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**Planning, Design and Access and Heritage
Statement**

Conversion of redundant agricultural barn to
residential dwelling together with parking and
amenity space

Lower Titmore Farm, Titmore Green

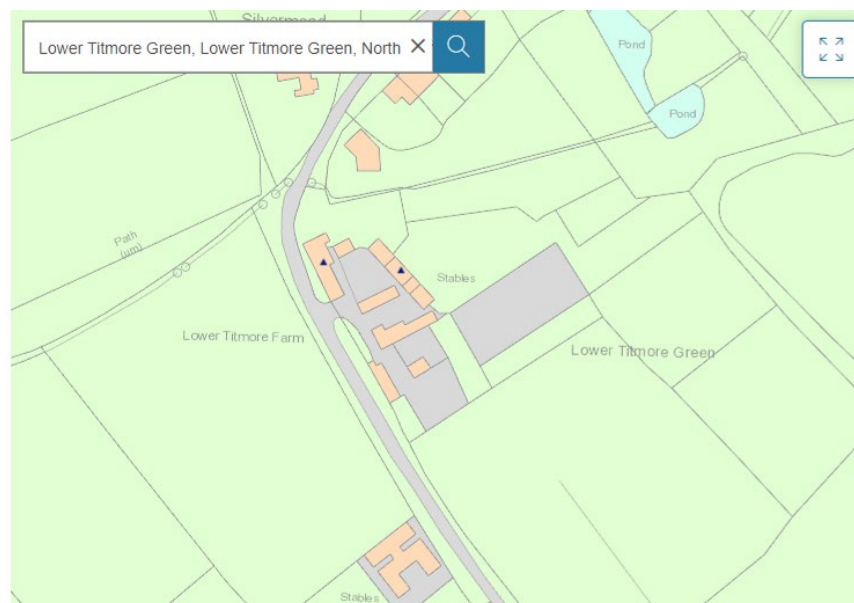
September 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for conversion of the existing agricultural barn into an independent residential dwelling together with parking and amenity provision.
- 1.2 The existing barn has historically been associated with the agricultural / equestrian use of the site and provided a functional building for the storage of machinery, equipment, feed. However, the circumstances that previously gave rise to the need for the building have materially changed and the barn is no longer required to support the current or foreseeable use of the land.
- 1.3 In particular, the use of the site has reduced, and the level and nature of activity undertaken on the site no longer generates a functional requirement for a building of this scale and form. The storage and operational requirements that historically necessitated the barn are therefore no longer present, as they generally now take place in the other buildings of the site.
- 1.4 The retention of the barn would consequently serves no meaningful agricultural or equestrian operational purpose. The building represents a redundant structure within the site which is no longer justified. Its conversion would put to meaningful use the built form. The conversion retains its demonstrable link to the main site, and it is envisaged that the applicants will likely move into the new dwelling allowing the sale of the Listed Building and remaining equestrian operation.
- 1.5 Given the increasing costs equestrian facilities, the likely future use and management of the land is not likely to return to an intensity or form of use which would require the existing building. The proposal should accordingly be understood as the conversion of a redundant and surplus building, rather than the loss of a building which remains necessary to the functioning of the site.
- 1.6 In these circumstances, there is no substantive functional justification for retaining the barn, and its conversion is considered appropriate.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING

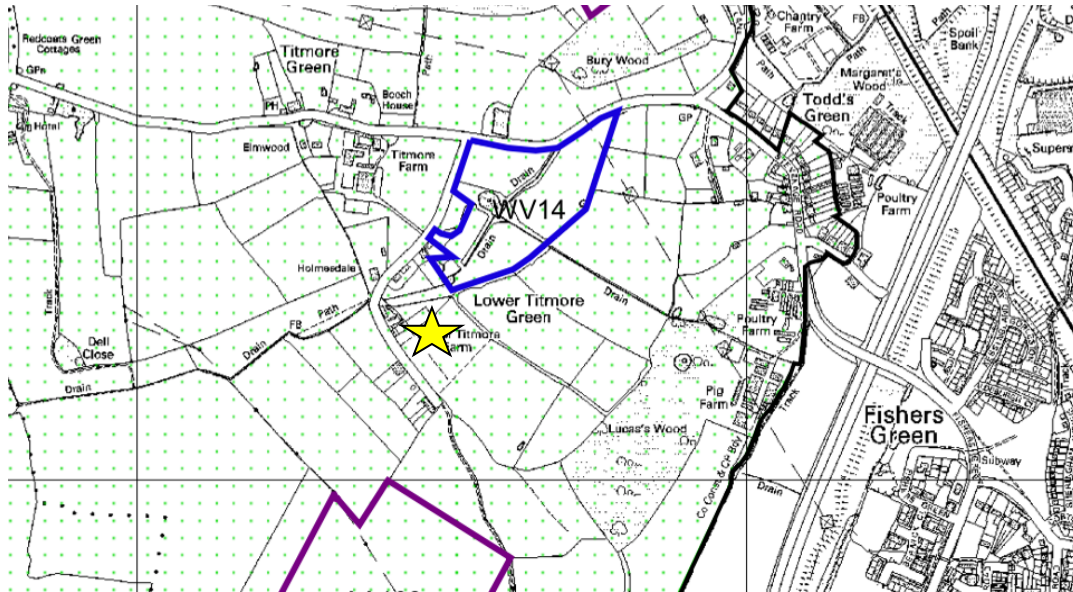
- 2.1 The application site comprises an operational stables and farm, located to the west of Lower Titmore Green.
- 2.2 The farmhouse adjacent to the existing site entrance is Grade II Listed, as is the central timber barn to its rear. The remaining stable buildings on site are unlisted and are not considered to be of architectural or historic significance. To the east of the site lies a hardstanding ménage and an associated area of hard surfacing.
- 2.3 The buildings on site are traditional in form and modest in scale, reflecting the site's agricultural character. The Listed dwelling is constructed of red brick under a red tile roof, while the outbuildings and barns are of black timber boarding with corrugated and/or red tile roofing.
- 2.4 The surrounding area is rural in character, characterised by low-density residential development interspersed with agricultural and equestrian uses.
- 2.5 Vehicular access to the site is currently taken from Lower Titmore Green, a single-width lane terminating to the south of the site. The lane serves a limited number of properties only and does not function as a through route within the wider settlement.
- 2.6 The existing access point approved under the original barn permission is to be reused for the purposes of this application.



Blue Triangles Represent Listed Buildings

3. LOCAL PLAN DESIGNATIONS AND POLICIES

3.1 The site falls within the Green Belt.



Yellow star highlights application site.

3.2 In assessing the submitted application, the below policies are considered most relevant.

- D1 Sustainable Design
- D3 Protecting living conditions
- SECN12 Achieving well-designed places
- SP9 Design and Sustainability
- T2 Parking
- HE1 Designated Heritage Assets
- CECN16 Conserve + Enhance historic environment

3.3 The New National Planning Policy Framework August 2026 has just been released, and within this document it sets out very clearly the constraints associated with development within the Green Belt. The National decision-making policies of note include:

GB6: Control of development in the Green Belt

This policy continues a restrictive approach and confirms that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls within one of the categories in policy GB7.

GB7: Development which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt

- 3.4 This policy sets out a number of categories of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt and therefore should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or be required to demonstrate very special circumstances. While many are not relevant to this submission, criteria B is and is therefore relied upon for this submission.
- b. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the original building. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- 3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework, as revised in August 2026, continues to place significant weight on housing delivery, though the mechanism for doing so has changed.
- 3.6 The former "tilted balance" at paragraph 11 has been replaced by a location-based presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in Policies S3 to S6. For development outside settlement boundaries, Policy S5 identifies a limited number of categories that benefit from this presumption, including, at S5(1)(j), housing that meets an evidenced unmet need.
- 3.7 Under the revised Framework, a local planning authority's inability to demonstrate the requisite five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (inclusive of any appropriate buffer), or Housing Delivery Test results falling below the 75% threshold, is treated as direct evidence of such unmet need. Where the Council cannot robustly demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, considerable weight therefore falls to be attached to the contribution any given proposal would make towards addressing that shortfall, and correspondingly reduced weight is given to development plan policies that would otherwise restrict housing in the countryside, to the extent those policies bear on the supply of housing.
- 3.8 This is directly relevant to the principle of the proposed barn conversion. As the reuse of an existing building rather than new build, the proposal is assessed principally under Policy S5(1)(c), it is worth noting that redundant agricultural buildings are expressly excluded from the definition of previously developed land at Annex B, so the reuse provisions — rather than a PDL argument — are the operative pathway.
- 3.9 Where the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, as here, the scheme additionally engages Policy S5(1)(j), since it would make a direct, deliverable contribution to addressing an identified shortfall in housing delivery through the sensitive reuse of a redundant building, avoiding the harms typically associated with new-build development in the open countryside. Taken together, the absence of a demonstrable

housing land supply materially strengthens the case for the proposal: it provides clear evidenced support for the scheme under Policy S5(1)(j) and underscores the positive contribution the conversion would make to the Council's housing delivery position, a matter to which significant weight should be attached in the overall planning balance.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 The history is not considered to be particularly relevant; other than to confirm that the existing building and its access is lawful and thus ensuing compliance with Criteria B of National Planning Policy GB7.

20/01135/NMA – Approved

Lowering of Barn's overall ridge height and eave height (as Non-Material Amendment of Planning Permission 19/02663/FP granted 11.05.2020)

19/02663/FP Approved

Erection of mixed agricultural and equestrian building to provide storage for feed/bedding, equipment and machinery and retention of and widening of vehicular access (as amended by plans received 7 January 2020).

5. THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 This proposal is for the conversion of an existing barn at Lower Titmore Farm, Lower Titmore Green into a residential dwelling.
- 5.2 The site area is approximately 0.199 ha and falls within the new exemption for Biodiversity Net Gain – this will be explored later in the report.
- 5.3 The submitted plans show the building being retained as a barn externally, with alterations to openings and the introduction of glazed elements, timber doors and externally mounted timber/louvred screens.
- 5.4 Internal accommodation will comprise of two large bedrooms, a utility room, entrance hall; kitchen/dining/living accommodation, WC/cloakroom.
- 5.5 The plans indicate bedrooms as being substantially larger than typical minimum bedroom sizes. Parking is in the form of 3 car parking spaces within the application site access from the existing point of access, together with a bin store, bin collection point and cycle store.
- 5.6 It is proposed to utilise the existing loose aggregate parking areas. Surface water is proposed to infiltrate naturally on site, with no runoff onto the public highway.
- 5.7 The barns existing external openings are selectively retained, with new glazed screens and timber/louvred screening used to provide daylight and outlook while maintaining an agricultural appearance.

6. PLANNING ISSUES

Principle

- 6.1 The principle of the proposed residential conversion is strongly supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2026, and in particular Policy GB7(1)(b).
- 6.2 The proposal involves the re-use of an existing lawful barn which is of permanent and substantial construction, and which is no longer required for its former agricultural purpose. It is therefore fundamentally different from a proposal involving the construction of a new dwelling in the Green Belt.
- 6.3 Importantly, the site is not an isolated location for the purposes of national planning policy. The proposal therefore does not fall to be assessed under Policy HO11 of the NPPF, which is specifically concerned with isolated homes in the countryside. The principle of development should instead be assessed having regard to the specific Green Belt provisions governing the reuse of existing buildings.
- 6.4 Policy GB7 of the 2026 NPPF establishes a clear distinction between inappropriate development in the Green Belt and forms of development which are expressly identified as not inappropriate.
- 6.5 GB7(1) provides that the specified categories of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt and therefore should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or be required to demonstrate very special circumstances.
- 6.6 Of particular relevance, GB7(1)(b) identifies "The re-use, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building" as development which is not inappropriate, subject to the requirements of the policy.
- 6.7 The policy requires that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction and, where extension or alteration is proposed, that the works do not result in a disproportionate increase in size over and above the size of the original building. In the case of replacement, the replacement building must be in the same use and not materially larger than the building it replaces.
- 6.8 The present proposal falls within the first of these categories: the re-use of an existing building.
- 6.9 This is an important distinction. The proposal does not involve the construction of a new building within the Green Belt. It involves giving an existing lawful building a new and beneficial use.
- 6.10 The 2026 NPPF deliberately supports the reuse of existing Green Belt buildings. The wording of GB7 should be given considerable weight in determining the application because it represents a deliberate change in national Green Belt policy.

- 6.11 The Government's explanation of the 2026 reforms confirms that GB7(1)(b) combines the principles relating to the reuse, alteration, extension and replacement of buildings and, importantly, removes the previous requirement for the reuse of buildings to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The Government explained that this previous requirement was considered unduly restrictive.
- 6.12 The Council should therefore not seek to apply to a straightforward building conversion the more restrictive test applicable to inappropriate development. The Framework expressly provides that reuse of an existing building is not inappropriate development. Consequently, the proposal does not need to demonstrate very special circumstances merely because the site is within the Green Belt.
- 6.13 The correct policy starting point is that the proposed reuse falls within a category of development which the Framework has expressly determined is not inappropriate.
- 6.14 The building is already lawfully established and forms part of the existing built environment at the site. The application therefore does not seek to introduce a new built form into an otherwise undeveloped part of the Green Belt. The fact that the proposed end use is residential does not alter the fundamental nature of the proposal as a reuse of an existing building for the purposes of GB7.
- 6.15 The agricultural function which originally justified the building has fallen away. Retaining the building indefinitely for an agricultural use for which there is no longer a genuine requirement would serve little planning purpose and risks leaving an increasingly underused and deteriorating building within the Green Belt. The proposed residential conversion provides the building with a viable and sustainable long-term use. This is precisely the type of outcome which the revised national policy approach to the reuse of existing Green Belt buildings is intended to facilitate.
- 6.16 Rather than allowing an existing building to become redundant, the proposal secures its continued occupation, maintenance and beneficial use. It is important that the proposal is not characterised simply as "a new dwelling in the Green Belt". The proposal is to convert it to residential use. The distinction is material because GB7 expressly identifies the reuse of existing buildings as a form of development which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt.

The scale and nature of the works

- 6.17 The proposed works should also be considered in the context of GB7(1)(b).
- 6.18 The application does not seek to replace the barn with a substantially larger building. The existing building is retained and its established form and relationship with the surrounding buildings remain the basis for the proposal. The works are principally concerned with adapting the existing structure to provide appropriate residential accommodation. The proposal therefore represents a genuine conversion rather than a scheme which uses the existence of an agricultural building as a justification for effectively constructing a new

dwelling. This is important in demonstrating that the proposal is precisely the form of development contemplated by GB7(1)(b).

- 6.19 The 2026 NPPF therefore establishes a positive policy presumption in favour of the principle of this form of development. The proposal is not inappropriate development for Green Belt purposes and does not require the demonstration of very special circumstances.
- 6.20 The Council should consequently move directly to consideration of the detailed planning merits and impacts of the conversion, including its design, landscape impact, residential amenity, highways, ecology, drainage and any other relevant considerations.
- 6.21 Subject to those detailed matters, there is no Green Belt objection to the principle of the proposed residential conversion.

Housing Land Supply

Principle of Development and Housing Need

- 6.22 The proposal should be supported having regard to the clear national policy objective of significantly increasing the supply and delivery of new homes. The August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places the provision of housing at the heart of the planning system and identifies the provision of a sufficient number and range of homes to meet the needs of present and future generations as a fundamental component of the social objective of sustainable development. The
- 6.23 Policy S3 of the NPPF establishes that decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposal would make a direct and tangible contribution towards meeting identified housing need through the delivery of an additional dwelling. This is particularly important in North Hertfordshire, where the Council is required to plan for a substantially increased level of housing need and is currently progressing work to identify additional land to meet that requirement. The Council's own evidence confirms that it needs to identify sufficient land to accommodate approximately 1,018 additional homes per annum.
- 6.24 The weight to be attributed to the provision of the dwelling is reinforced by Policy HO7 of the August 2026 NPPF. This expressly requires substantial weight to be given to the benefits of providing homes which contribute towards meeting the evidenced accommodation needs of the local community. Accordingly, the delivery of even a single additional dwelling is not a neutral consideration: it represents a positive contribution towards addressing the area's identified housing requirement and should attract substantial weight in the planning balance.
- 6.25 North Hertfordshire Council's published housing-supply evidence indicates that the Council is below the required five-year position. The national policy framework is specifically designed to ensure that housing is delivered through a sufficient and diverse supply of sites, including smaller sites which can make an important contribution to overall delivery.

- 6.26 Against this background, the proposal represents precisely the type of additional housing delivery which national policy seeks to facilitate. The starting point under the August 2026 NPPF is therefore one of support, with substantial weight afforded to the contribution the proposal would make towards meeting housing need.
- 6.27 The proposal should consequently be approved unless the Council can demonstrate that its adverse impacts would be sufficient to substantially outweigh the clear benefits arising from the delivery of the dwelling. In circumstances where the identified planning impacts can be satisfactorily addressed through the proposed design and, where necessary, appropriate planning conditions, the balance falls decisively in favour of granting planning permission.

Sustainability

- 6.28 The proposal represents a sustainable and proportionate form of residential development which would reinforce, rather than extend in an unacceptable manner, the established pattern of development at Lower Titmore Green.
- 6.29 Whilst Lower Titmore Green is rural in character, it forms part of the established network of settlements and hamlets within Wymondley, and the site is physically and functionally related to existing residential development. The North Hertfordshire Local Plan recognises Little Wymondley as a settlement where additional development is appropriate and identifies a range of existing services and facilities within the wider settlement, including a school, shop, churches and public houses. The proposal would therefore not represent an isolated dwelling divorced from an established community, but the logical completion and consolidation of an existing residential cluster.
- 6.30 The small scale of the proposal is also important. The development of a single dwelling would have no material effect on the ability of the area to accommodate its own infrastructure or services and would make a small but meaningful contribution towards meeting the Council's identified housing requirement. This is consistent with the spatial approach taken by the Council's evidence base, which recognises the role that smaller sites within villages can play in contributing to overall housing delivery. The proposal would utilise an established residential location and would not create a new settlement or significant extension to the built-up area.
- 6.31 Furthermore, there is clear planning precedent for residential development within Lower Titmore Green. Most notably, an appeal relating to The Barn, Lower Titmore Green, was allowed in 2016 and included the provision of a new four-bedroom dwelling. The Inspector found that the development would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would contribute towards addressing the housing shortfall. This provides important contextual evidence that appropriately designed residential development within this part of Wymondley can be accommodated without undermining the rural character of the area.

- 6.32 Accordingly, the proposal should be assessed as a small-scale addition to an established residential community rather than as isolated development in the open countryside. When considered alongside the substantial need for additional housing, the contribution of the proposal to housing delivery, the established residential character of Lower Titmore Green and the absence of any significant environmental or infrastructure harm, there is a compelling planning case for the development to be supported.

Design/Impact on the Character of the Area

- 6.33 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted provided that development responds positively to the site's local context in addition to other criteria. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan further considers that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context.
- 6.34 The proposed development, in terms of its external appearance, is considered to respond positively to the site's local context. The proposal would utilise appropriate external materials with a facing brick plinth and stained black timber walls and plain clay tiles.
- 6.35 The use of glazing is considered contemporary and ensures the building's original design comes through and remains apparent when glimpsed views of the building are possible from the access drive.
- 6.36 In terms of materials, the proposed alterations to the building are sympathetic to the existing barn.

Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Properties/Future Occupiers

- 6.37 Policy D3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.
- 6.38 In terms of neighbour amenity, the building would be located well away from any neighbouring properties located in the corner of a wider agricultural field. The location of this building is sufficient distance from any neighbours to not have any adverse impacts on them, with respect to over-dominance, loss of privacy through overlooking, and loss of daylight/sunlight, even with the proposed extensions, boundary treatments and landscaping.
- 6.39 In terms of the amenity of future occupiers, the dwelling would exceed the nationally prescribed minimum space standards and would benefit from a sizable private amenity space, and all rooms would have adequate levels of natural light.
- 6.40 The scheme would ensure a suitable standard of amenity for future occupiers. As such, the proposal would comply with Policies D1 and D3 of the Local Plan.

Highways and Parking

- 6.41 The site would be accessed via the existing road that serves the building and other residential properties nearby. The scheme looks to utilise the existing areas of hardstanding for the purposes of parking, meaning that 3 vehicles can be comfortably parked on site while maintaining sufficient turning space in order that vehicles can enter and exit in a forward gear.
- 6.42 It is not considered that this conversion would lead to a material increase in traffic in this area, indeed it is expected that traffic to and from the site would in fact be reduced when compared to the existing lawful agricultural use.

Heritage Assets

- 6.43 The immediate neighbour to the site, is a Grade II listed building. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building, or its setting, special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural interest which it possesses.
- 6.44 The sensitive conversion of this building and the nature of the development and the distance between this listed building and the host building ensures that the proposal would not result in any level of harm to the setting or significance of the heritage asset.
- 6.45 This is in accordance with Policy HE1 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

Landscaping / Ecology.

- 6.46 The proposed conversion of this barn building would be further facilitated by the formation of a sizable private garden, which would incorporate boundary fencing and landscaping through the planting of trees and hedges.
- 6.47 It is anticipated that boundaries would be embarked by low-level picket type of fencing, in order to maintain the character and openness of the area.
- 6.48 The application is supported by an Ecology Assessment.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.49 The proposed development is exempt from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement by virtue of the site area falling below the 0.2-hectare threshold. The application site, as defined by the red line boundary, extends to approximately 0.19 hectares, which is below the statutory threshold of 0.2 hectares. Accordingly, the development falls within the area-based exemption introduced on 6 August 2026, subject to the application having been made on or after that date and the site not impacting any onsite priority habitat.

- 6.50 The exemption means that the statutory biodiversity gain condition does not apply to the development and there is therefore no requirement to submit a Biodiversity Gain Plan or demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain.

Waste Storage

- 6.51 It is considered that the proposal would have ample room for the site the bins adjacent to the dwelling and the resident will be required to drag the bins to the end of the driveway for collection in line with the neighbouring dwellings.

Sustainability

- 6.52 The scheme would be capable of supporting future green technology for example PV panels on the roof or an Air Source Heat Pump. These are sustainable additions to the proposal would be acceptable and a benefit of this scheme, during the conversion, the applicant is to make the determination as to whether their installation is viable at this time.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed development represents the sensitive and appropriate re-use of an existing lawful barn which is no longer required for its former agricultural purpose. Most importantly, the principle of the conversion is expressly supported by the 2026 NPPF, with Policy GB7(1)(b) identifying the re-use of an existing building as a form of development which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt. The proposal does not involve the construction of a new building and does not therefore give rise to the same policy considerations as a new dwelling within the Green Belt. There is consequently no requirement to demonstrate very special circumstances.
- 7.2 The proposed conversion would retain the established building and its relationship with the surrounding area, whilst introducing a sympathetic palette of materials and alterations which respect its agricultural character. The development would provide a viable long-term use for the building, securing its continued maintenance and beneficial occupation rather than allowing it to become redundant or deteriorate.
- 7.3 The detailed assessment demonstrates that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts. The design responds positively to the local context; neighbouring residential amenity would be protected; the proposed dwelling would provide a high standard of accommodation for future occupiers; and the existing access and hardstanding provide appropriate arrangements for parking and vehicle movements. The proposal would also preserve the setting and significance of the nearby Grade II listed building, while the proposed landscaping and ecological measures provide further environmental benefits.
- 7.4 The development is also exempt from the statutory BNG requirement due to the application site extending to approximately 0.19 hectares, below the applicable 0.2-hectare threshold. Opportunities for sustainable technologies, including photovoltaic panels and an air source heat pump, can also be incorporated where considered viable.
- 7.5 Overall, the proposal accords with the relevant provisions of the development plan and the NPPF 2026. There are no identified material considerations which would outweigh the clear policy support for the re-use of the existing building. Planning permission should therefore be granted.
- 7.6 The proposal would make a positive and proportionate contribution towards meeting North Hertfordshire's identified housing need through the provision of an additional dwelling. Having regard to the August 2026 NPPF, substantial weight should be afforded to the benefits of new housing, with the Framework establishing a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development. In circumstances where the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the need to support additional housing delivery is further reinforced. Where, as in this case, the development is appropriately located and designed and would not result in unacceptable harm to other material planning considerations, there is no compelling policy reason to resist the proposal. The benefits of delivering an additional home therefore clearly weigh in favour of the grant of planning permission.