Class Q - Agricultural to Residential

Flat Meadow Farm, Derbyshire



Design & Access Statement
May 2026

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01. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Document

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany an application for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings into three residential dwellings. The proposal seeks to bring redundant rural structures back into productive use, delivering high-quality homes while retaining the character and appearance of the existing farmstead.

The development aims to provide well-designed residential accommodation that meets relevant national and local design standards, making efficient use of existing buildings and minimising the environmental impact associated with new construction.



1.2 Development Overview

The proposals comprise the conversion of a group of underutilised agricultural buildings to form three self-contained dwellings, supported by associated external works, parking provision, and private amenity space.

The scheme has been carefully designed to respect the rural setting, preserve the agricultural heritage of the site, and enhance its overall appearance. The layout prioritises functional internal arrangements, good levels of natural light, and strong connections between internal living spaces and external amenity areas.

Existing building forms are largely retained, with sensitive interventions introduced where required to accommodate residential use and meet modern living standards.

The development will contribute positively to the local area by delivering sustainable housing, reusing existing structures, and improving the visual quality of the site, while remaining sympathetic to its countryside context.



02. Site Context

2.1 Site Location & Setting

The application site is located at Flat Meadow Farm, Shipley, DE75 7JP, within a rural setting characterised by open countryside and surrounding agricultural land. The development area comprises the former cow sheds situated to the rear and side of the main farmhouse, forming part of an established farmstead.

The site is accessed via the existing farm access and sits discreetly behind the principal dwelling, benefitting from a degree of natural screening provided by the existing buildings and surrounding landscape. The wider setting consists predominantly of farmland, hedgerows, and dispersed rural development, reinforcing the agricultural character of the area.

Despite its countryside location, Flat Meadow Farm remains within reasonable proximity to nearby settlements and local services, with connectivity provided via the surrounding road network. This offers an appropriate balance between rural living and accessibility to everyday amenities.

The site benefits from a peaceful environment with open views across adjacent fields, creating a setting well suited to residential use. The proposed conversion of the redundant agricultural buildings provides an opportunity to bring underutilised structures back into productive use while retaining the established form of the farmstead.

The development has been designed to integrate sensitively within its surroundings, preserving the rural character of the site and avoiding unnecessary visual intrusion into the wider landscape.



Site Location

2.2 Photos

A comprehensive photographic survey has been undertaken to record the existing condition of the barns and their immediate surroundings. The photographs illustrate the current form, scale, and arrangement of the buildings













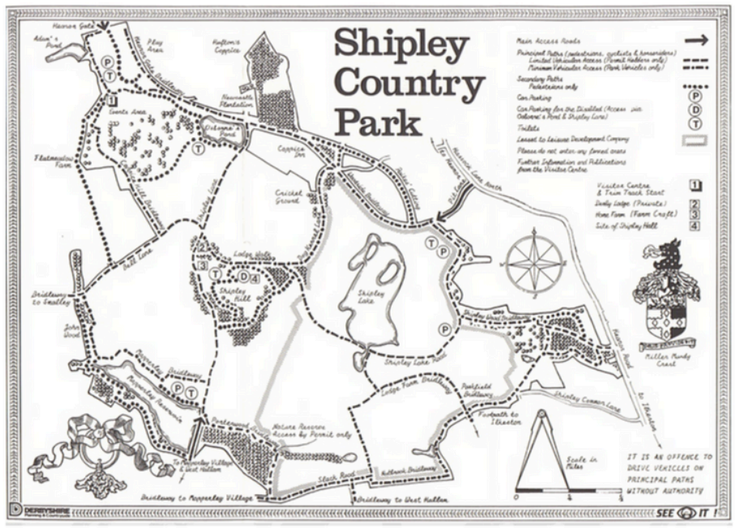


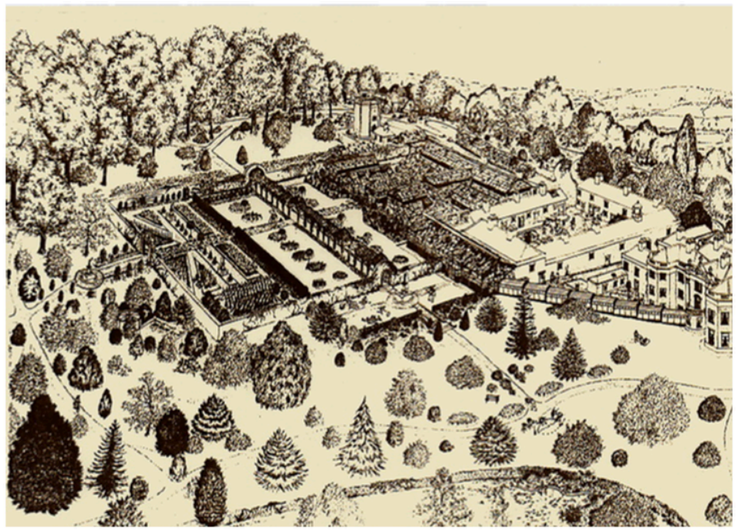
2.3 Site History

Shipley Park, situated in Derbyshire, England, boasts a rich tapestry of history and transformation. Its origins trace back to the Domesday Book of 1086, listing it among the lands owned by Gilbert of Ghent. Over time, the park transitioned from its agricultural beginnings into a prominent estate under the stewardship of the Miller Mundy family, who took ownership in the mid-16th century. They expanded the estate, building Shipley Hall and enhancing its use as a hunting ground while maintaining its agricultural productivity.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Shipley Park became an industrial hub due to its coal deposits. The Miller Mundy family developed mining operations that shaped the local economy and landscape, while the surrounding farmland, including Flat Meadow Farm, continued to support agricultural activities. The park's history is marked by this blend of natural beauty and industrial heritage, with remnants of mining infrastructure alongside rich, arable land.

The 20th century saw a decline in mining and the demolition of Shipley Hall in the 1940s, paving the way for the park's transformation into a public space. Today, Shipley Park spans approximately 700 acres, preserving its historic features while promoting recreation. It highlights the area's aristocratic and industrial legacy while celebrating its roots in farming and agriculture. Flat Meadow Farm, located within the park, underscores this agricultural heritage, reflecting the land's enduring role in supporting farming activities.





03. Planning Policies & History

3.1 Class Q Policy

Class Q – Agricultural Buildings to Dwellinghouses

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q allows for the change of use of agricultural buildings to dwellinghouses.

Class Q allows development consisting of:

(a) a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order; and

(b) building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building referred to in paragraph (a) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.

In effect, paragraph (a) permits the change of use, and paragraph (b) allows building operations that are reasonably necessary to convert the building to a dwelling. The key test is whether the works proposed are considered “reasonably necessary”.

The principal qualifying criterion is that the building was in agricultural use on 20 March 2013. Where a building was brought into agricultural use after this date, a continuous period of ten years must elapse before development under Class Q can commence.

A key point in this instance is that Flat Meadow Farm was in use as part of an established agricultural unit on the relevant qualifying date.

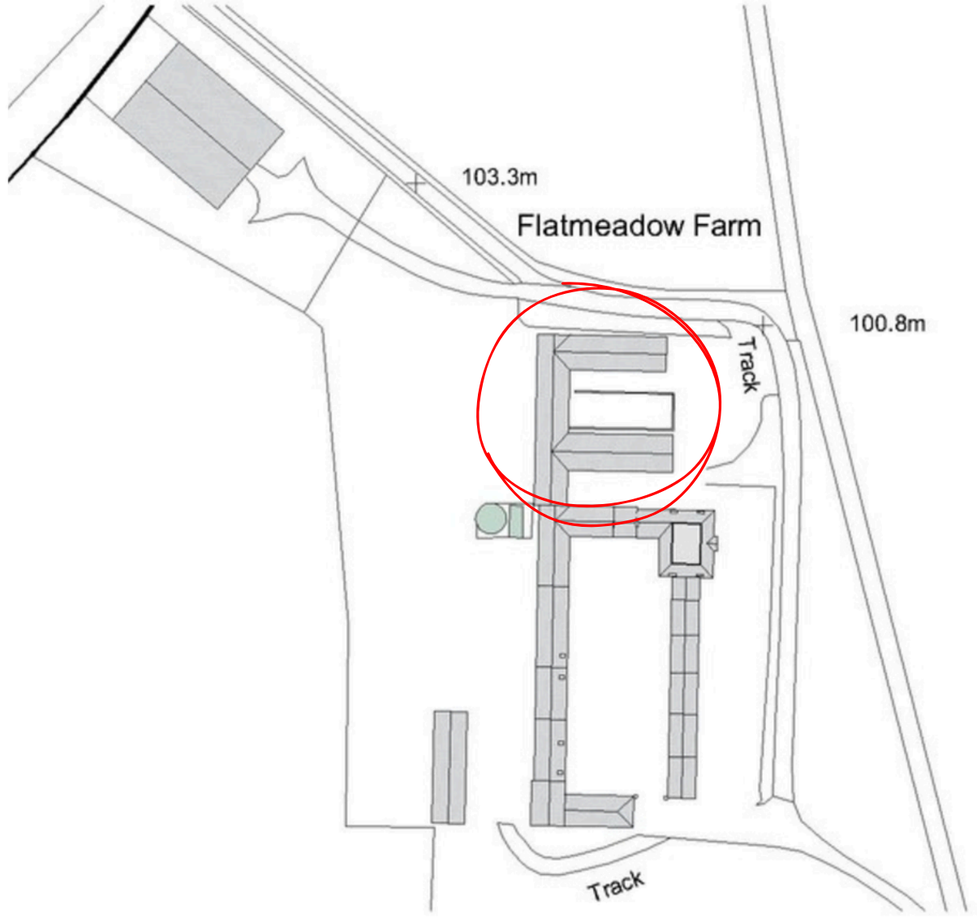


04. Design

4.1 Existing Site Layout

The existing layout of Flat Meadow Farm presents a compelling case for the proposed Class Q conversion scheme. The site comprises a diverse mix of structures, including horse stables, derelict cow sheds, and unused agricultural buildings, in addition to the main family dwelling, all situated within expansive, fertile fields. This arrangement allows for efficient use of space and facilitates easy access to essential resources, making the site well suited to redevelopment. Currently, the site benefits from a solid infrastructure, including a well-maintained vehicular access road leading to Bell Lane and a public footpath that enhances connectivity. This infrastructure is crucial to the proposed enhancements and will streamline access for both agricultural and recreational activities.

A recent structural condition report by David Keating of Tom Keating and Associates Ltd indicates that the existing buildings are in good condition, requiring only minor strengthening works. This provides positive confirmation of the site's viability for conversion, particularly given the age and previous underuse of some of the structures.



Site Location

4.2 Existing Plan

The existing buildings are of brick construction with timber framed roof structures and zinc roof coverings.

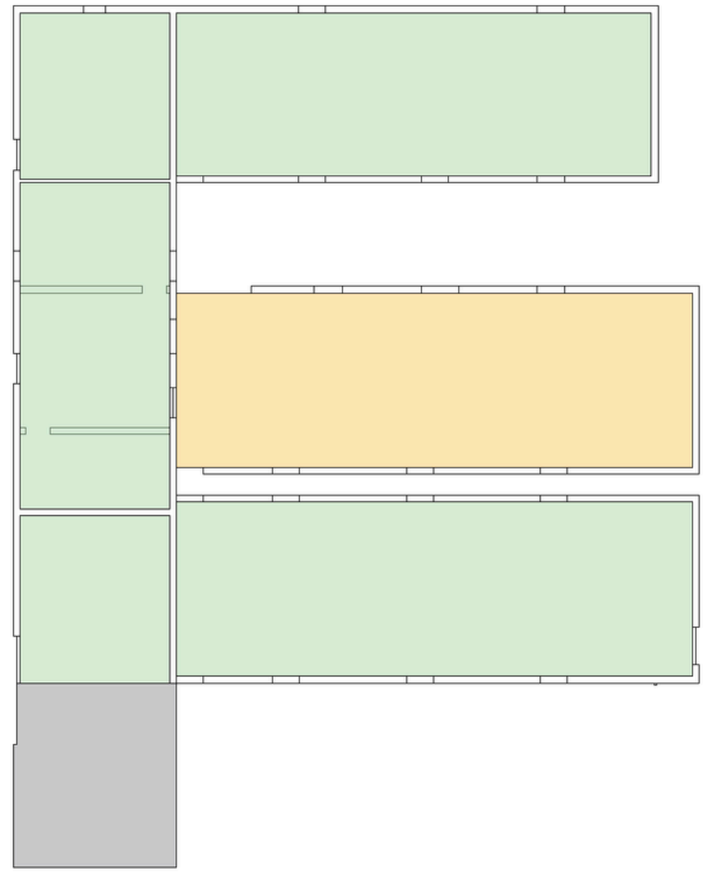
There are currently no window frames or any form of glazing but there are window openings.

The GIA area measures - **528m2**

The usable floorspace is - **407m2**

The highest roof is - **7.1m**

The lowest roof is - **5.1m**



Space not included

Usable Building Space

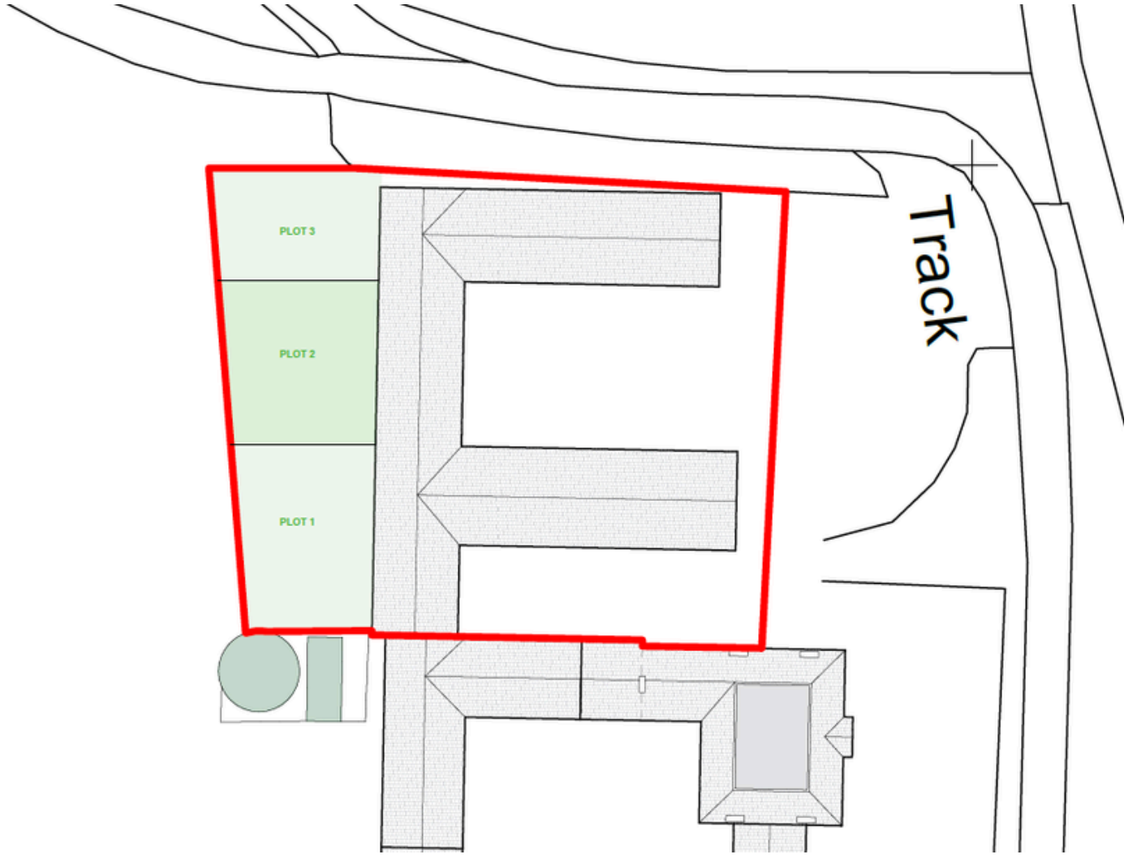
Remains of previous structure

4.3 Proposed Site Layout

The proposed site plan divides the development into three clearly defined residential plots within a total site area of approximately 314m², each served by dedicated parking and generous private garden space.

The arrangement follows the natural form of the existing buildings and farmyard layout, ensuring that each dwelling benefits from a logical and functional relationship between internal accommodation, outdoor amenity space, and access.

Private gardens are positioned to provide usable, well-proportioned outdoor areas with appropriate levels of privacy, while on-site parking is accommodated within the existing courtyard setting. The overall layout ensures a balanced and low-density form of development that respects the rural character of the farmstead while providing practical and comfortable living environments for future occupants.



4.4 Design Approach

The proposed conversion will maintain the existing building footprint with no external additions.

Key elements include:

Roof Works

The existing roof covering will be removed and upgraded the existing slate tiles will then be reinstalled.

The reuse of slate tiles reflects traditional materials commonly found within rural farmsteads, maintaining the simple form and agricultural character of the building while enhancing its thermal performance. The proposed works will respect the existing proportions and roof profile, ensuring the overall appearance remains in keeping with the established vernacular of the site.

Wall Construction

An internal timber-framed insulated walling system will be constructed within the existing masonry envelope to achieve the required thermal performance standards for residential use. This approach allows the external agricultural character of the building to be retained, with the upgrade works taking place internally to preserve the original appearance.

Internal Modifications

The existing concrete slab will be retained as part of the conversion works, subject to confirmation of its suitability. A new insulated floor build-up will be installed above the slab, incorporating underfloor heating to improve thermal efficiency and ensure compliance with current Building Regulations.

Internal partitions will be formed in accordance with the proposed floor plans using lightweight stud wall construction. This approach minimises additional structural loading on the existing building while allowing flexibility in layout and ensuring the creation of functional, well-proportioned residential spaces.



Proposed Ground Floor

Plot 1 - 150m2
Plot 2 - 130m2
Plot 3 - 142m2

Glazing

Glazing will be carefully positioned and specified to minimise glare and reduce artificial light spill into the surrounding rural environment. Window openings will follow the rhythm and proportions of the existing agricultural structure, ensuring that new insertions remain modest and sympathetic to the building's character.

High-performance double-glazed units will be used to improve thermal efficiency while incorporating low-reflectivity glass to reduce visual glare. External lighting will be limited and sensitively designed to prevent unnecessary light pollution, preserving the dark rural setting and maintaining the amenity of the surrounding countryside.

Light

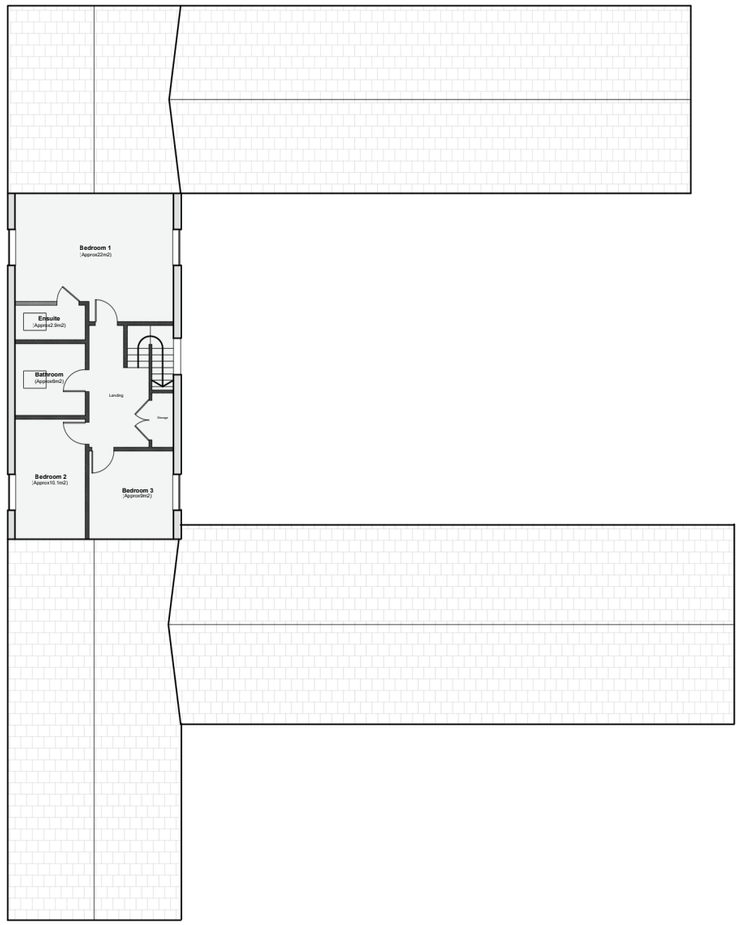
The floor plans and elevations submitted with the application include the introduction of additional doors and windows to serve each habitable space. These openings have been carefully positioned to ensure adequate levels of natural daylight and ventilation, creating comfortable and functional living environments in accordance with residential standards.

The scale and placement of new openings have been designed to respect the simple agricultural form of the existing buildings, avoiding excessive or suburban-style alterations. This balanced approach ensures the dwellings benefit from improved natural light while maintaining the character and appearance of the original structure.

Accessibility

Plots 1 and 3 have been designed with future accessibility needs in mind. The layouts have been arranged to allow for adaptable living, including level access thresholds, appropriately sized circulation spaces, and ground floor accommodation capable of supporting step-free living if required.

This approach ensures that the dwellings can respond to changing occupant needs over time without requiring significant structural alteration. By incorporating adaptable design principles at the outset, the scheme promotes inclusive living and long-term usability in accordance with current Building Regulations and best practice guidance.



Proposed First Floor

4.5 Access & Parking

Access to the site is taken from Bell Lane via the existing established farm access serving Flat Meadow Farm. This access point is currently used for agricultural vehicles, farm traffic, and access to the main farmhouse and associated outbuildings. The proposed development will continue to utilise this existing access arrangement, with no alterations to the point of entry onto Bell Lane required.

The internal access route leading to the former cow sheds is already in place as part of the farmyard circulation area. The proposal therefore makes use of established infrastructure and does not introduce new access points or significant changes to vehicle movements within the wider holding. Given the previous agricultural use of the buildings, which historically generated larger vehicle movements including tractors and delivery vehicles, the proposed residential use is not expected to result in a material increase in traffic impact.

Existing parking within the farmstead is informal in nature, typical of rural settings, with vehicles accommodated within the courtyard and surrounding hardstanding areas. The proposal formalises parking provision within the application site to serve the three dwellings, with dedicated off-street parking spaces allocated within the existing farmyard area. The use of block paving designed to replicate traditional York stone and cobbled surfaces will ensure that parking areas integrate sensitively with the character of the courtyard.

Overall, the scheme utilises the established access from Bell Lane and provides sufficient on-site parking to serve the proposed dwellings, without adversely impacting highway safety or the operational functionality of the wider farmstead.



05. Appearance

5.1 - Materials

The proposed development has been designed to preserve and enhance the agricultural character of the existing buildings at Flat Meadow Farm. In accordance with Class Q requirements, the scheme retains the fundamental form, scale, and structural envelope of the former cow sheds, ensuring that the rural identity of the farmstead remains intact.

The external appearance will closely reflect the established vernacular of the existing farmhouse and surrounding agricultural buildings. Materials have been carefully selected to ensure visual continuity and authenticity within the immediate setting.

Roof coverings will comprise natural slate tiles, reflecting the traditional materials found within the farmstead and wider rural area, ensuring visual cohesion with the main farmhouse and surrounding buildings. Openings will be detailed with stone window sills to provide a robust, traditional finish that complements the reclaimed brickwork. Georgian bar glazed windows will introduce a domestic scale appropriate for residential use while remaining sympathetic to the agricultural character of the original structures.

Timber framed beams will be incorporated selectively within key elevations and entrance features to reinforce the country aesthetic without appearing overly decorative. Externally, areas of hardstanding will be finished in block paving designed to replicate traditional York stone and cobbled courtyard surfaces, allowing parking and access arrangements to integrate seamlessly into the existing farmyard setting. Overall, the material palette ensures the conversion preserves the established vernacular and delivers a high-quality residential outcome in line with the intent of Class Q permitted development.



Material and façade references illustrating the proposed architectural character: durable, contextually informed, and coordinated to reflect the visual continuity and authenticity within the immediate setting.

06. Other Considerations

6.1 – Considerations

Site Conditions - A review of the existing buildings within the application site at Flat Meadow Farm confirms that the majority of the former agricultural structures are in a sound and serviceable condition. The buildings proposed for conversion are structurally stable and capable of accommodating residential use in accordance with Class Q requirements, subject to standard refurbishment and internal adaptation works.

Within the application site, the central cowshed has deteriorated significantly and is considered to be beyond economical repair. Its structural condition does not lend itself to conversion, and demolition is therefore proposed as part of the scheme. The removal of this element will improve the overall visual appearance of the courtyard and allow for a more coherent and practical residential layout, while retaining the principal structural elements required under Class Q.

Assessment of Surrounding Land Use - To the front of the site lies the main farmhouse, which is occupied by the landowner and forms the principal residential dwelling within the farm complex. The farmhouse is positioned such that it maintains clear separation from the former cow sheds proposed for conversion, with the farmyard courtyard acting as an intermediary space.

The wider holding also includes approximately sixteen horse stables, which are actively used for equestrian purposes. These facilities contribute to the mixed agricultural and rural character of the site. In addition, there are existing hay barns and a purpose-built hay storage facility located to the rear of the proposed site area, all of which remain operational and continue to support the ongoing agricultural activities at the farm.

Beyond the built elements, the surrounding landscape comprises open agricultural fields and managed grassland, with established hedgerows and boundary treatments defining the site. Public pedestrian footpaths run through parts of the wider landscape, contributing to the rural setting and openness of the area.

Identification of any visible signs of contamination or hazardous materials - There were no signs of contamination or hazardous materials on site

Health and Safety Risks - No hazardous substances were found to be present on site. No other health and safety risks were recorded on site

Asbestos Management - Based on a review of the existing construction materials used within the former cow sheds, there is no evidence to suggest the presence of asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) within the buildings proposed for conversion.

The structures are primarily formed from traditional masonry, reclaimed brickwork, and modern replacement roofing materials, none of which are typically associated with asbestos products.

Environmental Features - A flood map for planning report shows the site falls entirely within flood zone 1, the area of lowest risk of flooding.

Trees & Vegetation - There are a number of self-seeded trees and areas of unmanaged vegetation within the application site. These have established over time as a result of limited maintenance and the gradual decline in active agricultural use within the immediate area of the former cow sheds.

Given their unmanaged nature, limited arboricultural value, and proximity to the existing agricultural structures, the trees and overgrowth are proposed to be removed to facilitate the development. Their removal will allow for improved access, site organisation, and overall enhancement of the visual appearance of the former farmyard area.

Access and Infrastructure - The site has existing access from the highway with good visibility in either direction allowing safe exit and egress.

Re-use of Existing Structure - The proposal utilises the existing agricultural building structure, significantly reducing the need for new construction materials, minimising embodied carbon, and avoiding demolition waste.

Waste and Recycling - The design incorporates dedicated storage areas for domestic refuse and recycling within the site boundary, ensuring separation and efficient management of household waste.

Noise - The proposed development has been considered in relation to potential noise impacts and the surrounding acoustic environment. The site is located within an established rural setting where background noise levels are generally associated with agricultural activities, local vehicle movements, and normal day-to-day activity within the surrounding area.

07. Conclusion

7.1 – Summary

The proposed Class Q conversion project is inherently sustainable, aligning closely with national and local planning objectives that encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings and resource efficiency.

Structural Integrity Confirmed

Structural engineer's report confirms the existing structure is robust, stable, and suitable for conversion without significant structural alterations.

Floor Area and Curtilage Compliant

Proposed residential floor area totals under 465 square metres, within allowable Class Q limits, and proposed curtilage area (459 sqm) also complies with the maximum of 465 square metres regulations.

No Significant Contamination or Flood Risk:

No visible contamination, hazardous materials, or flood risk (site entirely within Flood Zone 1).

No Protected Species Affected

The Preliminary Ecological appraisal confirms negligible potential for bats or nesting birds, with no evidence of protected species or habitats affected.

No Significant External Works Required

Conversion utilises existing foundations and structure, with minimal external alterations limited to roof replacement and construction of new perimeter walls within existing footprint.

Satisfactory Access and Amenity

Existing highway access provides safe, compliant visibility splays; adequate parking available; and design incorporates accessibility standards ensuring suitability for all potential users.

This Design and Access Statement comprehensively demonstrates that the proposed development meets all Class Q permitted development criteria under the transitional arrangements, ensuring minimal environmental impact and promoting sustainability through effective reuse of existing agricultural infrastructure.