



Design & Access Statement

Barn conversion and extension create a new dwelling.

Mill Barns,
High Street,
Whitwell
Hertfordshire,
SG4 8AG

December 2025 (Rev February 2026)
DA_MDP_1944

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This statement has been prepared within the context of the following key sources of advice and guidance:

- *'Design and access statements: How to write, read and use them'*. CABE, 2006
- *www.planningguidance.communities.gov.uk (as substituted for archived document 'Guidance on information requirements and validation'*. Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2010)
- *The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015*

Relevant policies

NPPF

Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes; Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport;

Section 11 - Making effective use of land;

Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places;

Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031:

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 SP12 Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape

Policy T1 Assessment of transport matters

Policy T2 Parking

Policy D1 Sustainable design

Policy D2 House extensions, replacement dwellings and outbuildings

Policy D3 Protecting living conditions

Policy D4 Air quality

Policy NE2 Landscape

Policy NE4 Biodiversity and Geological Sites

Policy HE1 Designated Heritage Assets

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by MDP Architects to accompany an application for planning permission to convert and extend an existing barn into a new two-bedroom dwelling. This report is intended to provide background information on the proposals and their development, and to discuss the principles of the proposals including layout, form, access, materials, and landscaping.

Site Appraisal

The site is located on the north-eastern side of Whitwell Village, Hertfordshire in the Parish of St Paul's Warden. The site is set within the Whitwell Conservation Area which lies in the Mimram Valley. There are a number of listed properties within the village with a mix of age and style including timber frame with lower red brick half; timber barns and Georgian style properties. We will discuss the relevant Heritage elements and any potential impact in the Heritage Assessment Statement.

The existing barn is set north of the main high street accessed by a small, shared access road which leads to a courtyard arrangement. Around the courtyard there are dwellings and two large barns. The barn to the north of the courtyard is listed. The barn that is proposed for development has large double doors that open onto the courtyard. Enveloping the barn to the southeast is a paddock and orchard area, which would be included in the proposed site.

The village is designated as Category A within the SP2 policy regarding Settlement hierarchy and Spatial Distribution. The site falls within the agreed settlement boundary. Although a small village, Whitwell is well placed with good facilities and infrastructure to support another dwelling.

The site has several factors that needed carefully consideration during the design work to ensure the new development contributes in a positive way to the village in terms of ecology, heritage impact and sustainability. Please refer to the Planning Documents Schedule which lists the Reports and Surveys Carried out to assess and react to these elements.

Site Proposals

We initially looked at providing a two-bedroom new build bungalow on the south side of the courtyard and submitted a pre-application advice request to the planners and conservation team back in July 2024 (Ref: 24/01509/PRE). The constructive advice given was broadly that the creation of a new dwelling would be looked on favourably if we addressed certain factors. The main factors being:

- The inclusion of the barn within the proposals so that this asset could be utilised and in turn protected.
- Increase of the amenity space given to the plot and increased floor area for the dwelling.
- The removal of the porch proposals
- Alteration to the siting of the dwelling
- Continued consideration to ecological impact

Following this advice given the proposed dwelling was redesigned. The development still would create a two-bedroom dwelling, but this is now achieved by converting and conserving the existing barn with an extension. The new and old would be linked by a glazed entrance lobby on the south side which would also offer views of the orchard beyond when approaching the entrance.

1.0 | DESIGN

1.1 | Use

The existing barn is an outbuilding to 18 Mill Barn located north of the site, which is also within our client's ownership. The Class Use (C3) as an ancillary outbuilding of a dwelling will not change when converted to a new independent dwelling. The current owners of Mill Barn wish to plan for potential accommodation which will house elderly relatives in the future when required. This would allow our client to provide support to the members of their family by providing an independent, accessible living space which is located close to support from family.

1.2 | Amount

Our client wishes to keep the proposal modest by providing a 2-bedroom property which would allow for accommodation with a live-in carer, should need arise.

The outlined site area would be 1165sq.m. The existing barn itself has a footprint of 50sq.m. The additional single-storey extension 42sq.m. Including the proposed mezzanine area at the far end of the existing barn the GIA would total 72sq.m. This falls in line with the more generous floor area provisions raised by the planning pre-app. The amenity space has also increased, which will be discussed further in the landscaping clause.

1.3 | Layout

The site has a number of constraints that we have tried to address from an early stage. This has informed and determined a number of our decisions regarding the layout of the site.

There is a redundant culvert pipe that runs under the site. Our client has commissioned a topographical survey which has located the pipe, had a survey carried out by civil engineers on the current status of the now redundant pipe and we have approached the environment agency to confirm their advice regarding the now redundant route. We have, however, set the building north of this pipe to avoid any potential damage, should it ever be reinstated. The brook where the culvert meets is located to the east of the proposed site. Our footprint is over 5mtrs away from the start of the brook in line with NH guidance.

We have also moved the proposals further east from the previously submitted pre- application drawings to enable a comfortable connection to the existing barns and in order to retain the existing ash tree.

The practicalities of layout have also been assessed by a Structural Engineer. He has visited the existing barn to look at the structure and how the conversion can work and the introduction of a mezzanine can be supported. A covering letter confirming this is in the submission documents.

1.4 | Scale

Due to the close proximity of the river Mimram a Flood Risk assessment has been carried out. A copy has been included in the planning application documents. The recommendations to create floor levels a minimum of 300mm above the existing floor levels have been included within the proposals for both the converted barn and new build section of the dwelling.

The scale of the new extension has been kept subservient in both width and height to the main barn. We have designed the extension to have a modern barn style with contemporary elements to avoid creating a pastiche of the existing barn.

Between the two wings of the building, a modern glazed link entrance is set low between both buildings to provide a small but open interface between old and new.

The fenestration has been kept to a minimum on the front (north elevation) and side (west elevation) to keep the barn character from the courtyard approach.

In the main barn itself to the west large, fixed windows would offer natural light and views of the courtyard to the living space. Retaining the existing door opening dimensions.

Following a survey of the existing barn timbers. The proposed openings to the barn have been positioned to limit the cuts through the existing timber struts within the barn. Although a large number are modern timber repairs, so hold little historic fabric relevance.

1.5 | Landscaping

The landscaping approach has predominantly been two-fold. Our client has strongly focused on preserving and enhancing the existing natural habitat. To inform this approach correctly they have commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (with metrics), Preliminary Ecology Appraisal and Roost Assessment. The Roost Assessment has flagged up the presence of bats in the existing barn and all preservation measures suggested will be actioned as part of the proposed build.

Our client owns some of the surrounding land and has already been working on a plant scheme which is illustrated in the BNG and has been taken into account for the calculations.

The hard standing area for parking will be specified with a permeable build up. We would also aim to incorporate a sustainable drainage system (SuDs) suitable for the site to alleviate and potentially treat the surface water from the roof. The only tree which is now due to be removed is a small fruit tree which has been marked on the plan and covered in BNG metric.

1.6 | Appearance

The overarching style is of a modern barn. The walls would be externally finished in horizontal dark timber cladding to mirror that of the surrounding barns. At the base there would be a brick plinth which would help raise the levels of the proposed FFL to limit potential flood risk. The brickwork would match with the surrounding boundary wall to south.

The windows are proposed with slim dark frames to match the colour of the timber and not detract from barn image. The roof lights are conservation style and the roof itself is due to be standing-seam stainless steel. The metal roof was encouraged by the structural engineer as apposed to slate or tile to reduce the weight for the existing structure.

On the existing barn the large double doors are to be fixed back to the structure and the opening infilled with fixed glazing. Directly opposite this, two slim doors would offer direct access to the proposed orchard garden. There are a number of conservation roof lights proposed to limit cuts in the existing timbers of the barn frame.

An air source heat pump would be sited to the rear of the new build element which will limit the need for oil tanks and fossil fuel reliance. Solar panel and due to be mounted on this south facing roof to help with energy generation for the dwelling.

2.0 | ACCESS

2.1 | Vehicular & Pedestrian

The parking provision for the house would be two designated parking bays with potentially more within the courtyard if required. Covered sheltered space for bikes would be located behind the parking, along with the bin storage area.

2.2 | Inclusive Access

Level access will be provided at the main entrance with a stepped and ramped approach. We have based the internal allowances and spaces on the Part M Accessible and Adaptable Dwelling arrangements. This allows for independent living for an elderly resident and future opportunity to adapt the property should that be required.