



**Planning, Design and Access Statement
(Incorporating Heritage Statement)**

for

Erection of a detached garden building for use as a hobby room and garden storage

at

**Farmcroft, Church Street, Higham, Rochester, Kent
ME3 7LP**

for

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1.0 Introduction

This statement is submitted in support of a planning application for the erection of a detached garden building for use as a hobby room and garden storage at Farmcroft, Church Street, Higham, Rochester, Kent.

2.0 Site Context

2.1 Farmcroft is located within a rural hamlet at the northern end of Church Street, approximately 2.47 km north of the larger rural settlement of Higham. The larger urban areas of Medway and Gravesend are located approximately 3.8km and 4km to the south-east and south-west respectively.

2.2 The application site (the site) comprises a relatively modern (1960s/70s) detached chalet style dwelling located on the south side of Church Street. The dwelling has brick and render elevations under a concrete tiled roof and has been extended to the side and rear. The site is 'L' shaped with extensive garden areas to the rear and side (west) and has an area of approximately 0.13 hectares (0.33 acres). Pedestrian and vehicle access to the property is from Church Street. Vehicular access comprises an area of hard standing within the frontage of the dwelling, which together with the side garden sits slightly above road level. An aerial photograph of the site is attached as **Appendix A**.

2.3 The dwelling is located within an established hamlet which includes a variety of period and modern residential properties, St Mary's Church and several agricultural buildings. To the north is Church Street, beyond which is a terrace of older style, two-storey dwellings (Church Cottages), to the east is a detached chalet style dwelling similar to the application property (Lower Hope). To the south and west is farmland and agricultural buildings associated with Giles Farm. Photographs of the site are attached as **Appendix B**.

3.0 Planning History

3.1 Planning history records held by Gravesham Borough Council (the Council) for the application site are as follows:

1977/0819: Erection of private garage and porch at side. Granted 15th February 1978.

1983/0806: Erection of single storey rear extension to form lounge. Granted 11th January 1984.

2016/1158: Conversion of existing garage to form kitchen and erection of a orangery. Granted 10th February 2017.

4.0 Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The Development Plan

4.1.1 The relevant adopted Development Plan documents for the site comprises the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted September 2014 and the Saved policies in the Gravesham Local Plan First Review, adopted November 1994.

4.1.2 Gravesham Borough Council (the Council) are currently in the process of preparing a new Local Plan. In 2020 the Council undertook a Regulation 18 (stage 2) consultation on the Local Plan Core Strategy partial review and updated Development Management policies.

4.1.3 The Development Plan Proposals Map shows the existing dwelling and garden area located beyond the settlement confines, and it is therefore located in the countryside for planning purposes, (this generally encompasses all those areas that fall outside the limits of built development as defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map). Other relevant planning policy designations shown on the Proposals Map include the site falling within the Green Belt and the Church Street, Higham Conservation Area.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework

4.2.1 A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024. This outlines the government's over-arching planning policy aims and objectives and Paragraph 2 confirms that the NPPF is a

material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF is supplemented by National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

- 4.2.2 The NPPF re-affirms that at the heart of the planning system is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 11 states that:

'For decision-taking this means:

approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

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:

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

any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of this Framework taken as a whole.

5.0 Application Proposals

5.1 Background and Context

- 5.1.1 The application proposal seeks the erection of a detached garden building for use as a hobby room and garden storage within the dwelling's side garden area. In September 2023, a pre-application enquiry was made to the Council in respect of the proposal (PRE20230269). The submitted drawings showed the dimensions of the proposed outbuilding as 5.9m wide by 5m deep (29.5 sqm) with a ridge height of approximately 5.9m. It was also shown located closer to the west elevation of the dwelling. In response to officer's concerns at the size of the proposal, the current scheme footprint has been reduced to 28 sqm and the ridge height reduced to 2.76m including its base, a reduction of some 3.14m. The proposed outbuilding has also been moved further to the west, away from the host dwelling within an area currently occupied by a framed, wire mesh former hen enclosure.

5.1.2 The proposal aims to provide a sympathetically designed scheme that respects the setting and character of the existing dwelling and its Conservation Area location, whilst providing modern energy efficient, spacious accommodation that meets the needs of the occupants.

5.2 Use

5.2.1 The use of the proposed outbuilding as a hobby room and for garden storage is incidental to the enjoyment of the existing dwelling and is considered appropriate having regard to the domestic nature of its garden land location and the residential character of the immediate surrounding area.

5.3 Amount

5.3.1 The proposed outbuilding is 7m in length by 4m in width, measured externally and has a floor area of 28 sqm. The existing framed wire mesh hen enclosure, which is to be removed occupies an area of approximately 22 sqm.

5.4 Layout

5.4.1 The proposed outbuilding is located in the south-west corner of the side garden adjacent to the boundary with Giles Farm, approximately 17.7m from the west side elevation of the host dwelling. It is located within an area currently occupied by a framed, wire mesh former hen enclosure and will be seen as a peripheral structure. The proposed outbuilding has a north-south orientation with its windows and doors facing east towards the host dwelling and overlooking the rear garden area.

5.5 Scale

5.5.1 The proposed outbuilding is single storey with a shallow pitched roof and has an approximate height of 2.76m, including the base. Its size and massing do not seek to compete with the host dwelling and other nearby buildings, and it is considered that the scale of the proposed outbuilding is appropriate for the site and the character of the wider area.

5.6 Appearance

5.6.1 The proposed outbuilding is constructed of horizontal timber cladding painted in Wedgewood (grey/blue) under a charcoal grey felt shingle roof. A photograph of the proposed wall finish is attached as **Appendix C**. Its fenestration comprises a pair of partly glazed doors located centrally within the north elevation with two windows located either side.

5.6.2 A full concrete base is not proposed. Instead, the proposed outbuilding will utilise a structural timber base, which entails a post and beam method of construction. Posts are concreted into the ground and beams laid across. This is a more sustainable and cost-effective solution than a full concrete base. This also allows for good ventilation under the building, to help prevent rotting and decay which ensures the longevity of the structure and its longer term sustainability.

5.7 Landscaping

5.7.1 The area around the proposed outbuilding benefits from existing mature planting, which forms part of the applicant's side garden.

5.8 Access

5.8.1 There is no change to the existing vehicular and pedestrian access to the dwelling, which is from Church Street.

6.0 **Planning Considerations**

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The application proposal comprises the erection of a detached garden building for use as a hobby room and garden storage within the side garden of Farmcroft, a detached 1960/70s chalet style dwelling located within the Church Street, Higham, Conservation Area. The site is located outside of a settlement boundary falling within the countryside for planning purposes and is designated as part of the Green Belt. Matters relating to the Conservation Area are addressed within the Heritage section of this statement.

6.2 Principle of Development

6.2.1 The Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) '*Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide*', October 2021 notes at Paragraph 10.14 that an outbuilding should normally only be used for purposes incidental to the enjoyment of the house. Examples include garden sheds, other storage buildings, garages and summer houses. It does not include self-contained accommodation or other primary living accommodation incorporating such components as a bedroom, bathroom or kitchen. Paragraphs 10.15 and 10.16 continue and note as follows:

6.2.2 An outbuilding should not deprive the existing property of adequate private garden space and should be subordinate in scale to the existing dwelling and to the plot. In assessing proposals, consideration will be given to factors such as the scale, height, proximity to boundaries, roof design, finishing materials and prominence in the street scene or rear garden environment. Outbuildings should not detract from the character of the area, especially when visible from the street, and should be unobtrusively located to the side and rear of the existing dwelling. They should also not have an adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding properties in terms of noise and disturbance created through access or overlooking/over shadowing of existing properties.

6.2.3 Having regard to the design and subordinate scale of the proposed outbuilding, its screened location and positive relationship with the host dwelling and adjoining residential properties, it is considered that the application proposal fully accords with the relevant requirements set out in the Council's '*Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide*', SPD as outlined above, without detriment to the character of the site and its wider setting.

6.3 Green Belt

6.3.1 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF notes that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

6.3.2 Paragraph 143 identifies the five purposes of the Green Belt as follows:

- a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

6.3.3 Having regard to the above, the proposed development will not materially affect the extent of the built-up area, since it is small in scale and relates to a small rural settlement. It will therefore not contribute to the sprawl of large built-up areas. Similarly, given the scale and location of the proposals, it will not contribute to towns merging with one another.

6.3.4 Whilst the proposed outbuilding will encroach upon land that has not been previously developed, save for the hen enclosure, given the domestic garden land character of the site, it is considered that the proposal will not result in any material encroachment into the countryside; it will not affect the setting and special character of any neighbouring historic towns and the application site is not located within an urban area, and does not involve the recycling of derelict and other urban land. Consequently, the application proposal does not conflict with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt.

6.3.5 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF notes that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very Special Circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

6.3.6 Paragraph 154 continues that development within the Green Belt, should be considered as inappropriate, unless one of the following exceptions apply (inter alia):

- a) Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or change of use) including buildings for outdoor sport, recreation, cemeteries/burial grounds and allotments;
- c) The extension or alteration of a building provided it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) Limited infilling in villages;
- f) Limited affordable housing for local community needs;
- g) Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt;
- h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it. Examples include mineral extraction, engineering operations and the re-use of buildings (list not exhaustive).

6.3.7 Whilst the application proposal does not fall explicitly into any of the categories listed in Paragraph 154 of the NPPF, it is noted from the pre-application response, that officers have taken the view that since case law has confirmed that an outbuilding may be considered as an extension to a dwelling, (subject to the proposed use and its physical proximity to the host dwelling) Paragraph 154 c) of the NPPF is of relevance. Any extension or alterations should therefore not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. In doing so, officers consider that the proposed outbuilding should be subject to the size limitations imposed by Saved Policy C13: *Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside* of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review, adopted November 1994.

6.3.8 Whilst Paragraph 154 c) of the NPPF does not provide guidance on what is considered to be 'disproportionate additions' over and above the size of the original building, Saved Policy C13 (Sub-Paragraph ii) seeks to limit extensions to one third of the gross floor area of the original dwelling (measured externally)

prior to any later extension or alteration, unless the increased floorspace has no overall effect on the existing bulk and appearance of the dwelling.

- 6.3.9 Saved Policy C13 is in excess of 30 years old and as noted in the supporting text at Paragraph 9.35, is an interpretation of the relevant Kent Structure Plan policies, which themselves are no longer in existence, having been superseded many years ago by initially, The South-East Plan and then the NPPF. It is also noted, that Policy C13 makes a clear distinction between extensions and outbuildings. Sub-Paragraph (vii) states:

'Proposals for domestic garages and for other outbuildings will be considered on their individual merits but will be required to be well designed, discreetly sited and subservient to the scale of the main dwelling on the plot.'

- 6.3.10 The Sub-Paragraph clearly identifies the relevant design and locational criteria against which proposals will be assessed, just as Sub-Paragraph (vi) does in relation to extensions (*The appearance, massing, scale, form and materials of any extension shall be appropriate to the existing dwelling and the Green Belt setting*). Extensions and outbuildings for the purpose of this policy are therefore treated as two distinct elements.

- 6.3.11 The distinction made by Saved Policy C13 between extensions and outbuilding is also illustrated by further reference to the supporting text at Paragraph 9.35. This notes that the Borough Council interprets Structure Plan Policies RS6 (extensions to dwellings in the countryside) and MGB2 (Green Belt) as seeking to maintain the openness of the Green Belt and to retain a stock of rural dwellings of modest size which are a feature of the Kent Countryside. Clearly the objective here is to restrict the size of the dwelling, hence Sub-Paragraph (ii) of Saved Policy C13 seeks to limit extensions to one third of the original dwelling's floor area. Outbuildings and garages on the other hand do not contribute to an increase in the size of a dwelling, as they do not comprise primary living accommodation, such as bedrooms, kitchens or bathrooms, but rather are incidental to the enjoyment of the dwelling. Notwithstanding the historic nature of the policy, the provision of a suitable sized outbuilding would not therefore undermine the policy objective of seeking to retain a suitable stock of modest size rural dwellings.

- 6.3.12 A further consideration with regard to the policy objectives of retaining the openness of the Green Belt and retaining a stock of modest size rural dwellings is development permitted under the General Permitted Development Order. This was subject to significant changes in 2008, and further amendments have allowed quite generous additions to dwellings without the need to obtain planning permission. Whilst it is noted that a planning condition was attached to the 2017 permission removing the dwelling's Permitted Development Rights and additional restrictions apply to Conservation Areas (and other Article 2(3) land), a dwelling's location within the Green Belt does not in itself give rise to any reduction in Permitted Development Rights, unless as in this case, they are removed by way of a planning condition or an Article 4 Direction.
- 6.3.13 When seeking to determine whether or not an extension or out-building is a disproportionate addition to a dwelling, it is considered that rather than using a purely quantitative approach as advocated through the application of Saved Policy C13, it should be a matter of planning judgement, having regard to the nature of the proposed development and the relevant site-specific circumstances.
- 6.3.14 Therefore the test for 'disproportionate addition' under Paragraph 154 c) should be taken on a case-by-case basis, having regard to matters such as footprint, volume, floor space, scale, bulk, visual impact and any other relevant factors, together with any identified harm that materially impacts on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.3.15 The officer's report in respect of the conversion of the garage to living accommodation and the side extension granted planning permission in 2017 (2016/1158) provides an analysis of the various additions permitted for the dwelling. These are as follows:
- Original floor space of dwelling: 73.5 sqm.
 - Garage and porch side extension (1977/0819): 42.34 sqm.
 - Single storey rear extension (1983/0806): 11.20 sqm.
 - Conversion of garage and single storey side extension (2016/1158) 15.75 sqm.

- Existing overall increase of past extensions = 69.29 sqm (94% increase).

6.3.16 The proposed outbuilding has an area of 28 sqm. This provides for a cumulative overall increase of 97.29 sqm (132% increase). This is smaller than the pre-application scheme which resulted in a 134% increase and was significantly taller. A further consideration is that whilst it is acknowledged that the planning permission for the conversion of the garage has been implemented (2016/1158), the side extension has not been built to date (15.75 sqm) and the overall footprint of the dwelling has not changed since 1983.

6.3.17 When considering the conversion of the garage and side extension proposals, the officer's report concluded that the 21% increase in floor space was not a disproportionate addition and therefore appropriate to the Green Belt. The proposal was considered to be subservient in size and height without adding excessive bulk to the main dwelling. Overall the proposed development was not considered to be harmful to the appearance of the existing dwelling or the character of the conservation area. The conclusion to the report noted as follows:

'Notwithstanding the extension of the dwelling, the overall size, bulk and massing of these additions would not result in a disproportionate addition. The design respects the physical form of the existing dwelling and would improve the design, quality and overall appearance of the property at the rear. It will not create any additional harm to residential amenity or highway safety. As such planning permission should be granted subject to conditions'.

Whilst the current application proposal will increase development on the site, it will not add to the bulk and massing of the main dwelling.

6.3.18 With regard to openness, the leading cases of Turner (2016) and Samuel Smith (2020) together with numerous subsequent appeal decisions have confirmed that Green Belt openness has both a spatial and visual dimension. The Turner judgement noting in particular, that the consideration of openness cannot depend on a volumetric approach alone. It should also be noted that the spatial and visual dimensions to the openness of the Green Belt, work in tandem and not in isolation.

- 6.3.19 When looking at the spatial dimension, there would be impact on openness due to the increase in size, scale and footprint of the proposed outbuilding. However, visual perception may reduce the spatial harm from the effect of development on the openness of the Green Belt. For example, the perceived effect upon openness might be less than expected because the development was well screened and would have a limited effect upon people's perception of openness from the boundary of the site.
- 6.3.20 The application proposal comprises a single-storey garden outbuilding located within the south-west corner of the applicant's side garden. It measures 7m x 4m and has an approximate ridge height, including its base of 2.76m.
- 6.3.21 The application property benefits from an enclosed side garden area with extensive mature hedge planting along its northern boundary with Church Street. This will obscure the proposed outbuilding from view, since it is set back from the road frontage approximately 14m and has a ridge height of approximately 2.76m some 3.14m less than the pre-application proposal. It is only likely to be visible (possibly) in part, at a very oblique angle when viewed from the driveway opening at the frontage of the dwelling, when travelling west along Church Street. This, however, will only be a glimpse and the proposed outbuilding will be seen against the backdrop of the taller buildings of Giles Farm beyond. The application proposal will also be obscured by vegetation adjoining the driveway and vehicles parked within the frontage. See photographs 2 and 3 attached as **Appendix B**. The perception of the site's openness will not therefore change materially as result of the application proposal when viewed from Church Street.
- 6.3.22 To the south and west, the applicant's garden adjoins Giles Farm. The southern boundary is formed by a single storey agricultural building of block construction with a metal sheet monopitch roof, together with a block and sleeper wall approximately 2.19m in height. The western boundary is similar, comprising a block and sleeper wall immediately adjacent to the proposed outbuilding with a single storey agricultural building of brick construction under a pitched plain tile roof further to the north. Given the relatively low ridge height of the proposed outbuilding (2.76m), only the upper part of its roof will be visible from Giles Farm and

will not appear out of place in the context of the two single storey agricultural buildings that adjoin the application site. In addition, the proposal will be subservient in height and scale to the other buildings further to the south within Giles Farm.

6.3.23 To the east, the side garden is bordered by the side elevation of the host dwelling. The application site is therefore well screened from public viewpoints and adjoining properties. The location and extent of the proposed outbuilding will not therefore, materially change the nature or character of views through the site from Church Street or adjoining properties. This is a further indication that there will be no material change to the character or appearance of the land in this respect or any associated impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

6.3.24 The application proposal will not give rise to a change in the character of the land. The proposed outbuilding is located on domestic garden land that is used by the occupants of the dwelling as private amenity space. The application proposal will not result in a material increase in the intensity of use of the existing dwelling, no additional car parking spaces are proposed and there will be no material increase in domestic paraphernalia over and above that which currently exists or could legitimately exist within the current rear garden area. Consequently, there will be no change to the character or appearance of the land in this respect or any associated impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

6.3.25 Whilst recognising the increase in volume resulting from this development, it is considered that its impact on the openness of the Green Belt is mitigated by the factors outlined above and therefore the proposal should be regarded as appropriate development within the Green Belt in accordance with Saved Policy C13: *Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside* and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

6.4 Landscape and Visual Impact

6.4.1 The submitted layout plan shows that the proposal can be comfortably accommodated within the site without having an adverse visual impact on the surrounding area. As previously noted in section 6.3, the site is well screened

and as such, the visual impact would be mostly from within the existing residential curtilage. In such views however, the proposal will predominantly be seen against the backdrop of the taller buildings of Giles Farm beyond. See photographs 13, 14, 15 and 16 attached as **Appendix B**. The proposed development would not appear incongruous in this setting and would not unacceptably erode the openness of the countryside beyond the site boundary. Consequently, it is considered that the visual and landscape impact of the application proposals would not be materially harmful to the setting of the site, and therefore the proposals are considered to accord with Core Strategy Policy CS19: *Development and Design Principles* and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

6.5 Impact on Residential Amenity

- 6.5.1 The application proposal has been designed to ensure a good level of amenity is retained for the occupiers of the existing dwelling and to avoid any materially adverse impacts on the occupiers of adjoining properties. The existing garden land of the application property is sufficiently generous to ensure that the addition of the proposed outbuilding will not adversely impact on the availability, quality and use of the retained garden land.
- 6.5.2 The proposed outbuilding is located at the south-west corner of the applicant's side garden adjoining Giles Farm. It is screened by a block and sleeper wall approximately 2.19m high to its south and west elevations. The southern boundary is also formed by a wall of an agricultural building which forms part of the adjoining Giles Farm. This has several high-level windows that look directly over the applicant's side garden, but this existing relationship will not be affected by the application proposal. There are no windows/doors within the elevations of the proposed outbuilding adjoining the southern and western boundaries. The windows and doors are located in the east elevation which looks over the side garden area towards the host dwelling. This is enclosed by mature hedging/planting which provides a suitable privacy screen from the dwellings located on the north side of Church Street, together with passing pedestrians and vehicular traffic.

6.5.3 Vehicle movements associated with the existing dwelling are not anticipated to increase as a result of the application proposal and will be confined to the existing driveway and parking area. Accordingly, it is considered that the application proposals will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of adjoining and near-by occupiers through noise, and disturbance associated with increased vehicle movements.

6.5.4 It is considered that the application proposals will not lead to overlooking of adjoining properties or their rear garden areas and will not have an over-bearing impact or give rise to material overshadowing, loss of daylight/sunlight or noise and disturbance. In summary, it is submitted that the application proposals will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of adjoining residential properties and therefore accord with Core Strategy Policy CS19: *Development and Design Principles* and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

6.6 Nature Conservation

6.6.1 The site comprises domestic garden and does not form part of any statutory designated area for nature conservation purposes. The proposal is exempt from the Bio-Diversity Net Gain requirement, as it is a domestic outbuilding and therefore householder development. Notwithstanding this, it is anticipated that the following bio-diversity enhancements will be included within the site:

- Provision of bat and bird boxes on the building;
- shrub planting within the site to reinforce existing planting to benefit nesting birds, foraging bats and invertebrates such as bumble bees and butterflies.

6.6.2 The application proposals are therefore considered to accord with the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

6.7 Car Parking

6.7.1 The application proposals do not include an increase in the dwelling's bedroom spaces. Consequently, there will be no change to the number of car parking spaces provided or required.

7.0 Heritage Statement

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This section considers the application proposal in the context of its impact on the Church Street, Higham Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings having regard to the advice set out in the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and NPPG.

7.2 Church Street, Higham, Conservation Area

- 7.2.1 The Church Street, Higham Conservation Area was designated in April 1979 and subsequently extended in October 1999. An appraisal of the Conservation Area was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by the Council in February 2017.
- 7.2.2 Section 69 (1)(a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as an '*area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. Notwithstanding this, the designation of a conservation area is not intended to prevent change, but rather it provides a framework for assessing proposals to ensure that the special character of an area is not harmed or lost altogether.
- 7.2.3 Church Street, Higham is sited at the limit of raised land at the edge of the reclaimed marshes that fringe the Thames estuary. The small settlement dates from at least Saxon times with its later development centred around the medieval Higham Priory, which has now largely disappeared, with a few remnants still visible above ground. St Mary's Church is now the dominant building with its spire and roofs visible from the surrounding countryside. The conservation area is of particular significance for its collection of historic buildings, its local character and archaeological interest and potential.
- 7.2.4 Figure 10 attached to the appraisal identifies six individual character areas within the conservation area (copy attached as **Appendix D**). The application site is located within Area 2. This is described as:

'The remaining built-up area and gardens along the west arm of Church Street and the field behind this, to the south'.

7.2.5 This is described in further detail as follows:

'The curve of the west-running section of road produces linear enclosure to each side of the street here. It allows the historic buildings on its north side to each in turn come gradually into view as one moves west, with modern houses and other small buildings on the road's south side largely hidden behind shrub and tree growth along the highway edge'. (Our emphasis).

7.2.6 The appraisal identifies some of the buildings that contribute positively to the conservation area's character as follows:

- Nos. 1-3 Church Street;
- The Old Vicarage;
- Nos.1 - 3 Church Cottages;
- Clerk's Cottage
- Sun Farm (formerly the Sun Inn);
- St Mary's Church;
- Higham Priory;
- Abbey Farmhouse;
- The former barn at Abbey Farm;
- Other former farm buildings at Abbey Farm.

7.2.7 Clerk's Cottage and Nos. 1–3 Church Cottages are located opposite the site, whilst the Old Vicarage is located further to the east. Given the scale of the application proposal, in particular, its relatively low ridge height of approximately 2.76m, its separation distance from the above dwellings, which range from between approximately 21.5m, 26.8m and 50m respectively, together with the screening effect of the mature hedge and associated planting along the site's frontage to Church Street, it is considered that the character and appearance of the above mentioned dwellings and associated street scene will not be materially affected by the application proposals. These buildings together with the street scene are shown in photographs 4, 5, 6 and 7 attached as **Appendix B**.

7.2.8 Figure 9 attached to the appraisal identifies the contribution made by individual buildings to the character of the conservation area (copy attached as **Appendix E**). The host dwelling, together with the other modern housing to the east, is identified as having a neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area. The two farm buildings within Giles Farm that adjoin the site are identified

as contributing to the character of the conservation area. Whilst the building adjoining the western boundary is of visual interest with stock brickwork and a red plain tile roof, the building adjoining the southern boundary is less so, being of block construction under a modern metal sheet roof with high level, narrow rectangular windows as shown by photographs 15, 16, 17 and 18 attached as **Appendix B**. It should also be noted, that the Ordnance Survey base map used for the Conservation Area Appraisal is not reflective of the current extent of development within Giles farm, which has increased quite significantly in recent years, as shown by the more up to date submitted site location and block plans.

7.2.9 Figure 12 attached to the appraisal identifies key focal points and views within the conservation area and its immediate surrounds (copy attached as **Appendix F**). These are largely focused along existing routes in and out of the settlement, including looking west along Church Street, the small triangular green at the eastern end and localised views of St Mary's church to the north-east. Views are also identified looking north-east to the church from between Sun Cottage and Sun Farm in Church Street, and south-west from the church to the distant higher ground. In summary, the streetscape within Church Street will not be materially affected by the application proposal and there will be no impact on the other views and focal points identified within the conservation area.

7.2.10 The appraisal identifies a varied range of building materials within the conservation area. Walling materials, include flint, ragstone, weather-boarded timber frame, red and buff/yellow brick, together with whitewashed and externally rendered brick. Roofing materials comprise shingles, peg tile, thatch, slate galvanised iron sheeting, concrete tiles and composition slates. The proposed outbuilding has timber elevations under a felt shingle roof and therefore will not appear out of context having regard to the above wide ranging palette of materials.

7.2.11 The application proposals are therefore considered to be consistent with the character of the existing built form within the site and its immediate surroundings. Consequently, it is considered that the application proposals will not be materially harmful to the setting of the site and will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposals are therefore considered to accord with

Core Strategy Policy CS19: *Development and Design Principles* and Saved Policy TC3: *Development affecting Conservation Areas*, together with the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

7.3 Listed Buildings

7.3.1 There are four Listed Buildings within the Church Street settlement area together with a Scheduled Monument which are as follows:

- St Mary's Church: Grade I;
- Barn adjoining the church: Grade II;
- The Old Vicarage, Church Street: Grade II
- Clerk's Cottage, Church Street: Grade II.
- St Mary's Priory (Higham Priory): Scheduled Monument, 100m east of St Mary's Church

7.3.2 Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

7.3.3 St Mary's Church is located approximately 89m to the north-east and will not be materially affected by the application proposals. As previously noted, Clerk's Cottage is located in Church Street opposite the site, whilst the Old Vicarage is located approximately 50m to the north-east. The proposed outbuilding is located at the south-west corner of the applicant's side garden, is single storey and has a ridge height, including its base of approximately 2.76m. The extensive mature hedge that fronts the application site's northern boundary with Church Lane is retained and screens the garden area from view. The character and appearance of the street scene will therefore remain unchanged. Having regard to the above, and the separation distance between the application proposal and Clerk's Cottage and the Old Vicarage of 21.5m and 50m respectively, it is considered that the proposed outbuilding would not have an adverse impact on the setting of these listed buildings.

7.3.4 It is submitted that the application proposal will cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the above-mentioned listed buildings and as a minimum, will

sustain their significance as heritage assets. The proposals are therefore considered to accord with Core Strategy Policy CS20: *Heritage and the Historic Environment*, together with the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 In summary, it is submitted that application proposals are acceptable for the following reasons:

- The proposals provide a viable and sympathetically designed scheme that respects the setting and character of the existing dwelling, whilst providing modern, energy efficient accommodation, that meets the daily living needs of the occupants.
- Whilst recognising the increase in volume resulting from this development, its visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt is not considered to be material and therefore the proposal should be regarded as appropriate development within the Green Belt.
- There will be no change to the garden land character and appearance of the site or any associated impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- It is considered that the application proposals will not be materially harmful to the setting of the site and will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- Similarly, the application proposals will not have an adverse impact on the setting of listed buildings within the locality.
- The proposed outbuilding is of a form and scale appropriate to the site and its surroundings.
- The proposed development is well contained in landscape and visual terms, and there would be no materially adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area or the wider landscape setting of the site.
- The proposed outbuilding will not appear prominent or intrusive when viewed from Church Street or other public view-points.
- The proposals retain suitable amenity space for the occupants of the dwelling.

- There will be no materially adverse impact on the amenity of occupiers of adjoining dwellings, through overlooking, loss of daylight, disturbance or by the proposed dwellings being overbearing.
- There would be no adverse impact in terms of parking or highway matters in general, due to the small-scale nature of the proposals.
- The application proposals represent a sustainable form of development that is consistent with the provisions of the Development Plan, NPPF and NPPG.

8.2 Having regard to the above, it is respectfully requested that the Council gives favourable consideration to the application.

Penshurst Planning Ltd
November 2025