

PLANNING, DESIGN & HERITAGE STATEMENT

**The erection of one 3-bedroom dwelling with curtilage parking and landscaping
following demolition of existing former poultry barn**

Land south of Long Acre, Luffenhall, Hertfordshire SG2 7PX

May 2026



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning & Heritage Statement is submitted in support of a detailed planning application submitted to North Hertfordshire Council for development on land south of Long Acre, Luffenhall, Hertfordshire SG2 7PX.

1.2 The applicant is seeking planning permission for:

‘The erection of one 3-bedroom dwelling with curtilage parking and landscaping following demolition of existing former poultry barn’

1.3 This planning and heritage statement has been prepared to consider the proposed development against the statutory development plan (including neighbourhood plan) the National Planning Policy Framework and all other material planning considerations.

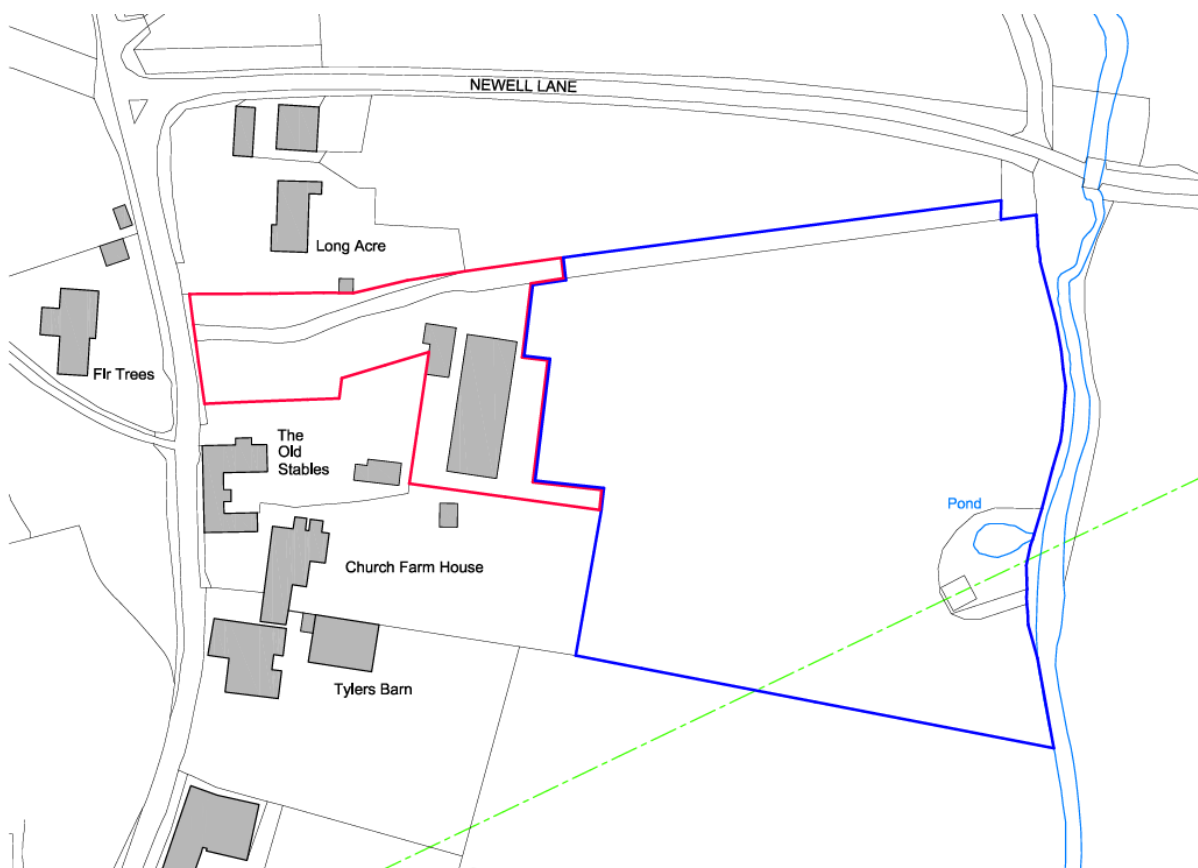
1.4 The application is supported by the following additional documents:

- Application form and Certificates
- Existing and Proposed drawings
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- Sustainability statement

2.0 Site background

2.1 Site and Surroundings

- 2.2 The application site measures 2557 sq metres (0.255 hectares) and comprises a plot of land formerly used for agricultural and recreational use located south of Long Acre and Newell Lane and north of The Old Stables and Church Farmhouse. There are two buildings on the site – a large disused and partially collapsed concrete blockwork and timber framed building formerly used for the rearing of poultry and an adjacent stable building. The application site is within the settlement of Luffenhall approximately 0.8 miles north west of the village of Cromer. A plan below shows the application site edged in red together with other land owned by the applicants edged in blue.



Site location plan

- 2.2 The existing barn on site, although dilapidated is of a substantial size and visible from nearby properties and Newell Lane. Photographs below demonstrate its scale and siting close to adjacent dwellings:



Eastern elevation of barn



Angled view of eastern elevation



Eastern elevation looking north

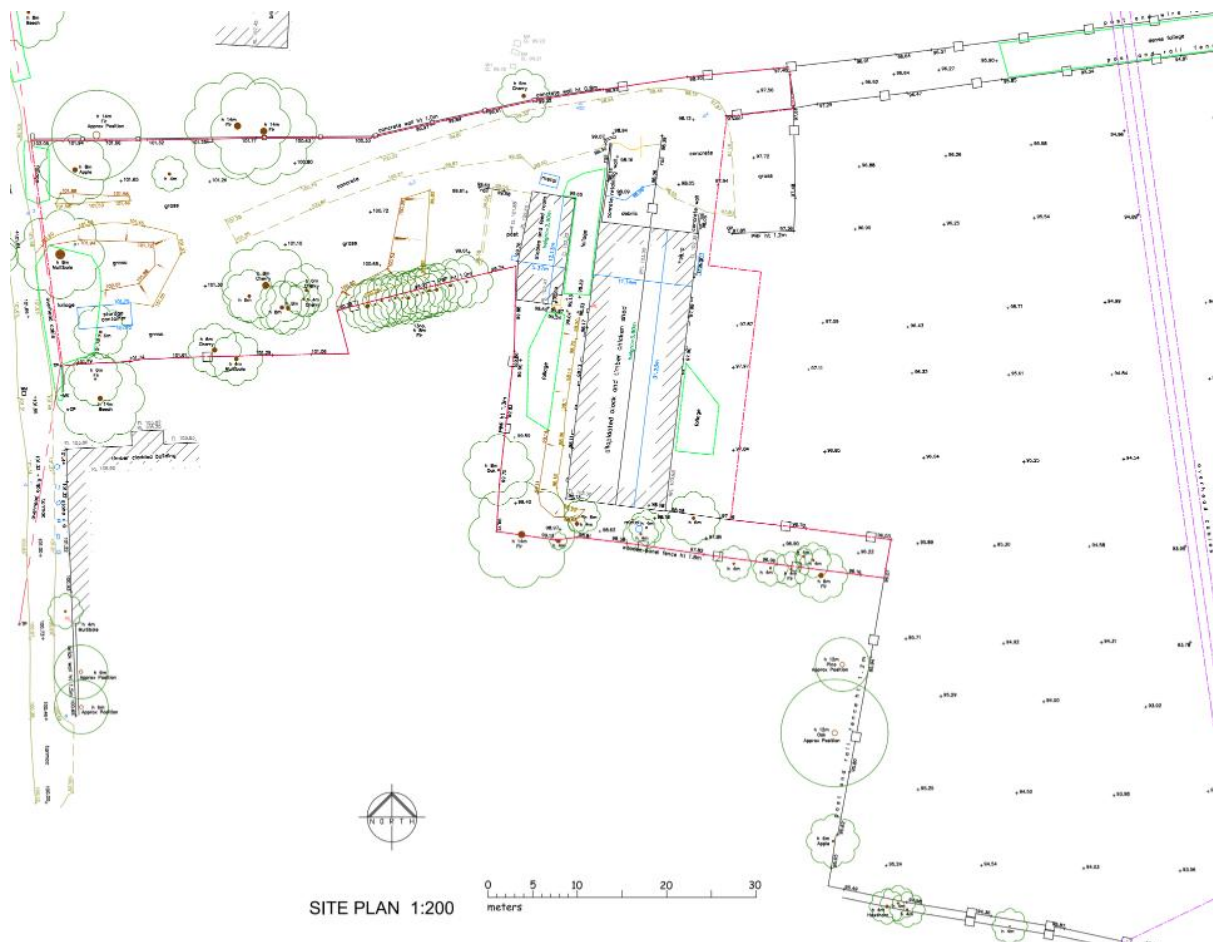


Internal photo of part of ground floor of barn



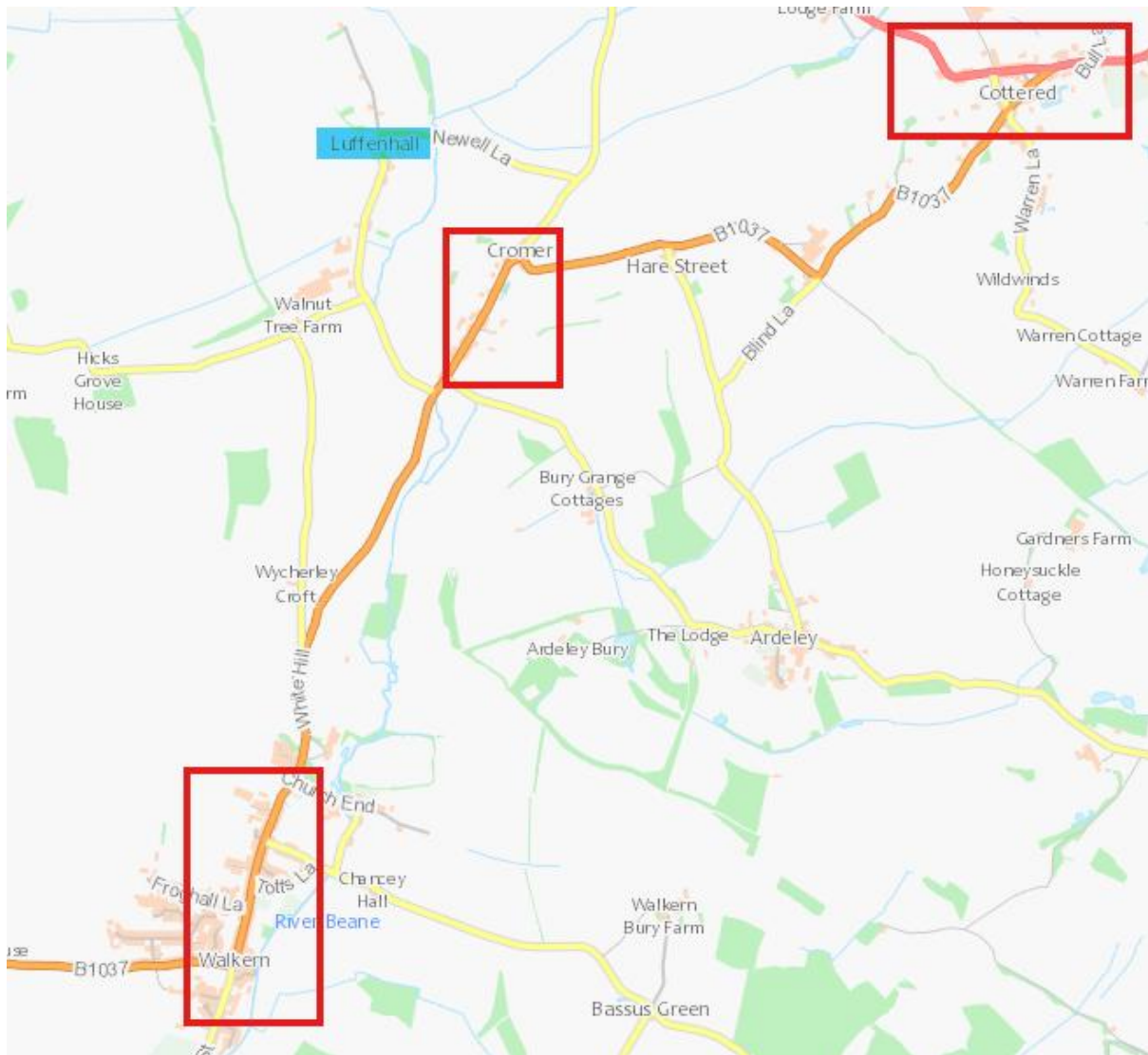
View from east and Newell Lane

- 2.3 The existing lane at Luffenhall is an unclassified rural lane. Newell Lane is also unclassified. Both lanes are maintained by Hertfordshire County Council as highway authority.
- 2.4 The topographical survey plan below shows the existing buildings on site as well as existing hardsurfacing and vegetation :



Existing site plan

- 2.5 There are several residential properties within the immediate vicinity of the site. To the north is 'Long Acre' a detached house with outbuildings. To the west is 'Old Stables' a converted barn and dwelling. To the south is 'Church Farm House' and south of that 'Tylers Barn' - both these dwellings are Grade II listed. A paddock flanks the poultry barn and stable to the east.
- 2.6 The plan below shows the location of Luffenhall in relation to nearby villages including Cromer (0.8 mile), Cottered (1.9 miles) and Walkern (1.6 miles)



2.7 The site falls within Flood Zone 1 although land to the east by the River Beane is categorised as Flood Zone 2.

2.8 Planning history

2.9 The following planning history on the application site is relevant:

93/0539/1: Church Farm Luffenhall – Outline application for detached dwelling following demolition of existing barn (design, external appearance and landscaping reserved). Refused 08.07.1993

03/01375/1: Land south of Long Acre, Luffenhall – Outline application for detached dwellinghouse. Refused 06.10.2003. Dismissed on appeal

04/00551/1: Land south of Long Acre, Luffenhall. Outline application for detached dwellinghouse . Refused 28.06.2004

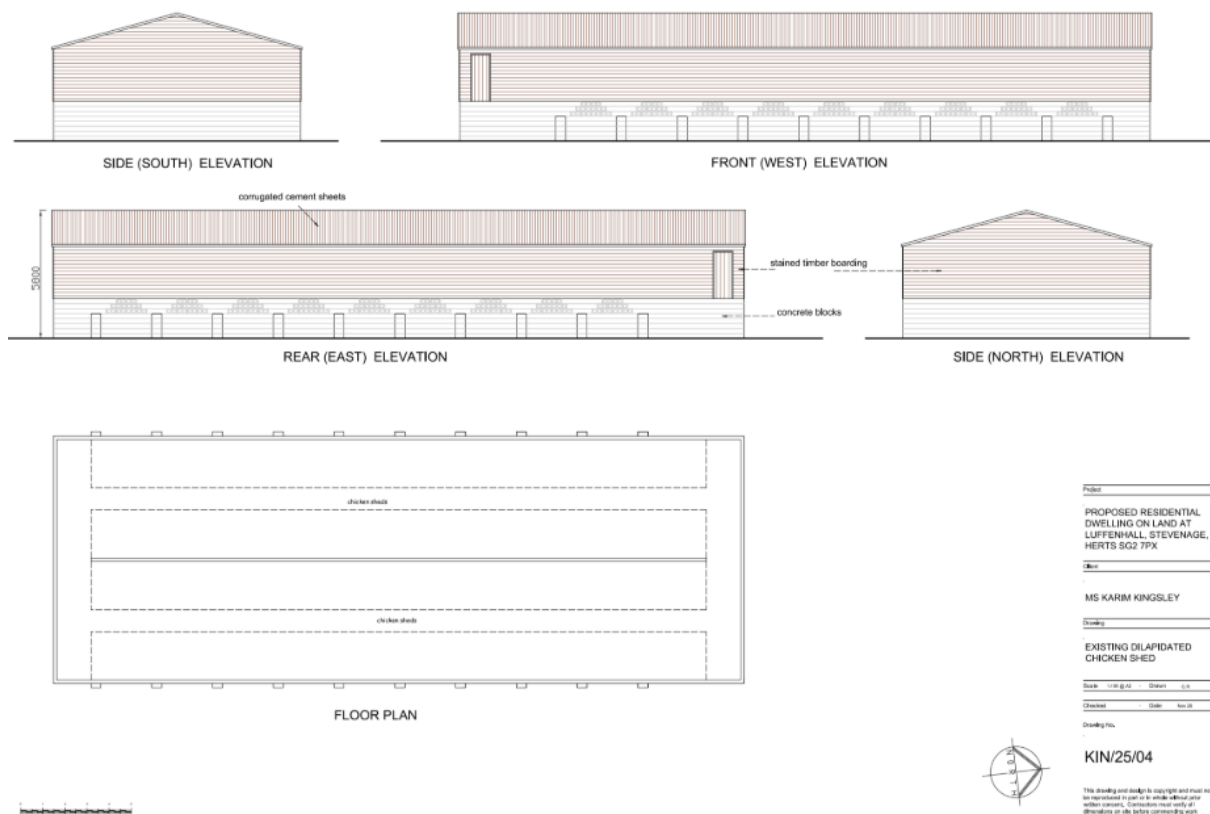
- 2.10 The following historical and recent planning decisions on nearby sites are also of some relevance in terms of the principle of development in Luffenhall relating to existing buildings :

87/01903/1: Church Farm House, Luffenhall – Alterations and conversion of barn to facilitate its use as a 5 bed dwelling and creation of new farm access. Granted 25.02.1988

87/01905/1: Old Stables, Luffenhall – Alterations, conversion and extension of former stables to facilitate use as a 3 bed dwelling. Granted 25.02.1988

23/01154/FP: Chez Nous, Harveys Hill Lane, Luffenhall - Erection of one detached 4-bed dwelling following demolition of existing dwelling. Granted 22.08.2024

24/01835/FP: Barn and land adjacent public footpath 022, Luffenhall - Erection of one 4-bed dwelling and detached double garage following demolition of existing outbuildings including parking and landscaping. Granted 21.01.2025

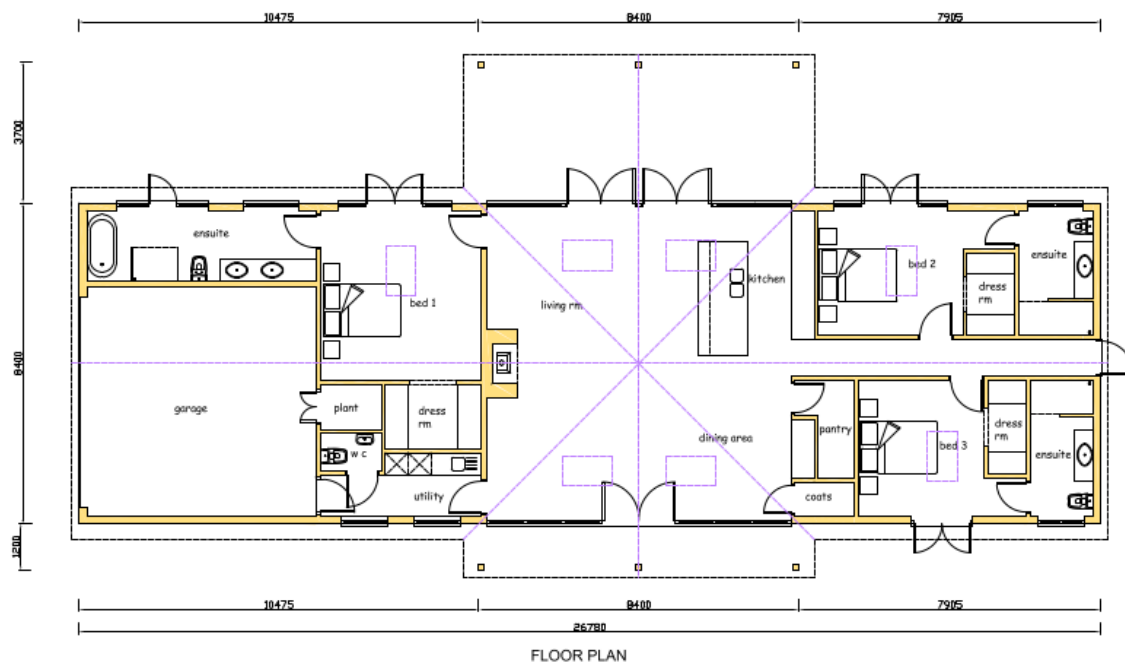


Original poultry barn

- 3.4 The proposed elevations and ground floor plan of the dwelling to replace the barn are shown below :



Proposed elevations of dwelling



- 3.5 The height of the new dwelling would be no more than the original building (5.8 metres). The adjacent three dwellings provide a residential setting within which the proposed dwelling will comfortably sit with the proposed dwelling adopting a lower height than these surrounding dwellings with its single storey eaves height and an appearance that is appropriate for this rural setting.
- 3.6 External materials would comprise stained timber boarding above a red brick plinth, stained timber window frames and a grey standing seam metal roof. The dwelling would have an overall internal floorspace of approximately 225 sq metres. Two open gables add another 41 sq metres.
- 3.7 Vehicular and pedestrian access is proposed by using the existing private driveway which accesses onto the unclassified lane that runs south from the junction with Newell Lane. A bin store would be provided within the site and refuse / recycling bins will be presented at the lane verge side on collection days as in the current practice locally.
- 3.8 A separate Sustainability and Energy statement is provided with this application which proposes that the dwelling will be constructed with high energy, high thermal performance and high water efficiency standards.

- 3.9 New landscaping is proposed as part of Biodiversity Net Gain on land both within the site and adjoining land owned by the applicant (land edged blue on the above plan) .

4.0 Planning Policy context and material considerations

- 4.1 This chapter provides an overview of the planning policies and legislation relevant to the consideration of this application in addition to other decision making considerations.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that applications for development should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan is the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (adopted November 2022). The Development Plan includes any made neighbourhood plan which in this case means the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan made on 29th June 2021 and the relevant policies contained within it. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) is also a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.
- 4.3 The relevant planning policies and guidance are set out below:
- 4.4 The NPPF (December 2024)
- 4.5 In December 2025 the Government published a new draft NPPF with consultation running until March 2026. The final version of the new NPPF with responses to the consultation is expected to come into effect in mid 2026.
- 4.6 The relevant sections of the Framework are as follows:
- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
 - Section 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
 - Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- 4.7 Chapter 2 of the Framework sets out the three overarching objectives necessary to achieve sustainable development. These are as follows:

a) **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.8 Paragraph 11 of the Framework states that for **decision making** this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination”

- 4.9 The NPPF explains that, for applications involving the provision of housing, policies are considered out of date if: “...the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years. See also paragraph 232.” (Footnote 8).
- 4.10 North Herts Council issued a Five Year Housing Land Supply Update in November 2025. This concludes that the Council currently demonstrates a five year land supply of between 2.6 and 3.3 years falling significantly below the five year requirement set out in the Framework.
- 4.11 The consequence of not having a 5 Year Housing Land Supply is that the 'tilted balance' is engaged in the decision-making process. The tilted balance refers to paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF which states that if the most relevant Local Plan policies for determining a planning application are out of date (such as when a 5 Year Housing Land Supply cannot be demonstrated), the application should be approved unless the application of NPPF policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance (as defined by the NPPF) provide a strong reason for refusing permission or the harms caused by the application significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits, when assessed against policies of the NPPF as a whole. In this context, the local plan policies considered to be out of date include in particular those relating to the development strategy and delivery of housing as follows:
- Policy SP2: Settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution
 - Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
 - Policy SP8: Housing

4.12 North Herts Local Plan Policies

The relevant policies are as follows:

- Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
- Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP8: Housing
- Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
- Policy SP11: Natural Resources and Sustainability
- Policy SP13: Historic Environment
- Policy T1: Assessment of Transport Matters
- Policy T2: Parking

- Policy CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt
- Policy CGB4: Existing buildings in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
- Policy D1: Sustainable Design
- Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions
- Policy D4: Air Quality
- Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites
- Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets

4.13 Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan

The relevant policies are:

- Policy G3: Creating well designed places
- Policy G4: Sustainable Design
- Policy V2: Clothall and Luffenhall

5.0 Planning Assessment

5.1 The Principle of Development

- 5.2 The application site is in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan. Policy SP5 states the Council will operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt through the application of additional detailed policies. These policies are CGB1 and CGB4. Part d) of CGB1 is considered applicable, as the proposal relates to an existing rural building. Policy CGB4 states that planning permission for the re-use, replacement or extension of buildings in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt will be granted provided that: *'b) Any existing building to be converted for re-use does not require major extension or reconstruction; c) The resultant building(s) do not have a materially greater impact on the openness, purposes or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt than the original building(s); and d) Any outbuilding(s) are sited as close as possible to the main building(s) and visually subordinate to them'*
- 5.3 The existing poultry barn has a maximum ridge height of 5.8 metres and has a total footprint of approximately 350 sq metres. The building is spread over two floors with the ground floor of concrete block construction (in two compartments) with the upper floor of timber framing. The proposed dwelling would have an overall footprint of 266 sq metres resulting in a 24% reduction in built footprint on the site. The height of the dwelling would be the same as the height of the original barn (5.8 metres) but would have a low eaves height. In view of the substantial reduction in footprint and volume the resultant building would not have any materially greater impact on the openness, purposes or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt than the original building. The existing stable block located immediately adjacent the poultry barn will be retained as an outbuilding to the dwelling.
- 5.4 In view of the above analysis, the proposal is considered to meet criteria c) and d) of Policy CGB4. It meets Policy CGB1 as it relates to an existing rural building.
- 5.5 Turning to relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies the proposed development is required to meet the key locational criteria for new development as set out in Policy V2 (Clothall and Luffenhall) of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) which states that in the case of Luffenhall development should *'be limited to those forms of development allowed by the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (excluding new housing, other than where it involves the conversion or replacement of an existing building and maintain the rural appearance and physical form of these villages, with narrow lanes bordered with trees and hedgerows, a lack of continuous urban*

frontages, most houses set well back from the road and an absence of footpaths and street lighting’.

- 5.6 In this case, the proposed dwelling would be sited over 50 metres from Luffenhall lane and screened from the lane by trees and other built development. The rural character of the road comprising a narrow lane with trees and hedgerow would be unaffected by this proposal. No footpaths or street lighting onto the lane are proposed. The proposal is therefore considered to be consistent with the requirements of Neighbourhood Plan Policy V2.
- 5.7 The Framework sets out policies relating to rural housing at paragraphs 82 to 84. The main thrust of this guidance is to promote sustainable development in rural areas, enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and avoid the development of isolated homes. The Framework does acknowledge that development in one village may support services in nearby villages essentially concluding that those smaller communities should not be excluded from further development. The site is not in an isolated location within the countryside but forms part of the small settlement of Luffenhall which contains at least 15 residential properties forming a generally linear form of development up and down Luffenhall Lane. The proximity to the nearby village of Cromer and further afield the larger villages of Cottered and Walkern, where there are a range of community facilities, confirm that the site is not isolated in locational terms. It is considered therefore that the proposal would not conflict with the Framework in relation to the provision of rural housing.
- 5.8 It will be noted from the above planning history that there have been refused planning permissions in the past for a dwelling on this site. Since those decisions the Local Planning Authority has adopted a new local plan which allows for development in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt under certain circumstances (i.e. Policies CGB1 and CGB4) with which this proposals complies. Furthermore, there have been several iterations of the National Planning Policy Framework which also permits rural housing under certain conditions as well as applying the tilted balance in favour of sustainable development where a local authority cannot demonstrate a five year land supply as is the case here. The Framework also attaches great weight to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets. The proposal will have a positive impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings as elaborated on in the comments below.

Suffice to say that there have been significant national and local planning policy changes in recent years that now provide materially different circumstances under which the previous decisions were made.

- 5.9 In conclusion on the principle of development, it is considered that the proposal complies with the relevant detailed Local Plan policies for assessing development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt i.e. Policies CGB1 and CGB4 as well as complying with the Framework as a whole.

5.10 Design, Layout and impact on Heritage Assets

- 5.11 Policy SP9 of the local plan states that the Council will support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context. Policy D1 of the local plan similarly requires development proposals to respond positively to a site's local context having regard to the Council's Design supplementary planning document and to meet or exceed nationally described space standards.
- 5.12 The proposal would result in the removal of an unattractive and dilapidated barn. There would be an immediate benefit to the appearance of the site through the removal of the existing building particularly as the building is visible from nearby adjacent properties and from Newell Lane and adjacent public footpaths.
- 5.13 The proposed dwelling would be generally consistent with the pattern and scale of development in Luffenhall. It would form part of a group of residential buildings on this eastern side of Luffenhall lane and south of Newell Lane. It would not extend into open countryside. The low ridge height ensures that the dwellings sits comfortably within the landscape and the gabled roof and projecting gables would be in common with the design of several of the existing Luffenhall properties.
- 5.14 The proposed dwelling has been sensitively designed with external materials that are in keeping with this rural location and the standing seam roof in particular provides some historical connection to the former use of the site for agricultural use. Rooflights are kept to a minimum in order to comply with the Building Regulations.

- 5.15 In terms of landscaping, the majority of existing trees within and around the site boundaries will be retained. Some cutting back of trees will be required around the site entrance to improve sightlines. If deemed necessary conditions could be attached to control new landscaping around the site and the type of boundary fencing to ensure that the development integrates with the rural character .
- 5.16 The development will therefore enhance the setting of the site and maintain the rural character and appearance of this eastern end of the lane. The proposal would be consistent with the prevailing form and residential use of the adjacent properties. There would be no encroachment into the countryside. The proposed development is therefore considered to respond positively to local context, in accordance with Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan. Furthermore, given the appropriate design of the dwelling and its sensitive integration within the existing residential setting, the development would not be in conflict with Neighbourhood Plan Policy G3 ('Creating well-designed places').
- 5.17 Impact on heritage assets
- 5.18 The site is not part of any conservation area and is also not part of any archaeological area of interest designated by the Local Planning Authority. There are, however, two listed buildings close by - Church Farmhouse and Tylers Barn, both Grade II listed, as shown on the map below:



Plan showing listed buildings

- 5.19 The listing descriptions of the above buildings are set out below (taken from Heritage England web site)

TL 22 NE CLOTHALL LUFFENHALL (East side) 7/93 Church Farmhouse -

GV II

Farmhouse. C16 or earlier in origin, altered in C17. Timber frame. Roughcast walls. Machine tile roof. 2 storeys. C16 part is a 1-window jettied cross wing on right. Remainder appears to be a C17 replacement or recasing with 4 glazing bar casements and 4 gabled dormers. The ground floor has a canted casement bay. Door near wing has an early C19 frame with tiled gabled hood on large curved brackets. Replacement stack near centre. Wing has curved brackets to jetty, below which is a C19 casement bay. C20 rear extension.

Listing NGR: TL2940628959

TL 22 NE CLOTHALL LUFFENHALL (East side) 7/94 Barn at Church Farm - immediately S of farmhouse

GV II

Barn. C17-18. Timber frame. Weatherboarded. Corrugated iron roof. Probably 3 bays, the barn is aisled on the S side and has a large door on the centre of the N side. Included for group value.

Listing NGR: TL2939828941

5.20 The statutory duty under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) sets out, with regard to applications for planning permission affecting a listed building or its setting, that regard should be had to the desirability of preserving the setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

5.21 Local Plan Policy SP13 states that:

'The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation and the management of its setting.'

5.22 Local Plan Policy HE1 states that:

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable): a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance; b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and c) Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use.'

- 5.23 In this case the listed building at Church Farmhouse and its garden curtilage lie immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the site with the garden area in particular in close proximity to the existing poultry barn. The historic significance of Church Farmhouse is largely as a consequence of its architectural value as evidenced by the above listing description.
- 5.24 Notwithstanding the close relationship between the proposed dwelling and Church Farmhouse the removal of the existing dilapidated barn and its replacement with a high quality and attractive dwelling that would be in keeping with the rural setting is likely to enhance the immediate setting of the heritage asset. This benefit of the scheme is considered to greatly outweigh any minimal harm that may arise from the development. The impact of the development on the setting of Tylers Barn is even less given its detachment from the application site by Church Farmhouse and the impact on this asset is arguably considered to be neutral.
- 5.25 Paragraph 212 of the Framework advises that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). In this case the proposal would remove a 20th century barn of poor quality that is considered to have a neutral and / or detracting significance. The removal of this barn is assessed as having a major positive impact on the heritage significance of the adjacent Church Farmhouse in particular. Overall, the proposal will not detract from the significance of the nearby heritage assets and would if anything enhance the wider setting of the heritage assets nearby.

5.26 Living conditions of future occupiers

5.27 The Government's Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standard (2015) (THS) provides guidance on the minimum gross internal floor area (GIA) requirements for new dwellings. In this case the proposed dwelling would comfortably exceed the minimum 97.5 sq metres of gross internal floorspace required for a six person , 3 bedroom home. The double bedrooms would exceed the minimum 11.5 sqm required by the Standards. As the internal floor area of the dwelling would exceed the minimum as set out above it is therefore considered appropriate space would be provided to serve the interest of future occupiers. All habitable rooms would be provided with a window opening which would allow for sufficient levels of light and ventilation.

5.28 The proposed dwelling would be positioned at a sufficient distance from adjacent dwellings to avoid any adverse impacts in terms of overshadowing or an overbearing relationship. This separation ensures that the property would retain an acceptable level of residential amenity without being detrimentally affected by the presence of existing dwellings. With regard to the provision of private outdoor amenity space, it is noted that the dwelling would benefit from a generous garden curtilage. The standard of accommodation and private amenity space would be adequate for the future occupiers of the property in accordance with Policy D3 ('Protecting living conditions') of the Local Plan.

5.29 Neighbouring amenity

5.30 Policy D3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development that does not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.

5.31 The proposed development has been designed to respect the amenity of neighbouring properties and to ensure compliance with Policy D3 and other relevant North Herts Local Plan policies.

5.32 In terms of use, the residential use of the land by occupiers of a single dwelling would be compatible with the adjacent residential uses and likely to involve significantly less noise and disturbance and general comings and goings (both vehicular and pedestrian) than that would have been the case with the previous use of the site as a poultry rearing business. It is acknowledged that the poultry use has ceased some time ago but that does not mean such a lawful use, or other agricultural use, could not re-commence in the future. Moreover, given the historical uses on the site, future planning applications for similar uses, including recreational uses appropriate to a rural area, could not be ruled out, albeit that

they would be considered on their merits taking into account all material considerations including adjoining residents amenity.

- 5.33 The primary consideration in relation to neighbour amenity regarding this application concerns the properties located at The Old Stables and Church Farmhouse (to the south) and Long Acre (to the north).
- 5.34 The proposed dwelling would make use of the existing vehicular access serving the site and as mentioned above trip generation would be modest compared to the previous uses. Neighbours may have become accustomed to very low, if any, vehicle activity on the site since the last uses became dormant but it is important to realise that the nature and scale of the proposed use is unlikely to result in a level of harm that could reasonably justify a refusal of planning permission.
- 5.35 Regarding other amenity considerations including loss of light, overbearing impact, loss of privacy and overlooking it will be noted that the proposed dwelling is single storey and located between 30 and 40 metres from the nearest dwellinghouses at Long Acre, Old Stables and Church Farmhouse. The topography of the site is such that the proposed dwelling will be on lower ground than that of the surrounding dwellings. The separation distances between the proposed dwelling is more than sufficient to mitigate any significant overbearing impact or loss of light. Whilst the new dwelling would be visible from adjacent properties – as is the current poultry barn – such visibility would be typical within a residential setting and does not, in itself, constitute harm.
- 5.36 In terms of privacy and overlooking, as mentioned above the proposed dwelling is single storey. The rooflights and gable windows on the west elevation, which would be the main elevation seen by adjacent properties, contains rooflights and gable windows that do not serve habitable rooms but are for the purposes of means of escape and the provision of natural daylight to the ground floor of the new dwelling. There are no windows proposed in the first floor north and south gabled elevations of the proposed dwelling. If necessary and considered reasonable, in the interests of safeguarding the amenities of adjacent property, a landscaping or obscure glazing condition could be imposed by the Local Planning Authority to ensure that any potential for overlooking is effectively mitigated.
- 5.37 It is inevitable that there would be some noise and disturbance during the construction period and as such the Local Planning Authority may consider, should it be minded to approve the development, the imposition of a construction management condition which would control hours of construction, materials storage and construction traffic management and the like.

- 5.38 In summary it is considered that the proposed development would comply with Local Plan Policy D3 subject to any planning necessary planning conditions.
- 5.39 Highways and parking matters
- 5.40 The proposal is for a single residential dwelling unit to replace buildings that were once used as part of a working poultry business which would have generated significantly more vehicular and pedestrian movement. The number of additional traffic movements generated by the single dwelling would be negligible (perhaps 4, two – way vehicular movements per weekday) and in any case this would be a reduction on those generated by the historic uses on the site.
- 5.41 In addition to the above it should be noted that the application site is part of an existing settlement in Luffenhall containing 15 or more dwellings and this together with the proximity of nearby villages (Cromer, Walkern and Cottered) as well the proximity to nearby Stevenage and Baldock means that the site cannot be considered to be truly isolated in locational terms.
- 5.42 The NPPF states at paragraph 110 that *‘Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.’* However, in this case it is considered that the provision of one dwelling cannot be deemed significant in scale and paragraph 110 does explain that transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas.
- 5.43 The NPPF also states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities, and that where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a nearby village. In this case there is other residential development nearby including Cromer. Due weight can also be given to the fact that the proposal would replace a redundant building enhancing its setting and that of adjacent listed buildings.
- 5.44 In taking account the above, it is considered that the proposal would be reasonably located in terms of access to local services and facilities and would facilitate sustainable modes of transport in a manner commensurate to its scale and location.

- 5.45 Policy T1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted provided that development will not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts upon the highway network. The provision of one residential unit (in lieu of a former poultry business) is not of a scale that would lead to significant congestion or a harmful increase in traffic movements. As a result there would be no severe cumulative impact. It should be noted that the Highway Authority recently raised no objections to the replacement of a storage barn for a new dwelling on land only 90 metres to the south under planning ref: 24/01835/FP.
- 5.46 The proposed dwelling would make use of the existing vehicular access onto Luffenhall lane. The lane is narrow and traffic is infrequent and vehicular speeds are unlikely to exceed 30mph, if that. Existing vegetation around the access could be cut back appropriately and maintained to facilitate any required visibility splays (maximum of 600mm above ground level). The applicant would accept a suitable visibility splay condition (if required by the Highway Authority) bearing in mind that vehicles are unlikely to travel at the national speed limit along Luffenhall lane.
- 5.47 Refuse and recycling bins can be brought to the Luffenhall lane verge side on collection days in accordance with current practice by other dwellings situated along the lane.
- 5.48 The Council's parking standards would require a minimum of two parking spaces and this provision can be easily accommodated within the site noting that the proposed dwelling has an integral double garage with additional space in front for parking and turning. Cycle and mobility scooter storage can be provided within the garage or secured through a planning condition if considered necessary.
- 5.49 Landscaping
- 5.50 The application site is characterised by trees and shrubs, including hedging and trees around the site's perimeter particularly onto the Luffenhall frontage and adjoining gardens. Other than cutting back vegetation to improve sightlines at the vehicle access no significant changes are proposed to the soft landscaping around the site. Turning area for vehicles is shown in front of the garage. If required a hard and soft landscaping plan could be secured by condition by the LPA. Additional landscaping to achieve Biodiversity net gain will be achieved on the adjoining land within the applicants ownership (see below)

- 5.51 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
- 5.52 Chapter 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' of the NPPF requires decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural environment. LP policies SP1 Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire, SP12 - Green infrastructure, biodiversity and landscape, NE4 - Biodiversity and geological sites - seek to protect, enhance and manage the natural environment.
- 5.53 The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment as well as a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. The site was subject to a habitat survey and roost assessment including an inspection of the existing buildings in line with established practice and BS42020:2013 and CIEEM 2019. The survey confirmed that the site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations but that there are several areas of Habitats of Principal Importance within 2km of the site. The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) determined that there was negligible potential for roosting bats but that the site provided suitable foraging / commuting habitat. No further surveys for bat potential at the site were required. Moderate potential for Great Crested Newts was identified 250 m east of the site. The site is suitable to support nesting birds but there was low potential / suitability of the site for reptiles or badgers. No invasive species were recorded during the survey. The survey confirmed that there were opportunities for ecological enhancement through the provision of bat and bird boxes and native species planting including hedgerows and trees.
- 5.54 In order to achieve the required 10% gain in biodiversity the submitted BNG assessment confirmed that off-site compensation was required to provide 0.61 biodiversity units. It is envisaged that if the application is supported by the Local Planning Authority the statutory biodiversity net gain condition would be imposed. Off-site additional habitat can be provided within adjacent land to the east owned by the applicant. In providing a net gain in biodiversity the proposed development would comply with Policy NE4 of the Local Plan ('Biodiversity and geological sites').
- 5.55 Having regard to the above comments, there are no ecology impacts arising from the proposal that cannot be mitigated and BNG will be achieved in accordance with planning policy

5.56 Climate change and Sustainability

5.57 All new developments should demonstrate how carbon emissions would be minimised across the development, taking into account the energy hierarchy, in accordance with the Council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document and District Plan Policies D1 and SP9. Chapter 14 of the Framework 'Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change' confirms that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.

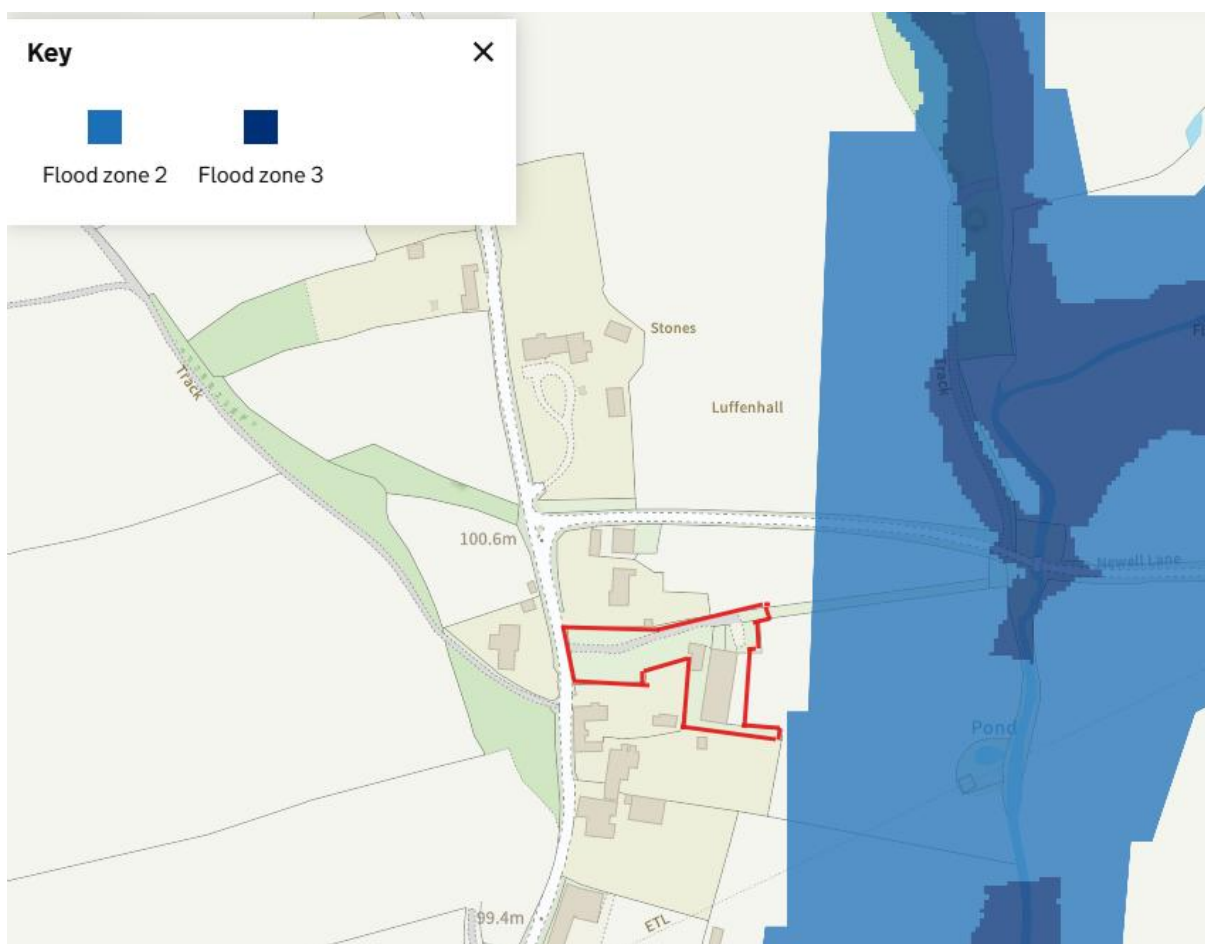
5.58 An Energy & Sustainability statement has been submitted in support of the application. The statement advises that the proposed dwelling would adopt a fabric-first approach, incorporating high thermal performance and insulation to reduce energy demand and improve energy efficiency in terms of U-values. The dwelling would also benefit from an electric vehicle charging point and air source heat pumps could be provided. These measures are considered sufficient to address the above relevant local plan policies and national guidance.

5.59 Contamination

5.60 As the previous use of the land and building was agricultural, there is potential for contamination at the site. Subject to the advice of its environmental health officers, the Local Authority may consider it reasonable to request a condition to deal with potential contamination.

5.61 Flood Risk and Drainage

5.62 Local Plan Policy NE7 states that development proposals will be granted where it is located outside of high risk flood areas and where it ensures the risk of flooding is reduced whilst not increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere. The proposed dwelling and its curtilage lies outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3 as confirmed on the below flood map for planning on the Gov.UK web site :



5.63 No development is proposed in Flood Zone 2 as the proposed dwelling and any associated works fall within Flood Zone 1. As such there is no requirement for the Sequential or Exception Tests to be applied. The finished floor levels of the proposed dwelling could be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition as well as any conditions required in connection with drainage relating to surface water management.

6.0 Summary and conclusions

- 6.1 There are several recognised benefits associated with this proposal which weigh in its favour. The development would provide an additional dwelling thereby making a modest contribution to the Council's overall housing supply and therefore this attracts some albeit limited weight in the planning balance. The proposals would, in removing an unsightly dilapidated building and replacing it with a smaller, high quality and appropriately designed building, significantly improve the visual amenities of the area. The development would enhance the setting of nearby heritage assets specifically the setting of Church Farmhouse and Tylers Barn both Grade II listed buildings. These positive aspects of the development could be attributed moderate weight. The scheme would also generate economic activity through the creation of construction related employment and some additional spending in the local economy although it is recognised that the construction phase would be a temporary benefit and is therefore a minor positive benefit. There would also be potential for some landscape improvements as well as Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 6.2 The site lies outside of any defined settlement identified in Policy SP2 of the Local Plan. That said, the proposal, in redeveloping a rural building, does comply with the exceptions for development in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt as identified in Policies CGB1 and CGB4 of the Local Plan.
- 6.3 Luffenhall does not have any local facilities and there will be some reliance on the private car in order to access services and therefore some conflict with sustainable transport policies promoted by the County Council. However, the Framework, in addressing rural housing issues, does recognise that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making. The proximity of the larger villages of Cottered and Walkern where there are services means that the harm arising from specific sustainable transport policies is limited rather than substantial.
- 6.4 The siting and scale of the development is limited and would be sympathetic to the surrounding residential setting established by several other nearby properties.
- 6.5 Given that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, paragraph 11 of the NPPF is engaged. This makes a presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination

6.6 As explored above, there are no policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance that provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed.

6.7 The adverse impacts of granting permission do not significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits associated with the delivery of new housing, albeit outside of a defined settlement. On balance and in light of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, it is concluded that permission should be granted for the proposal.

