

5e a) 3/12/1325/FP – Erection of 5no. dwellinghouses, garages and change of use and alteration of workshop to form a single dwelling and demolition of a small store building, demolition of agricultural barns and alterations to access and landscaping works and b) 3/12/1324/LB – Change of use and alteration of barn to form a single residential dwellinghouse and demolition of small store and agricultural barns at Priory Farm, Hunsdon Road, Widford, SG12 8RA for Mrs SJ Richardson and Mr SC Findlay

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Date of Receipt: a) 03.08.2012  
b) 03.08.2012

Type: a) Full – Minor  
b) Listed Building Consent

Parish: WIDFORD

Ward: HUNSDON

**RECOMMENDATION:**

a) That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Three year time limit (1T121)
2. No development shall take place until a scheme for the provision of affordable housing as part of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The affordable housing shall be provided in accordance with the approved scheme. The scheme shall include:
  - i) The numbers, type, and location on the site of the affordable housing provision to be made;
  - ii) The timing of the construction of the affordable housing;
  - iii) The arrangements to ensure that such provision is affordable for both first and subsequent occupiers of the affordable housing and;
  - iv) The occupancy criteria to be used for determining the identity of occupiers of the affordable housing and the means by which such occupancy criteria shall be enforced.

Reason: To ensure that an appropriate level of affordable housing is provided in accordance with policies HSG3 and OSV2 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

3. Contaminated land survey and remediation (2E33)
4. Programme of archaeological work (2E02)
5. Levels (2E051)

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6. Samples of materials (2E123)
7. Tree retention and protection (4P075)
8. No development shall take place until details of the earthworks required for the six parking spaces to the north of plot 5 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To avoid damage to health of existing trees, in accordance with policies ENV2 and ENV11 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

9. No development shall take place until the tree management plan as referred to on drawing number 126-P1 Rev A, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved management plan.

Reason: To avoid damage to the health of existing trees, in accordance with policies ENV2 and ENV11 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

10. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved drawings, no works relating to the landscaping of the site shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include a) means of enclosure; b) hard surfacing materials; c) planting plans; d) schedules of plants noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities and e) a timetable for implementation.

Reason: To ensure the provision of amenity afforded by appropriate landscape design, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

11. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the details approved pursuant to Condition 8. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with the programme agreed with the local planning authority. Any trees or plants that, within a period of 5 years after planting are removed, die or become damaged or

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defective shall be replaced with others of the same species, size and number as originally approved unless the local planning authority has given written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of a reasonable standard of landscaping in accordance with the approved designs, in accordance with policy ENV2 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

12. Construction hours of working – plant and machinery (6N072)
13. No development shall take place until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:
  1. The parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
  2. Loading and unloading of plant and materials;
  3. Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
  4. The erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate;
  5. Wheel washing facilities;
  6. Measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction;
  7. A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

Reason: To ensure that the construction works and associated activity are acceptable in terms of amenity of the area and highway safety.

14. Prior to the commencement of development, an 'unlicensed method statement' as recommended in paragraph 4.15 of the 'Ecological Walkover and Protected Species Survey' July 2012, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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Reason: In the interests of the conservation and enhancement of protected species in accordance with policy ENV16 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

15. Lighting details (2E27)
16. Approved plans (2E102) (insert:- 126-LOC1, 126-P1 Rev A, 126-P2 Rev A, 126-P3 Rev A, 126-P4, 126-P5 Rev A, 126-P6 Rev A)

Directives:

1. Other legislation (01OL1)
2. Highway Works (06FC2)
3. Bats (32BA)
4. Public Rights of Way (18FD)
5. Street name and numbering (19SN4)

Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan, the saved policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007 and in particular policies SD1, HSG3, HSG4, HSG7, GBC3, TR1, TR7, ENV1, ENV2, ENV11, ENV16, ENV20, BH6, LRC9 and OSV2) and the National Planning Policy Framework. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

- b) That listed building consent be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Listed building three year time limit (1T141)
2. Listed building (New Windows) (8L03)
3. Listed building (New Doors) (8L04)
4. Listed building (New Rainwater Goods) (8L09)
5. Listed building (Making Good) (8L09)

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### Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan, the 'saved' policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular the National Planning Policy Framework. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

\_\_\_\_\_ (132412LB.MP)

#### **1.0 Background:**

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The site lies within the category 2 village of Widford and within the Conservation Area of that village. There is an existing vehicular access to the south of the site which leads into a gravel 'track' and access into and around the site. Adjacent to the access is also a pedestrian footpath which runs to along the southern edge of the application site to the east and to the countryside beyond.
- 1.3 The site is generally level, although there is a slight slope up into the site from the road, which then falls away slightly within the site and towards the north.
- 1.4 To the north of the application site is the farmstead of Priory Farm where there is a farmhouse and two timber framed and clad Grade II listed barns known as 'West Barn' and 'East Barn'. That site links to the application site by virtue of the relationship with the barns and a loose stone access track which runs to the east of West Barn. Attached to East Barn is a single storey projection which is also listed. That element of the building is within the application site and forms a brick built structure with openings on the eastern elevation which fronts into the site. On the road elevation the building has an attractive brick and flint wall which continues into a boundary wall that encloses the application site onto Hunsdon Road. This building is currently used as a vehicle repair workshop.
- 1.5 To the south of the application site is the Grade II Listed building, known as 'The House of Orange'. That dwelling is set 'side on' to the application site and there is a mixture of boundary treatment between this dwelling and the application site. There is also an electrical sub station to the rear garden of this listed building.

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- 1.6 Within the application site there is currently a large group of three interconnected corrugated metal clad buildings which have three curvilinear roofs. The combined building is described by the applicant as a 'Dutch Barn' and is referred to as such in this report. The buildings have a footprint of around 500 square metres and are at a height of approximately 7.5metres. Further to the north of the Dutch barn is a much smaller brick built shed. Both the metal clad barns and shed structure are proposed to be demolished as part of this application.
- 1.7 As noted above, the site is located within the Widford Conservation Area. The site is located within a cluster of listed and historic buildings which, together with the boundary treatment and landscaping, help to form the character and distinctiveness of the site and immediate surroundings.
- 1.8 The proposed development seeks to retain the existing access, albeit with modifications involving retention and demolition of some parts of the existing wall which fronts the site to provide improved visibility. The proposed access extends into the site leading to the east (to provide access to one dwelling - plot 3 and an existing farm track) and to the north, where the main concentration of dwellings are proposed. To the south of the vehicular access the existing footpath would be retained. Additional landscaping is proposed between the footway and the access road, and a small bin storage area is also proposed.
- 1.9 The development comprises the conversion of the existing single storey listed projection to East Barn. Internal alterations are proposed to this building to provide a two bed dwelling and 'open-plan' living space. Externally, fenestration is proposed to the existing openings on the east elevation and the provision of two rooflights to the western roofslope.
- 1.10 Two affordable dwellings are proposed to the south of the proposed converted listed building. These buildings comprise of 2no. 2 bed detached dwellings which form an 'L' shape. In-between those affordable dwellings and the road are five trees which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Those trees are proposed to be retained.
- 1.11 To the east of the affordable units and to the other side of the access road three separate but interlinked dwellings are proposed (plots 1, 2 and 3). Plots 1 and 2 would front onto the access road with plot 2 being at a height of 8.6 metres and plot 1 set slightly lower with a staggered roof ridge line. Plot 3 would be is set back further into the site and would be linked to plot 2 by detached cartlodge styled garages.
- 1.12 Amended plans have been received during the process of the

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applications to address concerns initially raised by the Conservation Officer. Consultees, the Parish Council and third parties have been re-consulted in respect of those amended plans.

### **2.0 Site History:**

- 2.1 There is no relevant recent planning history relating to development within the site. However, planning applications have been received and determined for developments on an adjacent site to the south of the application site and on land to the rear of 'The House of Orange'. Those proposed developments related to the provision of a detached dwelling with the access running through the application site.

### **3.0 Consultation Responses:**

- 3.1 Environmental Health have recommended the inclusion of planning conditions with the grant of any planning permission relating to construction hours of working and soil decontamination.
- 3.2 Natural England comment that the proposal does not appear to affect any statutorily protected sites or landscapes or have significant impacts upon the conservation of soils. Natural England refer the Council to their standing advice and comment that permission may be granted subject to a condition requiring a detailed mitigation and monitoring strategy for Great Crested Newts.
- 3.3 English Heritage recommends that the application be determined in accordance with national and local guidance and on the basis of the Councils expert conservation advice.
- 3.4 HBRC comment that there is no evidence to suggest that bats are roosting in any of the barns and that there is very little suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts and any potential impact could be dealt with through an unlicensed method statement. HBRC recommend planning conditions relating to birds and construction works, the implementation of an unlicensed method statement, and the provision of bird, bat boxes and appropriate landscape planting.
- 3.5 Hertfordshire County Highways comment that they do not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission. The Highways Officer comments that the proposed development is acceptable in a highways context. The means of access is of an appropriate design in terms of width, alignment and visibility provision. The Highways Officer is satisfied that the transport statement submitted with the application accurately predicts the level of traffic generation and the level of parking

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provision will not result in overspill onto the highway.

- 3.6 The Historic Environment Unit comments that Priory Farm occupies a substantial site at the southern end of the High Street in the core of the village. It can be suggested that the farmstead formed a productive part of the land of Bermondsey Abbey which held the manor of Widford from the early C12 until 1544. It is likely therefore that there has been a farmstead on the site since the medieval period.

The County Archaeologist considers that the proposed development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and it is necessary and reasonable to attach a planning condition with any grant of planning permission requiring the implementation of a programme of archaeological work.

- 3.7 The Landscape Officer recommends that planning permission be granted. The Officer comments that tree protection measures for the trees to be retained, together with a method statement, is needed. A 'no dig' construction is required for the parking spaces to plots 4, 5 and 6 as that area is within the root protection area of trees.

The impact of the proposed development will be enhanced when adequate landscaping proposals are prepared. The landscaping should be designed to complement the development without reducing the occupiers enjoyment. There is a need to reconcile the demand for development and the protection of the natural and built environment by either protecting trees and other natural features or providing for new tree planting and landscaping.

The Landscape Officer comments that there is no objection to the proposed development provided that there is sufficient emphasis on tree planting and protection together with comprehensive landscape design proposals.

- 3.8 The Conservation Officer recommends that planning and listed building consent be granted. The Conservation Officer advises that the site is located within Area D (as defined in the draft Widford Conservation Area appraisal) of the Conservation Area which encompasses the junction of Ware Road, Hunsdon Road and the High Street. The character and appearance of that area is made up through a mixture of residential and agricultural buildings and structures. Priory Farmhouse is a tall C17 building described as an 'historic small Queen Anne brick farmhouse little altered'. This building and its associated listed barns form an important group which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area.



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The Conservation Officer comments that, in terms of the layout, whilst it is disappointing that a more defined courtyard characteristic of an agricultural farmstead has not been achieved, the proposed layout does create a small courtyard which allows West Barn, a grade II Listed Building, to be appreciated and does involve the repair and restoration of the building currently used as a vehicle workshop, which is also a grade II listed building.

The design of the development is considered to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the immediate and wider setting. The provision of rooflights within the Listed Building, the number of which has been reduced through the amended plans, are acceptable and respect the character of the flint wall in addition to making a positive contribution to the wider appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Officer advises that the scale of the development has been measured against West and East Barn. Those two listed buildings are considered by the Conservation Officer to be significant heritage assets which define the historic function of the site and contribute to the immediate setting. Plot 1 has been amended and now sits more comfortably in relation to the listed buildings, having a lower roof ridge line. Plot 2 is also considered to be acceptable in terms of its height, as it is located further away from the listed building. The stepped roof ridge line which is proposed in the amended plans is considered to create a more interesting roofscape. The scale of the other proposed dwellings is considered to be acceptable.

### **4.0 Parish Council Representations:**

4.1 Widford Parish Council objects to the planning application for the following reasons:

- There are too many buildings proposed and plots 1, 2 and 3 at a height of 8.5 metres form one large dominant building on the site which would be out of keeping with the Conservation Area;
- The development will result in a detrimental effect on listed buildings, particularly East and West barns of Priory Farmhouse;
- The development will result in harm to protected trees within the site;
- Insufficient parking associated with the number and size of dwellings proposed;
- The development will lead to significant numbers of traffic movements.

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### **5.0 Other Representations:**

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.
- 5.2 With regards to LPA reference 3/12/1325/FP, 10 letters of representation were originally received. Following consultation on the amended plans, an additional 11 letters of representation have been received.
- 5.3 With regards to LPA reference 3/12/1324/LB, 6 letters of representation were originally received. Following consultation on the amended plans, an additional 11 letters of representation have been received.
- 5.4 The comments from third parties can be summarised as follows:
- Impact on traffic congestion and highway safety;
  - Inappropriate form and over-development of the site;
  - Detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of listed buildings;
  - Insufficient parking;
  - Harmful impact on protected trees and other landscape features;
  - New lighting associated with the development and impact on surroundings;
  - The development would set a harmful precedent.

### **6.0 Policy:**

- 6.1 The relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies in this application include the following:

SD1	Making Development More Sustainable
HSG3	Affordable Housing
HSG4	Affordable Housing Criteria
HSG7	Replacement Dwellings and Infill Housing Development
GBC3	Appropriate Development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
TR1	Traffic Reduction in New Developments
TR7	Car Parking Standards
ENV1	Environment and Design
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV11	Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees
ENV16	Protected Species

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ENV20	Groundwater Protection
BH6	New Developments in Conservation Areas
LRC9	Public Rights of Way
OSV2	Category 2 Villages

6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework is also of importance in the determination of this planning application.

6.3 In addition, the draft Widford Conservation Area appraisal is also of relevance in the determination of this planning application.

### **7.0 Considerations:**

7.1 The main planning considerations in respect of the planning application relate to the following:

- The principle of infill development within the category 2 village and policy OSV2 requirements;
- The acceptability of adaptation and reuse of the existing listed building and policy GBC9 requirements;
- The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the street scene and Conservation Area and the demolition of existing buildings within that designated area;
- Impact on the setting of heritage assets;
- Parking provision and highways matters;
- Neighbour and future residents amenity.

7.2 There are two aspects to the proposed development in this application – firstly, the acceptability of the provision of five new dwellings within the category 2 village and secondly, the acceptability of the conversion of an existing building into a dwelling. This report will firstly examine the acceptability of the infill development comprising of the provision of five new dwellings at the site and then consider the conversion of the existing building. The report will then go on to consider the impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of listed buildings and other issues including neighbour amenity impact, parking/highways, landscaping and other matters.

#### **Infill Housing Development – policy OSV2**

7.3 The site is located within the category 2 village of Widford and policy GBC3 does allow for limited infill housing development, subject to the development meeting the criteria of policy OSV2 of the Local Plan. The

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definition of infill housing development within the Local Plan allows for the erection of up to five dwellings within the built up area of the village.

Having regard to the relationship of the application site with built form to the north and south of the application site, the development is considered to represent infill housing development, in accordance with policy GBC3 of the Local Plan.

- 7.4 However, the development must also comply with policy OSV2, which is discussed below:
- 7.5 Policy OSV2 sets out that infill development will be acceptable provided that there would be no unacceptable resultant loss of housing, employment, sport, recreation, open space or community facilities; proposals make appropriate provision for affordable housing where necessary and meet an identified local need; proposals would not detrimentally impact on neighbour amenities and the site does not represent a significant gap important to the village setting; the development does not unacceptably impact on views or vistas within or into the site and; that design of the development respects the character and appearance of the village and surroundings.
- 7.6 The proposed development does involve the loss of a building, the Dutch barn which could, potentially, be used for other purposes, including employment use. From the information available it is understood that the building is not currently being used for any employment purpose but may well be being used for storage.
- 7.7 On this matter the applicant comments that the application will not lead to the unacceptable loss of employment facilities since the business use of the Dutch barn is undesirable and any reuse would probably be industrial and would lead to potential harm to neighbour amenity. The applicant also comments that the insubstantial construction of the Dutch barn also renders it unattractive to potential occupiers and the cost of improving the building would be prohibitive. The applicant does not consider that the location of Widford makes it an attractive site for employment activity.
- 7.8 Having regards to the above considerations and, taking into account the comments from the applicant, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in the loss of housing, sport, recreation, open space or community facilities. The position is less clear in terms of loss of employment use, as there is potential for the use of the building for B1 purposes which, by definition is acceptable in planning terms within a residential area without causing harm to neighbour amenity. It is however acknowledged that significant work may need to

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be undertaken in order to bring about a reuse of the building which is likely to be cost prohibitive. Whilst there is some scope for use of the building for employment purposes, given the constraints identified for such a use, Officers do not consider that such a matter weighs significantly against the development proposal.

7.9 With regards to housing needs, Officers understand that the Parish Council have relatively recently undertaken a survey which identifies the following:

- To the question of what type of housing would be acceptable, 64% commented individual dwellings would be acceptable, 25% commented that small groups of less than 10 dwellings would be acceptable and 11% did not know;
- Other: Of 22 responses 8 favoured small groups and 3 favoured Housing Association;
- Conversion of redundant farm buildings was suggested. Affordability was stressed;
- To the question, what type of housing does the Village need, 13% would prefer smaller single person dwellings, 39% for starter homes for young couples, 19% for warden assisted housing Homes for families and 29% for family homes (3 bedrooms or more);
- Other: 57 households responded. There was a clear preference for family homes (24), starter homes (21) and warden-assisted homes (11). Affordability was stressed. 6 respondents said "none".

7.10 Having regard to the mixture of units proposed in this application and in accordance with the above information from the Parish Plan, it is considered that there is an identified need for the quantum of development proposed.

7.11 The proposed development does make some provision for affordable housing which involves plots 4 and 5. This represents the provision of 33% affordable housing which is below the maximum requirement of 40% affordable housing, in policy HSG3. However, given that six residential units are proposed as a whole, this does not easily provide precisely 40% affordable housing. Having regard to that consideration and, taking into account the comments from the Housing Team, it is considered that the provision of two affordable housing units is acceptable, in this case. Officers consider that, given the requirements of policy HSG3, it is necessary and reasonable to require the provision of plots 5 and 6 to be affordable units through a planning condition, which is recommended above.

7.12 In accordance with the above considerations, the proposed

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development is considered to comply with criteria a), b) and c) of policy OSV2 of the Local Plan. The impact of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surroundings and neighbour amenity matters are set out later in the report.

### **Adaptation and reuse of listed building**

- 7.13 The development also involves the adaptation and reuse of a rural building on the site. Policy GBC3 of the Local Plan does allow for the residential adaptation and reuse of rural buildings subject to the criteria in policy GBC9 being met. Policy GBC9 requires that:- the building be worthy of retention and any residential should not detract significantly from the rural character and appearance of the area; the building is unable to be reused for business re-use, leisure, tourism, community or other purposes compatible with the rural area and; the building cannot contribute to affordable housing needs in the area.
- 7.14 Given the listed status of the building and historic relationship with the adjacent West and East Barns and, given the role it plays in forming a boundary with Hunsdon Road and the immediate setting of the Conservation Area, the building is considered to be worthy of retention. The building does not benefit from any openings onto the main road and only two small conservation style windows are proposed on the western roof slope. Taking that consideration into account, Officers do not consider that a residential conversion would lead to significant harm to the rural character or appearance of the site or area.
- 7.15 Policy GBC3 also requires a consideration as to whether the building can be used for business re-use, leisure, tourism, community or other purposes compatible with the rural area. The requirements of this policy are echoed in policy EDE2 which also requires that the retention of existing employment premises must be fully explored.
- 7.16 The applicant has not undertaken a marketing exercise to show whether the reuse of the building for the purposes mentioned above or for continued employment is possible. The applicant relies on the submissions previously set out above in relation to conversion of the Dutch barn for similar purposes – namely, the potential conflict with neighbour amenity (including the new residential dwellings proposed in this application) and financial constraints with conversion.
- 7.17 Whilst some moderate weight may be given against the development in terms of the lack of evidence to show that continued employment reuse of the building has not been provided, Officers do consider that greater weight should be attached to the submissions made by the applicant

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with regards to the cost associated with any reuse of the building and the potential conflict with neighbour amenity. Given that the building is listed, conservation requirements for conversion, including materials of construction and remedial works to the historic fabric may well be significant. Such costs and the listed status of the building are also likely to make its use as an affordable dwelling an unattractive proposition for any housing association. Having regard to that consideration and, given the relationship with the new residential dwellings (which, as set out above are considered to be acceptable, in principle), Officers consider that the residential conversion of this building is, on balance, acceptable.

### Character and appearance

- 7.18 With regards to design and conservation matters, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that development should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and that development should take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. The NPPF requires the Council to consider the significance of any heritage asset; how it might be affected by a development proposal; the desirability of sustaining and conserving significant heritage assets and any positive contribution to the wider character of an area.
- 7.19 Local Plan policies relating to environment, design and conservation issues can be found within policies ENV1 and BH6 of the Local Plan. Those Local Plan policies generally reflect the above mentioned national planning policy approach and full weight should therefore be attached to them.
- 7.20 The Council have published a consultation of the draft Widford Conservation Area. This identifies the area around the application site to have the greatest concentration of Listed Buildings within the area. There is a mixture of ages, materials and styles. Priory Farmhouse, which is adjacent to the application site and its associated barns are described within the draft Conservation Area appraisal as forming an important group in the centre of the Conservation Area.
- 7.21 The Parish Council are critical of the application and comment, *inter alia*, that plots 1-3 create one very large building which would be out of character with the site and surroundings. Letters from third parties raise a similar concern, but also object on other grounds relating to the impact on the setting of the listed building, the cramped and overdeveloped nature of the development, amongst other matters.

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- 7.22 In considering the amount, layout and design of the proposed development, the Council should take into account the existing buildings on the site. This involves not only the retention of the existing listed building and its conversion, but there is also the very large existing agricultural Dutch barn building. That building is the dominant feature on the site and is significant in terms of its mass and scale. Whilst the Dutch barn could not be said to be of a design which is complementary to the Conservation Area, its overall size is a consideration in assessing the acceptability of the amount/scale and height of development in this application.
- 7.23 In this regard the applicant has provided some volume calculations as to the amount of development existing on the site and that proposed. The applicant comments that the existing buildings on the application site which are proposed to be demolished have a volume of around 3659 cubic metres. The proposed development comprising of the five new dwellings has a volume of approximately 2522 cubic metres. The proposed development will therefore realise a reduction of 1137 cubic metres of building within the application site.
- 7.24 The buildings which are proposed to be demolished to allow for the new buildings are not, in Officers opinion, of a high quality design and appearance which are particularly sympathetic to the Conservation Area. The large Dutch barn in particular, is a dominant feature within the site. Whilst it does demonstrate its era of construction and plays some limited role in helping to define the historic evolution of the site and surroundings, its removal and replacement with a more sympathetic form of development should be seen as a positive aspect of the planning application which weighs in favour of the proposal, provided that any replacement meets policy objectives, which are set out above.
- 7.25 Whilst Officers are mindful of the comments from neighbouring properties, the proposed layout, spacing between dwellings and level of amenity proposed is generally considered to be appropriate to the context of the site and is not considered to appear cramped, congested nor represent an overdevelopment of the site.
- 7.26 The development does seem to respond well to the main constraints of the site – the listed buildings to the north, the listed boundary wall to the western boundary, trees and the public footpath to the south of the site. It is acknowledged that the presence of the listed wall to the west of the site will prohibit the potential for a more active frontage onto the High Street. However, the retention of the trees and siting of the residential units, will ensure that glimpses of the development from the Hunsdon Road will be achievable, which will add to and enhance the street scene



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in Officers opinion.

- 7.27 The affordable units to the front of the site will, it is acknowledged, be closer to the road frontage than the existing Dutch barn building. However, these dwellings do allow appropriate spacing to the protected trees to the front of the site and are therefore set back appropriately from the road frontage which also provides an appropriate level of amenity. Furthermore, the mass of the affordable units is broken up through the 'L' shape design and mixture of materials. In this respect, the layout, design and scale of these buildings is considered to assimilate well within the street scene and the site in general and appears sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 7.28 The more significant element of the development is plots 1-3 which has been raised as a concern by the Parish Council and local residents. Whilst Officers do understand those concerns and agree that plots 1-3 seem, in plan form, to create one large building, it will not, in Officers opinion, be viewed as such. The building serving plots 1, 2 and 3 creates a design, form and height of building which seeks to replicate a 'barn' type appearance, which is an acceptable approach given the location of the site adjacent to Priory Farm and associated listed barns. The materials of construction and openings on the west elevation help to articulate such an appearance, although any materials of construction should be high quality and appropriate to the setting and the provision of cedar boarding as shown on the proposed plans is questionable in this context.
- 7.29 The building serving plots 1 and 2 is broken up through the stagger to the roof ridge line and the garage additions, which also assist in creating a hierarchical and transition in height between plot 1, its garage and West Barn. Plot 3 is linked to plot 2, albeit only through a link to their associated garages. Plot 3 is set well back from the road frontage and Officers do not consider that it will be perceived in conjunction with plots 1 and 2, in this respect.
- 7.30 The height of plots 1-3 is greater than the existing Dutch barn building, by around a metre. Such a height increase in the built form will not, in Officers opinion, result in significant harm to the street scene when considering the siting of the building (set back from the road frontage by around 30metres, which is further back than the existing Dutch barn) and the mass and height of the proposed building in comparison to the Dutch barn is taken into account.
- 7.31 Turning to the impact on the setting of listed buildings; the main

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considerations relate to 'The House of Orange' and East and West Barn. With regards to the impact on The House of Orange, having regard to the siting and mass of the existing Dutch barn, Officers considered that the proposed development involving an alternative layout and design of building will result in an improved relationship with the setting that listed building. The demolition of the Dutch barn is considered to have a beneficial impact on the character and appearance of the surroundings generally.

- 7.32 There are acknowledged to be other listed buildings within the locality of the site, including Bullards, Swan House and Wann's Cottage – however the distance between the development site and those listed buildings is such that Officers do not consider that significant harm will be caused to their setting.
- 7.33 With regards to the impact on East and West Barn, having regard to the advice from the Conservation Officer and, for the reasons set out above, it is considered that the layout, design and siting of the proposed development will not result in a significant harm to the setting of those listed buildings. The siting of plots one and two does allow for a modest courtyard space which is achieved by the access and parking area to plots 4, 5 and 6. The provision of such a space reflects the farmstead character of the site and immediate surroundings and is appropriate to the setting of East and West Barns.
- 7.34 Turning to the conversion of the listed building, it is noted that the proposal retains the principal openings of the building on the east elevation and their replacement with fenestration, to provide an open plan living space within. This will ensure that minimal alteration and subdivision of the building is required. Two rooflights are proposed on the western roofslope. However, the rooflights are modest and, having regard to the advice from the Conservation Officer will not be detrimental to the Listed Building or its setting. Having regard to those considerations, the proposed residential conversion will not lead to significant harm to the special historic and architectural significance of the listed building, in accordance with section 12 of the NPPF. Further information in respect of the detail for the doors, windows and all making good and rainwater goods are required as is normal Conservation practice. Planning conditions in respect of these elements will cover such matters which, in the interests of the historical significance of the heritage asset, are both necessary and reasonable.
- 7.35 The significance of this site and relationship with adjacent buildings is acknowledged. The site does play an important role in the character of this part of the Conservation Area. In this respect and, having regard to

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the above considerations and the advice from the Conservation Officer, the proposed development will, in Officers opinion, enhance this setting and the character of the Conservation Area in this location. The proposed development therefore accords with policies HSG7, ENV1, BH6 and OSV2(II g-i) of the Local Plan and sections 7 and 12 of the NPPF.

### Neighbour amenity

- 7.36 East and West Barn are not currently occupied for residential purposes and there will therefore be no impact on amenity in that respect. Residential dwellings opposite the site on the other side of Hunsdon Road are located an appropriate distance away and the relationship with the proposed development, is considered acceptable, with existing retained trees obscuring views into the development site, particularly during the spring and summer months. In this respect, Officers do not consider that the proposed development will result in significant harm to the amenity of those properties.
- 7.37 The main consideration in respect of neighbour amenity relates to The House of Orange. Plot 4 is located at a distance of 18 metres 'side on' to The House of Orange and plot 2 is located 14 metres 'side onto' that neighbouring property also. No windows are proposed to the flank elevations of those dwellings and, given the distances/relationships, will not result in significant harm to the amenity of The House of Orange in terms of overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing or loss of privacy.
- 7.38 Plot 3 has a closer relationship with The House of Orange, in that its front elevation would face (albeit at an angle) to the rear of this neighbouring property. However, at a distance of over 20 metres, with no windows serving living accommodation at first floor on the front of plot 3, Officers do not consider that this building will result in significant harm in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy or overbearing impact.

### Highways/parking

- 7.39 The Parish Council and third parties raise concern with the traffic generation associated with the proposed development and how this will impact on highway safety and congestion on Hunsdon Road. Concern is also leveled at the information contained within the Transport Statement with respect to traffic generation. Whilst Officers acknowledge those concerns, County Highways consider that the information contained within the Transport Statement adequately describes traffic levels associated with the development and no objections are raised by that consultee in respect of the impact on

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highway safety or capacity. Having regard to the advice from County Highways and, taking into account the alterations to the proposed access and the level of development proposed; Officers do not consider that the proposed development will result in significant harm in highway safety or capacity terms.

- 7.40 Turning to parking provision, the development involves the provision of two no. two bed dwellings, one no. three bed dwelling and three no. five bed dwellings. In accordance with policy TR7 there is a maximum requirement for 14.25 parking spaces. The proposed development provides 14 parking spaces. Two spaces each are proposed for plots 4, 5 and 6. Plots 1, 2 and 3 each have a double cartlodge garage and plot 3 has space for parking to the front of the cartlodge for around two vehicles. The parking levels are considered to be acceptable and this is supported by the Highways Officer.
- 7.41 With regards to the impact on the public right of way, the proposed layout plan shows the retention of this footpath to the south of the application site. The proposed development will not therefore result in significant harm to that public right of way in accordance with policy LRC9 of the Local Plan. Officers recommend the inclusion of a directive relating to this matter, reminding the applicant that any alteration to the public right of way will require a separate consent.

Other matters

- 7.42 Concern is raised by third parties in respect of the impact on protected trees within the site. Officers are however mindful of the advice from the Landscape Officer who raises no such concern. The proposed development is located outside of the root protection area of trees which are proposed to be retained to the front of the site. The Landscape Officer does recommend that earthworks in relation to the parking serving plots 4, 5 and 6 be submitted as that parking area is within the root protection area of trees. Officers recommend such a condition and it is considered that, subject to appropriate earthworks being agreed, the parking areas will not result in harm to the protected trees.
- 7.43 The Landscape Officer generally considers that a landscape condition should be imposed on any grant of planning permission as this will determine how the development assimilates with the surroundings. In accordance with that advice and, having regard to policy ENV2 of the Local Plan, Officers recommend such a planning condition. The layout plan submitted with the application makes reference to a management plan for the protected trees to the front of the site. No information on this has however been submitted with the current application and, in the

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interests of protection and longevity of those protected trees and in accordance with policy ENV11 of the Local Plan, it is considered to be necessary and reasonable to require the submission of that management plan through a planning condition.

- 7.44 The comments from the County Archaeologist are noted. In accordance with that advice and, having regard to policies BH1, BH2 and BH3 of the Local Plan and section 12 of the NPPF it is considered to be necessary and reasonable to require, through a planning condition, the monitoring and recording of any archaeology within the site.
- 7.45 Turning to matters of ecology, the comments from Natural England and HBRC are noted. The site is within the vicinity of ponds which have been found to contain protected species - Great Crested Newts. The advice from the Council's consultees is however that the development may proceed subject to a planning condition relating to an unlicensed method statement. In accordance with that advice and having regard to policies ENV16 and section 11 of the NPPF, Officers consider that it is necessary and reasonable to attach such a planning condition.
- 7.46 HBRC recommend also a number of other planning conditions relating to bats and birds. However, the ecological report does not find that the proposed development will result in significant harm to such animals and the buildings proposed to be demolished do not contain bats. In this respect, planning conditions relating to such matters are unnecessary and unreasonable. Officers do however recommend a directive relating to bats.
- 7.47 The comments from Environmental Health are noted. Having regard to the nature of the development involving the demolition of existing buildings and the relationship with neighbouring properties it is considered to be necessary and reasonable to attach a planning condition restricting hours of use of plant and machinery and a construction method statement. Furthermore, having regard to the advice from Environmental Health and given the previous uses of the site and the requirements of policy ENV20, it is also necessary and reasonable to attach a planning condition relating to land decontamination.

## **8.0 Conclusion:**

- 8.1 In accordance with the above considerations, the principle of the proposed infill housing development and conversion of the existing building into a residential dwelling is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with policies GBC3, GBC9 and OSV2 of the Local Plan.

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Whilst it is acknowledged that limited justification has been submitted to show whether the existing buildings on site are able to be used for purposes other than residential, given the use/condition of the buildings currently on site; the relationship with residential properties and the costs associated with conversion, it is considered that such matters should weigh only slightly against the development proposal.

- 8.2 There is an acknowledged need for housing development across the District and within the village and the proposed development does provide two affordable units in accordance with policies HSG3 and HSG4 of the Local Plan. Such matters weigh in favour of the development proposal.
- 8.3 The site is acknowledged to play an important role in the immediate and wider setting of the Conservation Area which is explained within the Council's draft Conservation Area Appraisal. Officers do in this respect acknowledge the concerns from the Parish Council and third parties. However, for the reasons set out above, Officers do not consider that the proposed development will result in significant harm to the character, appearance or setting of the Conservation Area, particularly when the demolition of the existing buildings on the site are taken into account. Having regard to that consideration the proposed development will enhance the Conservation Area and preserve the setting of listed buildings within the immediate and wider vicinity of the site, in accordance with policy BH6 of the Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 8.4 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of highway matters, neighbour amenity, landscaping, ecology and other matters.
- 8.5 In accordance with the above considerations and, subject to the conditions set out at the head of this report, Officers therefore recommend that planning permission and listed building consent be granted.