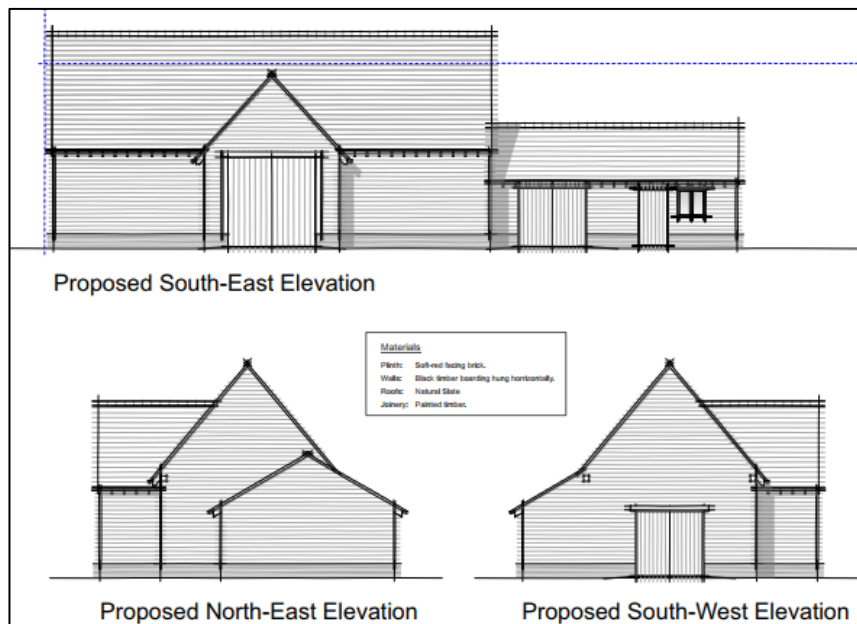


Figure 2.10 Proposed Barn

2.17 Proposed external materials for the timber framed barn will include a soft-red brick plinth, black timber boarding (hung horizontally), a natural slate roof and painted timber joinery. This will provide a traditional appearance for the barn, which is considered much more suited to the setting than the utilitarian barns which occupy the site at present.

2.18 It is considered that, as well as reintroducing this more traditional scale and style of barn, just 50m from the Listed farmhouse, the benefits in terms of the visual impact on the open countryside means that this proposal offers a material planning benefit when compared with the existing barn. These benefits are considered against relevant planning policy in the following section.

2.19 As set out in the Heritage Impact Assessment, this scheme has been designed so as to reflect the relationship of the Listed Building to the historic agricultural built form

(which shows a smaller barn to the north of Slate Hall Farm House) and is of a style more appropriate for the Listed Building than the utilitarian 20th century straw barn. The Heritage Impact Assessment states at paragraph 15 that the straw barn provides a negative contribution to the setting of the Listed Building:

*‘These modern structures are out of keeping with the scale and proportions of the Farmhouse and the farm as it would have been... Owing to their scale, mass, materials and design, these modern structures make a negative contribution despite providing a continuity of an historic use on the site. The hay barn is one such modern building, albeit it is screened in some views from the rear of the listed building and therefore its impact is reduced. **The hay barn makes a minor negative contribution to significance owing to scale, mass, materials and design.**’*

2.20 In terms of the proposed replacement barn, the heritage statement notes:

‘The layout has also been informed by and responded to the historic development of the site, as referenced above in the historic map regression section.... given the extent of improvements from the proposal over and above the existing structure, the scheme will result in an enhancement to the contribution which setting makes to the significance of the listed building. The retention of an agricultural use and the proposed traditional scale, design and materials will ensure a continuation of the agricultural character to the site in a manner wholly appropriate with the wider setting of the listed building and its historic origins.’

2.21 The report concludes:

‘It is considered that the proposal will result in an enhancement to the contribution which this part of the site makes to the significance of the Farmhouse.’

2.22 As such, it is considered that the proposals should be supported, but we now turn to assess the proposal against planning policy.

3.0 Planning Policy and Assessment of Proposals

3.1 The development plan for Helions Bumpstead comprises the Braintree District Local Plan which was adopted in 2022. The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) is also relevant to this proposal.

Principle of Development

3.2 The adopted development plan proposals map shows the application as being within the development framework for the village (which we have outlined in red), *albeit*, the principle of this development on this site should be supported even if the site were within open countryside, since the uses is appropriate irrespective of the settlement boundary.

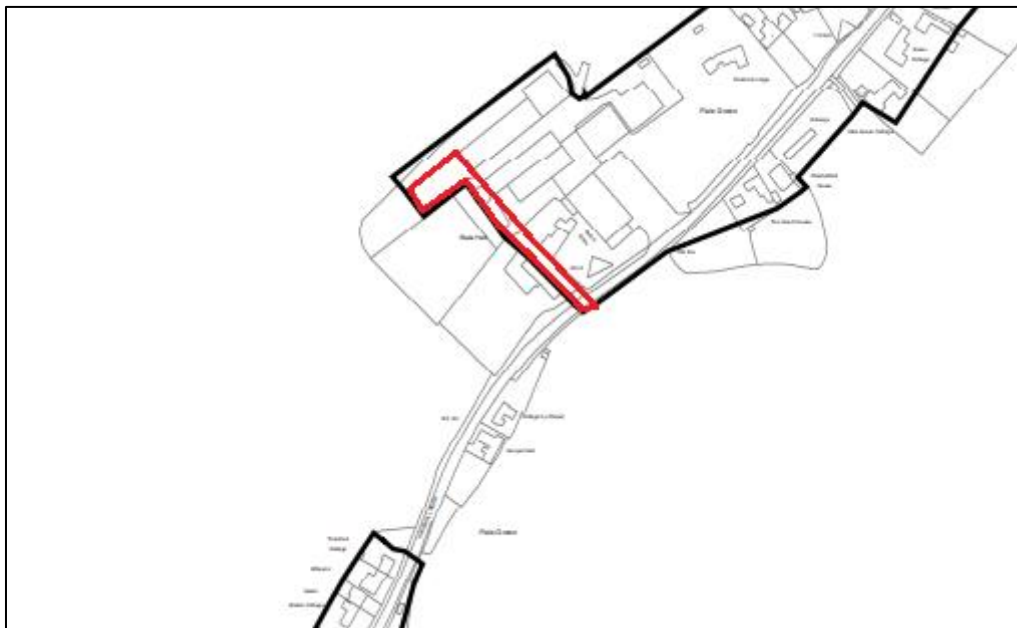


Figure 3.1 Adopted Proposals Map For Application Site

3.3 **Policy SP1** commits the Council to supporting sustainable development and taking a positive stance, working with applicants to find solutions. Since this scheme proposes a traditional barn on a site which forms part of the setting of a Listed Building, and offers visual improvements, we trust that the LPA will support this application as sustainable development.

3.4 The Local Plan Spatial Strategy identifies Helions Bumpstead as a third-tier settlement, although this site is also on the immediate edge of that settlement and is adjacent to the countryside. Within settlement boundaries, development proposals are supported which '*satisfies amenity, design, environmental and highway criteria and where it can*

take place without material adverse detriment to the existing character and historic interest of the settlement.' Within the open countryside appropriate countryside development is permitted where it will also *'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'*. This proposal would be a suitable countryside development, supportable under spatial strategy but since it is within the settlement boundary, development proposals are even more supportable, especially where they protect the character and historic interest of the settlement. Since the site is farm yard site, the proposal is entirely suitable irrespective of the settlement boundary, and therefore should be supportable under this planning policy as it offers an improvement to the farmyard and will improve the character of the countryside as well.

- 3.5 The NPPF states that planning decisions should enable *'the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses'* (para 84) and therefore we consider that the NPPF supports the principle of this proposal.

Design

- 3.6 This scheme proposes a well-designed scheme, which reflects the local vernacular, and is suitable within its local context. Given the building ,which currently occupies the site, we consider that it provides a scheme which has been designed to a high standard and which will offer an improvement on the current site arrangement.

- 3.7 **Policy SP7** states that *'All new development must meet high standards of urban and architectural design'* and that all new development should *'respond positively to local character and context to preserve and enhance the quality of existing places and their environs'* and *'protect and enhance assets of historical or natural value'*. We consider that this proposed new barn will do exactly this, by providing an enhancement to the historic environment and responding positively to the wider countryside.

Setting of the Listed Building

- 3.8 The application site forms part of the setting of Slate Hall, which is listed for its heritage significance, owing to its C17 and C19 origins. The accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment identifies its significance as follows:

'The building has high historic interest owing to its C17 and early C19 origins. The building provides material evidence of an historic vernacular property and could hold information about how people lived and building techniques. Slate

Hall provides evidence of a vernacular building that was extended with a more polite addition and reflects the historic development of a farmstead over the years... The Farmhouse is experienced within a rural, largely modern farm complex.'

3.9 Therefore, the significance of the Listed Building is as its historic role as a farmhouse, and the setting plays a part in forming the significance of the dwelling.

3.10 The planning system seeks to protect and enhance heritage assets through appropriate policies and good planning decisions.

3.11 Regarding Listed Buildings, **Policy LPP 47 'Built and Historic Environment'** states that:

'The Council will promote and secure a high standard of design and layout in all new development and the protection and enhancement of the historic environment in order to:

*a. Respect and respond to the local context, especially in the District's historic areas, **where development may affect the setting of listed buildings ...'***

3.12 Likewise, the NPPF supports development that will enhance the setting of listed buildings (paragraph 197 and 206):

'Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development ... within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.'

3.13 By proposing a replacement barn of a more traditional scale, and of a form of development which is more akin to the historic pattern of development to the north of the Listed Building, we consider that this proposal will enhance the setting of the Listed Building, and better reveal its significance.

3.14 The accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment has set out how this scheme offers heritage benefits, and given that the scale, massing, materials and site plan are more appropriate to the historic context of the farmhouse, the Heritage Impact Assessment supports the application proposals, stating:

'It is considered that the proposal will result in an enhancement to the contribution which this part of the site makes to the significance of the

Farmhouse.'

- 3.15 Given that policy LLP47 and paragraph 206 of the NPPF supports applications where the setting of Listed Buildings would be enhanced, this scheme is clearly supportable under policy LLP47 and the NPPF, as the accompanying Heritage Impact Statement sets out that this scheme will improve the setting of the Listed Building, better revealing its significance.

Visual Impact on the Countryside

- 3.16 The NPPF requires local authorities to recognise *'the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland,'* (para. 174). In so doing, the NPPF is supportive of proposals which improve the way that the countryside is experienced.
- 3.17 The Local Plan takes the same approach. Policy **LPP67** relates to *'Landscape Character and Features'* and it states:

'In its decision-making on applications, the Local Planning Authority will take into account the different roles and character of the various landscape areas in the District, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, in order to ensure that any development permitted is suitable for the local context...'

- 3.18 Whilst the Countryside around Helions Bumpstead has no special protection, it should still be worthy of protection for its own sake. We have set out above how this scheme will lead to a more appropriate visual impact within the countryside and provide at Appendix A photographic evidence of views towards the barn from Public Rights of Way. Whilst the existing barn is currently most visible from PROWs Helions Bumpstead 14, Helions Bumpstead 25 and Helions Bumpstead 50 (which are the closest public rights of way to the site) and the barn is also visible in distant views from Helions Bumpstead 13, Helions Bumpstead 59, Helions Bumpstead 3 and Helions Bumpstead 3. Images from these footpaths can be seen at Appendix A. Since the ridge of the new barn will sit 1m, and the overall massing will be significantly reduced as the new barn will be smaller and will have much lower eaves, it is considered that that the barn will become negligible in the distant views and much less dominant in the near views from Helions Bumpstead 14, Helions Bumpstead 25 and Helions Bumpstead 50.

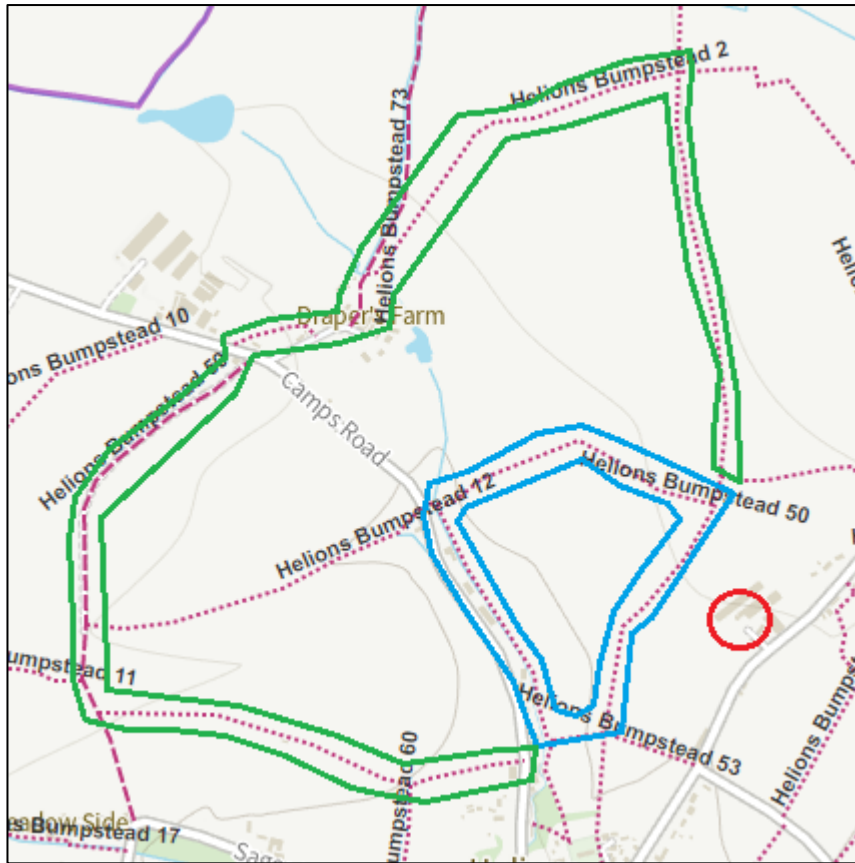


Figure 3.2 Footpaths Which Will Lead To An Improved View Towards The Barn (Blue) And Footpaths Where Distant Views Of The Barn Will Be Replaced With Negligible Views Of The Replacement Barn (Green)

3.19 Furthermore, the existing barn is a modern structure and lacks any character. This replacement barn, being of a traditional scale and design, will be considered to be more appropriate within the landscape and has a visual lower impact when it is viewed by walkers using the footpaths. Whilst it will still be visible, its ridge will be 1m lower and its eaves will be several meters lower than the existing straw barn. This will mean that the massing and visual impact is much reduced and the overall visual impact of the farm will be lessened. We therefore consider that the scheme should be supported under policy LPP67 of the Local Plan.

Ecological Enhancements

3.20 Regarding the natural environment, **Policy LPP63** 'Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure' states:

'Development proposals must take available measures to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity of the District and to be acceptable, also taking climate change and water scarcity into account in their design'. ...

- 3.21 This scheme can build into the design biodiversity enhancement features, such as bat tiles and nesting boxes, to enhance the habitat options at this site. These could be required by condition.

Summary

- 3.22 We consider that this replacement barn, being of a traditional design and significantly reduced in massing compared with the existing barn, should be fully supported by planning policy, since it offers enhancements to the setting of the Listed Building, the wider countryside and it supports an existing agricultural business. Planning policy supports proposals which deliver these objectives, and therefore, planning permission should be granted.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 This report supports an application which seeks to replace a modern large-scale straw barn with a traditional timber frame barn.
- 4.2 We have assessed the proposal against the Braintree District Local Plan which was adopted in 2022 and the NPPF, and we consider that the principle of development should be supported. The NPPF states that planning decisions should enable *'the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses'* (para 84) and therefore we consider that the NPPF supports the principle of this proposal. Likewise, since the proposal is for a farming use, it would be supportable either within or outside of the settlement boundary under the Local Plan. But within settlement boundaries, the Local Plan supports proposals where they satisfy *'amenity, design, environmental and highway criteria and where it can take place without material adverse detriment to the existing character and historic interest of the settlement.'* Against this policy, we have demonstrated that the proposal should be supported, as it offers an improvement to the farmyard and will improve the character of the countryside as well, without having any of the material adverse impacts referred to.
- 4.3 In terms of design, the proposal complies with **Policy SP7** since it is of a high standard of design and responds *'positively to local character and context to preserve and enhance the quality of existing places and their environs'* and *'protect and enhance assets of historical or natural value'*. We have set out how that this proposed new barn will provide an enhancement to the historic environment (in accordance with policy LPP 47 and the NPPF paragraphs 197 and 206) and responding positively to the wider countryside (in accordance with policy LPP 67 and the NPPF paragraph 174).
- 4.4 As such, we consider that this replacement barn, being of a traditional design and significantly reduced in massing compared with the existing barn, should be fully supported by the LPA.

Appendix A

Appendix A – Views of Hay barn from Public Rights of Way, Spring 2023

