Planning Design and Heritage Statement

Supporting Applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent

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Proposed Removal of the Holiday Occupancy Condition
Creation of Private Residential Amenity Space
Alterations to the Grade II Listed Barn Approximately 20 Metres North of The Hermitage
Historic England List Entry No. 1189123



The Hermitage, Ipstones Bank
Froghall
Staffordshire
ST10 2HQ

Prepared on behalf of the Applicants August 2026

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1. Introduction

This Planning Design and Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent relating to the Grade II listed barn approximately 20 metres north of The Hermitage (Historic England List Entry No. 1189123), located at The Hermitage, Ipstones Bank, Froghall, Staffordshire ST10 2HQ.

1.1 The application seeks to remove condition 1 of SMD/2004/0970 entirely to initially allow for indeterminate rental of the dwellings.

1.2 Specifically, the condition that is currently in effect states: -

Condition 1: *The premises shall be used for short-stay accommodation not exceeding 4 weeks at any one time except during the period 1st October to 31st March when it may be used for Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order, 1987 as long as no occupancy exceeds 3 months of any 12 month period. A register of such occupants including details of duration of stay will be kept and made available for inspection by the Local Planning Authority, if requested.*

1.3 This condition replaced the original condition applied under SM99-0224, that stated: -

- *The premises shall be used for short term holiday accommodation not exceeding four weeks at any on time and for no other purpose including any purpose in Class C3 (dwelling houses) of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987.*

1.4 This change to a C3 dwelling house was allowed in order to ensure a viable future for the heritage asset. The planning officers delegated report in support of this change is attached in the appendices (Attachment 2).

The application seeks permission for the removal of the existing holiday occupancy condition which attached to planning permission Ref 04/01361/FUL (SMD/2004/0970), dated 20 January 2005.

This will be achieved by the creation and addition of appropriate private outdoor amenity space, the removal of the modern lean-to attached to the rear elevation, the reopening and reuse of existing historic openings.

This statement should be read alongside the accompanying documents, which together provide the full planning, heritage and viability evidence in support of the application. The accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment forms an integral part of the planning case and should be read in conjunction with this statement.

The accompanying documents are:

- Optimum Viable Use Assessment
- Sustainability and Accessibility Assessment
- Financial Performance Assessment
- Existing and Proposed Drawings
- Supporting Technical Plans and Elevations

The proposal has been carefully developed in response to the findings of the Planning Inspectorate decisions issued in December 2020 (APP/B3438/W/20/3253390 and APP/B3438/Y/20/3253392) and June 2025 (APP/B3438/W/25/3358820). Those decisions identified two principal matters requiring further consideration: the provision of suitable private residential amenity space and the need for more robust evidence demonstrating that unrestricted residential occupation represents the optimum viable use of the listed building.

The current proposals directly address both of these matters. The scheme provides dedicated private outdoor amenity space through the removal of a modern lean-to that detracts from the setting of the listed building, whilst the accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment provides comprehensive evidence, based on more than three years of active operation, substantial capital investment, detailed financial analysis and marketing evidence, demonstrating that unrestricted residential occupation now represents the optimum viable use of the heritage asset.

Taken together, the submitted documents demonstrate that the proposal preserves and enhances the significance of the Grade II listed building, secures its long-term conservation through a sustainable and viable use, provides an appropriate standard of residential amenity and fully addresses the concerns that led to the dismissal of the previous appeals.

2. Site Background and Ownership

The applicants purchased the holiday accommodation business in 2021. The surrounding agricultural holding remains under separate ownership and continues to be operated by the Barlows.

Since acquisition, the applicants have invested in excess of £100,000 in improvements including replacement kitchens, flooring, carpets, furniture, lighting, decoration, energy-efficient boilers and the creation of a dedicated indoor play and entertainment barn. Despite significant investment and active management over a period of approximately three years, the holiday accommodation business has not achieved a sustainable level of profitability.

3. Existing Accommodation

The listed barn currently comprises The Coach House, The Pump House, The Smithy and Anvil Cottage. The Smithy and Anvil Cottage are physically connected and operate as a

combined unit. Under the proposed arrangement the building will provide three residential units, each served by one of the three existing historic rear openings.

4. Description of the Proposal

The proposal comprises:

- Removal of the existing lean-to structure attached to the rear elevation of the listed barn.
- Creation of private outdoor amenity areas.
- Allocation of additional shared amenity space within the existing open-sided barn**.**
- Reopening and reuse of three existing historic openings.
- Internal reconfiguration of modern partitions where required.
- Removal of the holiday occupancy restriction.
- Continued use as unrestricted Class C3 residential accommodation.

Importantly, no additional openings are proposed within the historic fabric of the listed building. The proposal does not alter the position or size of existing windows or materially change the outlook available from the first-floor accommodation compared with the existing lawful use.

5. Design Principles

Design Philosophy

The proposal has been developed in accordance with a clear heritage-led design philosophy, seeking to secure the long-term conservation of the Grade II listed barn whilst enabling a viable and sustainable future use. The overriding objective has been to achieve the minimum level of physical intervention necessary to support permanent residential occupation, whilst preserving and, where possible, enhancing the historic significance of the building.

Rather than introducing substantial alterations or extensions, the proposal focuses on the removal of later unsympathetic additions, the reinstatement of historic features and the sensitive adaptation of the existing building. The design approach has therefore been guided by the principles of conservation, repair and reuse, ensuring that the building's agricultural character and architectural integrity remain readily apparent.

Heritage-Led Design

The proposal deliberately limits alterations to those necessary to facilitate the proposed change of use and improve the setting of the listed building. The removal of the existing

modern lean-to represents a significant heritage benefit by revealing the original rear elevation and reinstating the historic form of the building.

Similarly, the proposal makes use of existing historic openings rather than creating new ones. This approach reduces intervention within the historic fabric, preserves the building's significance and reflects established conservation principles of minimum intervention and maximum retention of original fabric.

Overall, the scheme has been designed to respect the architectural character, materials and historic evolution of the listed building whilst providing accommodation capable of meeting modern residential expectations.

Landscape and External Spaces

The proposed gardens will be created under guidance for the conservation to suit the scale and character of the converted barn. Their layout will be carefully considered to avoid creating an overly suburban appearance whilst providing the level of outdoor space expected for permanent residential occupation.

The removal of the modern lean-to creates the opportunity to reinstate the historic rear elevation and establish well-defined garden areas using simple, traditional boundary treatments and sympathetic landscaping. Existing mature landscape features are retained wherever possible, ensuring that the rural setting of the building continues to dominate its character.

The proposed landscaping therefore performs both functional and heritage roles by improving residential amenity whilst enhancing appreciation of the listed building.

Materials

The proposal seeks to retain the existing traditional materials that contribute to the significance of the listed building. Existing stonework, roofing materials and historic features will be preserved wherever practicable, with repairs undertaken using appropriate matching materials and traditional construction techniques.

No new external materials are introduced other than those necessary to facilitate the removal of the modern lean-to and associated reinstatement works. This restrained approach ensures that the character and appearance of the listed building remain the dominant features of the site.

6. Access

Existing Access Arrangements

The proposal does not alter the established means of access to the site. Vehicular access will continue to be taken from the existing entrance onto Froghall Road, which has historically served both the residential property and the holiday accommodation.

No changes are proposed to the internal access arrangements, circulation routes or the established relationship between the buildings within the site. Consequently, the proposal does not generate any highway implications beyond those associated with the existing lawful use.

Parking and Movement

Existing parking arrangements are retained and continue to provide sufficient off-street parking for the proposed residential use. The proposal does not require additional access roads, parking courts or other engineered infrastructure, thereby avoiding unnecessary visual impact upon the setting of the listed building.

Pedestrian movement within the site also remains unchanged, with residents continuing to access their properties via the existing courtyard and established pathways.

Accessibility and Inclusive Use

The proposal represents the continued occupation of existing converted accommodation rather than the construction of new dwellings. The layout of the buildings and access arrangements therefore remain largely unchanged.

The Sustainability and Accessibility assessment demonstrates that the site benefits from access to local services, educational facilities and healthcare within the nearby village of Ipstones. In addition, the Moorlands Connect demand-responsive bus service operates directly from the site, providing access to surrounding settlements and connecting with the wider public transport network.

The proposal therefore makes effective use of an existing residential environment and established infrastructure without requiring new roads or service provision.

Sustainable Movement

Although residents of rural Staffordshire Moorlands are likely to rely upon private vehicles for some journeys, the proposal does not introduce a new isolated dwelling into the countryside. Instead, it secures the continued occupation of an existing converted building with established infrastructure, access arrangements and service connections.

Importantly, permanent residential occupation is not expected to generate greater levels of vehicle movement than the existing authorised holiday accommodation use. Holiday accommodation inherently generates frequent guest arrivals and departures, servicing visits, cleaning operations, laundry collections and maintenance activities associated with short-term occupancy. By contrast, permanent residential occupation results in stable, day-to-day travel patterns with significantly fewer servicing and operational visits. Furthermore, the proposal reduces the number of units within the barn from four to three, which is likely to reduce the overall number of occupants and associated vehicle movements when compared with both the existing holiday accommodation use and a four-unit residential scheme. The proposal therefore has the potential to reduce overall traffic generation whilst continuing to make effective use of the existing highway access and parking arrangements.

The proposal therefore represents an efficient reuse of existing infrastructure whilst supporting the long-term conservation of the listed building through a sustainable and economically viable use.

7. Heritage Significance and Impact

Historical Development

The Hermitage has ancient origins, forming part of the Manor of Ipstones until its sale in 1649. The farm was subsequently purchased by Michael Bradshaw in 1651. The name appears as "Armitage" in the Ipstones parish register of 1656 before evolving into the modern form "Hermitage", which appears on Yates' map of Staffordshire published in 1775. Although the National Heritage List for England describes the farmhouse and associated barns as dating from the late seventeenth century, research by Faith Cleverdon (*Landscape with Buildings: A North Staffordshire Study Based on the Medieval Parish of Leek*, 2002) suggests that the southern range of the farmhouse may date from around 1600, with the northern range added during the eighteenth century. The buildings were constructed using locally quarried sandstone and have evolved over several centuries while retaining their agricultural character.

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the farm was occupied by several well-established local farming families, most notably the Fernihoughs and later the Scarratts, who managed a substantial mixed farm extending to over 150 acres. During this period the agricultural buildings evolved in response to changing farming practices while continuing to function as a traditional working farm.

Following the sale of the wider Shawe Estate in 1919, Hermitage Farm passed into new ownership but remained in agricultural use throughout the twentieth century.

The Barlow family acquired the farm in 1980 and diversified the business through agriculture, bed and breakfast accommodation and, following planning permission granted in 1999, the conversion of the curtilage-listed barn to self-catering holiday accommodation.

Although now separated from the holiday cottages, The farm continues to operate as an active agricultural holding.

Heritage Significance

The application building is a Grade II listed eighteenth-century agricultural barn that forms part of the historic farmstead associated with The Hermitage. It derives its significance from its traditional sandstone construction, simple agricultural form, surviving historic openings and its contribution to the character and appearance of the wider listed farmstead.
The building also contributes positively to the historic relationship between the farmhouse, farmyard and surrounding agricultural landscape. Although adapted for holiday accommodation, it retains its historic form, scale and architectural character, with the principal heritage significance remaining clearly legible.

The existing lean-to attached to the rear elevation is a modern addition of limited architectural or historic significance. It obscures the original rear elevation and

detracts from the appreciation of the historic fabric. Its removal will reveal the original stonework and reinstate the historic appearance of the building.

The proposal does not introduce new openings into the listed building. Instead, it reinstates the use of existing historic openings that have previously been blocked or altered, preserving the building's historic fabric while allowing the accommodation to function effectively as permanent residential dwellings.

Overall, the proposals preserve and enhance the significance of the Grade II listed building by removing a later, unsympathetic addition, revealing the original rear elevation and securing a sustainable long-term use through unrestricted residential occupation. The accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment demonstrates that this represents the optimum viable use of the heritage asset and provides the best prospect for its continued conservation.

8. Previous Appeal Decisions

The current proposal has been carefully informed by two previous Planning Inspectorate decisions relating to the site and has been specifically designed to address the concerns identified within those decisions whilst retaining the benefits expressly acknowledged by the Inspectors.

Appeal Decisions APP/B3438/W/20/3253390 and APP/B3438/Y/20/3253392 (2020)

The 2020 appeal considered proposals involving the removal of agricultural buildings to the rear of the listed barn, the creation of private garden areas and alterations to the rear elevation.

Importantly, the Inspector accepted that the reopening of existing historic openings would not be harmful to the listed building, stating:

"The use of previously blocked openings within the rear façade and the reconfiguration of modern partitions within the individual units would not be harmful to the historic built fabric of the listed building".

The Inspector's principal concern related not to the reopening of historic openings but to the creation of additional new openings within the rear elevation which would have altered the character and legibility of the historic barn.

The Inspector also concluded that the removal of the modern agricultural structures attached to and located behind the listed barn would provide a clear heritage benefit, stating:

"The existing agricultural buildings to the rear of the barn are of a utilitarian form, layout and appearance. While they help to illustrate the incremental development of the farmstead, particularly over modern times, they crowd and obscure the rear façade of the listed building, which makes a negative contribution to its setting. The removal of those buildings, in itself, would therefore improve the setting of the listed building, as more of the rear of the building would be evident from within the farmyard and surrounding areas."

The current proposal directly responds to these findings. No additional openings are proposed. Instead, the scheme relies solely upon the reopening and use of the three existing historic openings already present within the rear elevation. At the same time, the proposal secures a clear heritage benefit through the removal of the modern lean-to structure which currently obscures part of the historic rear façade.

Appeal Decision APP/B3438/W/25/3358820 (2025)

The 2025 appeal considered the removal of the holiday occupancy restriction affecting the accommodation units.

This decision is particularly relevant to the current application because the Inspector accepted a number of important principles which support the proposal.

In relation to tourism impacts, the Inspector concluded:

"Although the loss of the units would inevitably reduce the supply of tourist accommodation in the area, I am not persuaded, in the context of the site's location and the mixed-use nature of the development, that the removal of the condition would be contrary to the development plan strategy for sustainable tourism."

The Inspector then concluded:

"For these reasons, I conclude that the removal of the condition would not harm the supply of visitor accommodation in the area."

The Inspector also considered the impact upon the listed building and concluded:

"I am therefore satisfied that the proposed removal of the condition would preserve the special interest of the heritage asset."

Furthermore, the Inspector recognised the benefits associated with securing a long-term future for the building, stating:

"Securing a long-term viable use for the listed building would also help to ensure that the building is managed and maintained appropriately also."

The appeal was ultimately dismissed not because permanent residential occupation was considered unacceptable in principle, nor because of any concerns regarding tourism impacts or heritage impacts. Instead, the Inspector's conclusions focused primarily upon two matters.

Firstly, the Inspector found that the existing units lacked suitable private outdoor amenity space for permanent residential occupation, stating that:

"The lack of a private garden of a suitable size for activities such as sitting out, drying clothes, and for children to play, would be harmful to the living conditions of future occupiers."

Secondly, the Inspector concluded that insufficient evidence had been submitted to demonstrate that unrestricted residential occupation represented the optimum viable use of the heritage asset.

The current proposal has been specifically designed to address both of these concerns. The removal of the redundant lean-to and associated modern structures allows the creation of dedicated outdoor amenity areas for each dwelling, directly addressing the Inspector's concerns regarding residential amenity. This provision will be supplemented by additional shared amenity space within the existing open-sided barn, providing residents with a substantial covered communal area without requiring further enclosure, subdivision or physical alteration to the listed building or its setting. In addition, the applicants are now able to provide evidence of more than three years of active operation of the holiday

accommodation business together with substantial investment in improvements, upgrades and modernisation works.

Taken together, the two appeal decisions provide clear support for a number of key elements of the current proposal. The Inspectors accepted that removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would not harm tourism provision, that a viable long-term use would assist in securing the future of the listed building, that reopening existing historic openings would not be harmful, and that removal of the modern structures to the rear of the barn would improve its setting. The current proposal combines dedicated private outdoor areas with substantial shared covered amenity space within the existing open-sided barn, while avoiding the need for additional domestic enclosure or alteration. It has therefore been carefully designed to retain the benefits identified in the previous decisions whilst directly addressing the concerns that led to the dismissal of the previous appeals.

9. How this Application Differs from Previous Appeals

The current application has been carefully prepared in direct response to the findings of the Planning Inspectorate decisions issued in December 2020 (APP/B3438/W/20/3253390 and APP/B3438/Y/20/3253392) and June 2025 (APP/B3438/W/25/3358820). It should not be regarded as a repeat of the earlier proposals. Instead, it has been fundamentally revised and is supported by a comprehensive suite of evidence specifically prepared to address the concerns identified by the Planning Inspector.

Provision of Private Residential Amenity Space

The principal reason for the dismissal of the 2025 appeal was the absence of suitable private outdoor amenity space for the proposed dwellings. The current proposal directly addresses this concern through the creation of dedicated private garden areas for each dwelling.

These gardens have been carefully designed to provide an appropriate level of private residential amenity whilst respecting the historic character of the listed building and its setting. The removal of the existing modern lean-to enables the reinstatement of the historic rear elevation and allows the gardens to be accommodated without introducing an unduly suburban character. The proposal therefore directly addresses the Inspector's previous concerns regarding residential amenity whilst simultaneously delivering heritage benefits through the removal of an unsympathetic modern addition.

Heritage Improvements

The current proposal also differs from earlier schemes by concentrating on the enhancement of the listed building itself.

The removal of the modern lean-to, together with the reopening of existing historic openings, will better reveal the original agricultural form of the building and enhance its significance. Importantly, the proposal does not rely upon the creation of new openings or alterations that would adversely affect the historic fabric. Instead, it makes better use of surviving historic features whilst preserving the architectural integrity and historic significance of the Grade II listed building.

Comprehensive Evidence of Optimum Viable Use

A further significant distinction between this application and the previous appeal is the submission of a comprehensive body of supporting evidence addressing the long-term viability of the existing authorised use.

The Planning Inspector concluded in 2025 that insufficient evidence had been provided to demonstrate that unrestricted residential occupation represented the optimum viable use of the listed building. The current application responds directly to that finding through the

submission of both a **Financial Performance Assessment** and an accompanying **Optimum Viable Use Assessment**.

The Financial Performance Assessment provides detailed factual evidence of the operation of the business over more than three years, including its trading history, statutory financial accounts, capital investment exceeding £100,000, management arrangements, marketing strategy, staffing, operational commitment and the substantial unpaid owner labour required to sustain the business. It demonstrates that the applicants actively pursued the authorised holiday accommodation use through significant financial investment, professional management and sustained personal commitment.

Drawing upon this financial evidence, together with an assessment of the heritage significance of the building and consideration of reasonable alternative uses, the accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment concludes that the existing holiday accommodation use has been afforded every reasonable opportunity to succeed but has not demonstrated the level of commercial performance necessary to provide a commercially sustainable long-term future. It therefore concludes that unrestricted Class C3 residential occupation now represents the optimum viable use of the listed building, securing its long-term conservation through an economically sustainable use.

A Fundamentally Different Proposal

Accordingly, this application should not be viewed as a resubmission of previous proposals. It is supported by a significantly more comprehensive evidence base, including the Planning Design and Heritage Statement, Sustainability and Accessibility Statement, Financial Performance Assessment and Optimum Viable Use Assessment. Taken together, these documents directly address the concerns identified in the previous appeal decisions and provide a robust, objective and evidence-based justification for the proposed development.

Comprehensive Supporting Evidence

Unlike the previous appeal, the current application is supported by a coordinated suite of technical documents, including:

- Planning, Design and Heritage Statement;
- Optimum Viable Use Assessment;
- Financial Performance Assessment;
- Existing and Proposed Plans and Elevations;
- Sustainability and Accessibility Assessment;

Taken together, these documents provide a substantially more robust evidence base than was available to the Planning Inspector during the previous appeal.

Planning Balance

The current application therefore differs from previous proposals in several important respects. It:

- directly addresses the Inspector's concerns regarding private residential amenity;
- enhances the significance of the Grade II listed building through the removal of a modern, unsympathetic addition;
- preserves the historic character of the building by reopening existing historic openings rather than creating new ones;
- provides comprehensive evidence demonstrating that unrestricted residential occupation represents the optimum viable use of the heritage asset; and
- secures the long-term conservation of the listed building through a sustainable and economically viable use.

For these reasons, the current proposal should be considered on its own merits as a materially different scheme that responds directly and comprehensively to the issues identified in the previous appeal decisions.

10. Planning Policy Assessment

The proposal has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020).

The NPPF places great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets and supports proposals that secure viable uses consistent with their conservation. Paragraphs relating to conserving and enhancing the historic environment recognise the importance of sustaining heritage assets through appropriate long-term uses and securing their continued maintenance and occupation.

The proposal is also consistent with the overarching objective of sustainable development by making effective use of an existing building, securing the long-term future of a heritage asset and avoiding the need for new-build development elsewhere.

Policy DC2 – Historic Environment

Policy DC2 seeks to protect, conserve and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets.

The proposal directly supports this objective. The removal of the modern lean-to structure will expose part of the historic rear elevation of the listed barn and improve appreciation of its historic form. This benefit was expressly recognised by the Planning Inspector in the 2020 appeal decision.

The proposal relies solely upon the reopening of existing historic openings and introduces no additional openings within the historic fabric. As such, the scheme preserves the architectural and historic significance of the listed building whilst improving appreciation of its original form.

The proposal therefore accords fully with Policy DC2.

Policy DC1 – Design Considerations

Policy DC1 requires development to respect local character, safeguard amenity and respond positively to its surroundings.

The proposal utilises existing historic openings, retains the traditional character of the listed barn and removes structures which detract from its appearance and setting.

Importantly, the proposal also addresses the principal concern identified by the Planning Inspector in the 2025 appeal decision through the provision of suitable outdoor amenity space for future residents.

The proposal therefore satisfies the requirements of Policy DC1.

Policy H1 – New Housing Development

Policy H1 supports the conversion of rural buildings where such development represents the optimum viable use of a heritage asset or where it secures the future of that asset.

The applicants have actively operated the holiday accommodation business since acquiring the property in 2021 and have invested in excess of £100,000 in improvements and upgrades. Despite this investment, the business has not achieved a sustainable level of profitability.

The accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment demonstrates that unrestricted residential occupation now represents the optimum viable use of the building and provides the most realistic means of securing its long-term future.

The proposal therefore accords with Policy H1(5)(d).

Policies SS10 and SS11 – Rural Areas and Churnet Valley Strategy

The appeal site lies within the Churnet Valley where policies seek to support sustainable rural development and encourage appropriate economic activity.

The proposal secures the continued occupation and maintenance of an existing listed building and provides a sustainable future for a heritage asset that has already undergone conversion.

The proposal does not involve the loss of agricultural land, does not adversely affect the operation of the adjoining farm and does not introduce development that would harm the landscape character of the area.

Policy E4 – Tourism and Rural Diversification

Policy E4 supports tourism and rural diversification.

Importantly, the Planning Inspector concluded in the 2025 appeal decision that:

"The removal of the condition would not harm the supply of visitor accommodation in the area."

The Inspector further concluded that the proposal would not be contrary to Policies E4, SS10 and SS11.

The current application therefore benefits from a clear and recent Planning Inspectorate finding that removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would not adversely affect tourism provision within the Churnet Valley.

Policy T1 – Development and Sustainable Transport

The previous appeal identified concerns regarding the sustainability of the location for unrestricted residential occupation.

However, the current application must be considered in its specific context. The building is already occupied throughout the year under the existing mixed-use arrangements and the proposal does not create a new residential building. Instead, it regularises and rationalises the existing occupation of the accommodation.

Furthermore, the 2025 appeal decision accepted that the likely increase in vehicle movements would be modest.

The proposal therefore does not result in a significant transport impact and benefits from existing access, parking and servicing arrangements.

11. Optimum Viability Assessment

The accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment has been prepared specifically to address the evidential deficiencies identified by the Planning Inspector in Appeal APP/B3438/W/25/3358820.

The assessment demonstrates that:

- The holiday accommodation business has been actively operated for over three years;
- In excess of £100,000 has been invested since acquisition;
- Detailed financial analysis demonstrates that the holiday accommodation business has not achieved a sustainable level of profitability;
- Permanent unrestricted residential occupation represents the optimum viable use of the listed building in accordance with Policy H1(5)(d) of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The findings of that assessment should be read alongside this Planning Design and Heritage Statement and form part of the supporting evidence for this application.

12. Tourism Impact

The impact of the proposal upon tourism provision has already been considered in detail by the Planning Inspectorate through Appeal Decision APP/B3438/W/25/3358820.

In that decision the Inspector specifically considered whether removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would adversely affect tourism provision within the Churnet Valley and the wider Staffordshire Moorlands area.

The Inspector acknowledged that the proposal would result in the loss of four units of holiday accommodation. However, having considered the location of the site, the mixed-use nature of the accommodation and the relevant development plan policies, the Inspector concluded:

"Although the loss of the units would inevitably reduce the supply of tourist accommodation in the area, I am not persuaded, in the context of the site's location and the mixed-use nature of the development, that the removal of the condition would be contrary to the development plan strategy for sustainable tourism."

The Inspector went on to conclude:

"For these reasons, I conclude that the removal of the condition would not harm the supply of visitor accommodation in the area."

This conclusion is particularly significant because it directly addresses one of the principal concerns often associated with proposals involving the loss of holiday accommodation.

The Inspector further concluded that the proposal would not be contrary to Policies E4, SS10 and SS11 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, all of which seek to support tourism and rural diversification within the district.

The current proposal therefore benefits from a clear and recent Planning Inspectorate finding that removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would not adversely affect tourism provision within the Churnet Valley.

Furthermore, since the 2025 appeal decision, the applicants have continued to operate the holiday accommodation business and have accumulated further evidence regarding its commercial performance. This additional evidence reinforces the conclusion that the existing holiday accommodation model is not capable of providing a sustainable long-term future for the building despite substantial investment and active management.

It is also relevant that the accommodation has historically operated as a mixed-use development, allowing both holiday occupation and residential occupation during parts of the year. The proposal therefore does not represent the loss of a wholly tourism-dependent facility but rather the rationalisation of an existing mixed-use arrangement into a permanent residential use.

The proposal must also be viewed in the context of the wider tourism market within the Churnet Valley and Staffordshire Moorlands. The area benefits from a substantial and diverse range of visitor accommodation including hotels, guest houses, holiday cottages, holiday parks, camping and glamping facilities, together with accommodation associated with major visitor attractions including Alton Towers. The loss of four units of holiday accommodation at Hermitage Farm would not materially affect the ability of the area to accommodate visitors.

Consequently, there is no evidence that the proposal would undermine tourism objectives within the Churnet Valley or conflict with the tourism policies of the Local Plan. On the contrary, the Planning Inspector has already determined that removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would not harm visitor accommodation provision and would not conflict with Policies E4, SS10 or SS11.

The proposal should therefore be regarded as fully compliant with the tourism objectives of the development plan.

13. Living Conditions and Amenity Space

The provision of suitable outdoor amenity space formed a central consideration of Appeal Decision **APP/B3438/W/25/**3358820 and was ultimately one of the principal reasons for dismissal of that appeal.

The Inspector noted that the existing accommodation only benefited from small patio areas located to the front of the building and concluded that these arrangements were acceptable for holiday accommodation and short-term occupation but were inadequate for permanent residential occupation.

In particular, the Inspector concluded that:

"The lack of a private garden of a suitable size for activities such as sitting out, drying clothes, and for children to play, would be harmful to the living conditions of future occupiers."

The current proposal has been specifically designed to address this concern through a combination of dedicated private outdoor amenity space and substantial additional shared covered amenity space.

The scheme includes the removal of the redundant lean-to and associated modern structures located to the rear of the listed barn and the creation of dedicated private outdoor amenity areas directly associated with each residential unit. These comprise private front courtyard patios of approximately 20 square metres, together with private rear gardens of approximately 50 square metres or greater, providing each dwelling with approximately 70 square metres or more of dedicated private outdoor amenity space.

In addition to these individual private areas, residents will have access to additional shared amenity space within the existing open-sided barn situated across the courtyard. This provides a substantial covered communal area capable of supporting informal recreation, sitting out and social activities throughout the year, complementing rather than replacing the dedicated private amenity space associated with each dwelling.

Importantly, the shared amenity provision makes productive use of an existing part of the historic complex and requires no additional building, enclosure or subdivision. It therefore increases the range and extent of amenity available to future residents without introducing further domestic structures or features into the setting of the listed barn.

Taken together, the private front patios, rear gardens and shared covered amenity area provide a varied and substantial range of amenity spaces suitable for permanent residential occupation. Future residents would have access to private areas for sitting out, gardening, drying clothes and other normal domestic activities, together with a much larger shared covered space suitable for recreation and communal use.

Private Residential Amenity

Each dwelling is provided with approximately 70 square metres or more of dedicated private outdoor amenity space, comprising a private front courtyard patio of approximately 20 square metres together with a private rear garden of approximately 50 square metres or greater.

The front patios provide private sitting-out areas within the historic courtyard, whilst the rear gardens provide outdoor spaces capable of accommodating the normal activities associated with permanent residential occupation, including outdoor seating, dining, recreation, planting, drying clothes and general enjoyment.

Although there is no nationally prescribed minimum standard for private residential garden sizes, the proposed provision represents a substantial improvement over the amenity arrangements considered by the Inspector in the 2025 appeal and provides clearly defined private outdoor spaces capable of supporting normal day-to-day residential activities.

The design has deliberately sought to balance the provision of appropriate private residential amenity with the need to conserve the agricultural character and significance of the Grade II listed barn. The extent and treatment of the private areas have therefore been carefully considered to avoid unnecessary enclosure and an overly suburban form of development.

Additional Shared Amenity Space

The dedicated private amenity areas are supplemented by the allocation of substantial shared amenity space within the existing open-sided barn located across the courtyard.

The open-sided barn already forms part of the established historic complex and provides a large, sheltered and readily accessible space that can be used by residents for sitting, informal recreation, social activities and general communal enjoyment. Its covered nature also provides a useful form of amenity during periods when weather conditions may restrict the use of the external gardens and courtyard areas.

This shared space is additional to, rather than a substitute for, the dedicated private amenity areas provided for each dwelling.

The use of the open-sided barn for shared amenity purposes is particularly appropriate within the context of the listed complex because it requires no extension, new building or further physical enclosure. It therefore enables a substantial increase in the overall amenity available to residents while retaining the open and agricultural character of the existing courtyard group.

The combination of private gardens, courtyard patios and substantial shared covered amenity space provides future residents with a choice of private, communal, open and sheltered spaces and represents a significant improvement over the arrangements considered in the previous appeal.

Response to the Previous Appeal Decisions

The proposal should therefore be clearly distinguished from the scheme considered in the 2025 appeal. Whereas the previous proposal sought removal of the holiday occupancy restriction without providing suitable private garden space, the current proposal directly addresses that deficiency.

Each dwelling would now benefit from approximately 70 square metres or more of dedicated private outdoor amenity space, supplemented by substantial shared covered amenity space within the existing open-sided barn.

The proposal also responds positively to the findings of the 2020 appeal decision. The rear amenity areas are made possible through the removal of modern structures that the Planning Inspector identified as detracting from the setting of the listed building, while access to those areas is achieved through the reopening and reuse of existing historic openings rather than the creation of additional openings within the historic fabric.

The approach therefore provides an opportunity to address residential amenity requirements while also securing heritage benefits through removal of unsympathetic modern structures and restoration of the legibility of the historic rear elevation.

Existing Residential Context

The proposal should also be considered within the context of the existing pattern of development surrounding the site. The Hermitage already comprises an established mixed residential environment consisting of the principal farmhouse together with two permanently occupied residential cottages. In addition, the adjoining agricultural holding includes its own established dwelling.

More widely, the surrounding rural area is characterised by residential properties situated in close proximity to working farms and agricultural buildings. Such relationships are an established characteristic of the Staffordshire Moorlands countryside and are not unusual within a rural environment.

The proposal therefore does not introduce residential occupation into an agricultural setting where such occupation has not previously existed. Instead, it extends an established pattern of residential use within the existing complex whilst retaining the longstanding relationship between the site and neighbouring agricultural operations.

Furthermore, the converted cottages have operated as authorised holiday accommodation during the applicants' ownership, accommodating guests throughout the year under the existing lawful use. The proposal does not alter the physical relationship between the accommodation and the neighbouring farm, nor does it introduce buildings closer to agricultural activities. It changes the nature of occupation within an existing and established built environment.

Internal Living Conditions and Outlook

The proposed dwellings provide an appropriate standard of outlook for future occupiers. Of the seven bedrooms within the building, four are served by conventional external windows

and the remaining three are each served by twin rooflights, providing natural light, ventilation and sufficient external outlook.

These arrangements form part of the existing lawful conversion of the Grade II listed barn. No new bedrooms are proposed and the application does not alter the position or size of any existing windows or rooflights. The outlook and internal living conditions therefore remain unchanged from the established accommodation.

Importantly, the same accommodation was considered by the Planning Inspector in Appeal APP/B3438/W/25/3358820. While the Inspector specifically considered the living conditions of future permanent occupiers and identified the absence of suitable private outdoor amenity space as a concern, no concern was identified regarding bedroom outlook or the existing window and rooflight arrangements.

The proposal now directly addresses the amenity deficiency identified by the Inspector through the provision of substantial private and shared outdoor amenity space. Taken as a whole, the existing windows and rooflights provide sufficient outlook, daylight and ventilation, and an appropriate standard of internal residential amenity.

Overall Residential Amenity

Taking these matters together, the proposal provides a comprehensive range of residential amenity appropriate to the character of a converted Grade II listed barn within a rural setting.

The scheme has been specifically designed to address the principal concern identified by the Planning Inspector in Appeal Decision APP/B3438/W/25/3358820. Each dwelling would benefit from approximately 70 square metres or more of dedicated private outdoor amenity space, comprising front courtyard and rear garden areas, together with access to substantial additional shared covered amenity space within the existing open-sided barn.

This combination provides future occupiers with a choice of private and communal, open and sheltered amenity spaces capable of accommodating the range of activities normally associated with permanent residential occupation.

Importantly, this enhanced amenity provision is achieved without introducing new buildings and while limiting additional enclosure around the listed barn. The use of the existing open-sided barn as shared amenity space provides additional residential benefit without physical alteration to that structure, while removal of the modern rear lean-to and associated structures provides the opportunity to improve the setting and historic legibility of the listed building.

Accordingly, the proposal responds directly to the principal residential amenity concern identified in the 2025 appeal while seeking to do so in a manner sensitive to the heritage concerns identified through the earlier planning history.

When considered as a whole, the combination of substantial dedicated private amenity space and additional shared covered amenity space provides an appropriate standard of

living for future occupiers whilst seeking to preserve the agricultural character and significance of the Grade II listed building.

14. Planning Balance and Public Benefits

The proposal should be assessed in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan as a whole. When considered in its entirety, the scheme delivers a range of significant heritage, planning and public benefits which substantially outweigh any limited adverse impacts.

Securing the Long-Term Conservation of a Heritage Asset

A principal objective of both national and local planning policy is to secure the long-term conservation of designated heritage assets through sustainable and viable uses.

The accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment demonstrates that, despite substantial investment, active management and extensive marketing over a period exceeding three years, the holiday accommodation business has not achieved a sustainable level of profitability. The proposal therefore represents the optimum viable use of the listed building and provides the most realistic means of securing its continued occupation, maintenance and long-term conservation.

Heritage Enhancement

The proposal delivers clear heritage benefits through the removal of the modern lean-to structure attached to the rear elevation of the listed barn. As recognised by the Planning Inspector in the 2020 appeal decision, this structure detracts from the setting of the listed building and obscures appreciation of its historic form.

Its removal will reveal the historic rear elevation, improve understanding of the building's agricultural origins and enhance the significance and setting of the heritage asset.

Importantly, the proposal introduces no new openings into the historic fabric. Instead, it reinstates the use of existing historic openings, preserving the architectural integrity of the building whilst allowing it to function successfully as permanent residential accommodation.

Improved Residential Amenity

The proposal directly addresses the principal reason for refusal identified in Appeal APP/B3438/W/25/3358820 through the provision of dedicated private outdoor amenity space for each dwelling.

The proposed amenity spaces provide an appropriate standard of residential amenity consistent with permanent occupation whilst respecting the historic character of the listed building and its setting.

Tourism

The Planning Inspector has already concluded that removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would not materially harm the supply of visitor accommodation within the Churnet Valley and would not conflict with Policies E4, SS10 or SS11 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

The proposal therefore benefits from an existing Planning Inspectorate finding that the change would not result in unacceptable harm to the area's tourism offer.

Sustainable Development

The proposal represents sustainable development through the continued use of an existing converted building. No new built development is proposed and the scheme makes effective use of existing buildings, infrastructure, access arrangements and services.

The proposal also secures the continued occupation and maintenance of a designated heritage asset, thereby reducing the risk of future deterioration.

Response to Previous Appeal Decisions

The current application has been specifically designed to address the concerns identified by the Planning Inspectorate.

Unlike the previous proposals, it:

- Provides dedicated private outdoor amenity space for each dwelling;
- Removes a modern structure that detracts from the listed building;
- Reuses only existing historic openings;
- Is supported by a comprehensive Optimum Viable Use Assessment prepared specifically to address the evidential deficiencies identified in the 2025 appeal;
- Provides a significantly more robust planning and heritage evidence base than was previously available.

Overall Planning Balance

The proposal preserves and enhances the significance of a Grade II listed building, secures its optimum viable use, improves the setting of the heritage asset, provides an appropriate standard of residential amenity, accords with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan, and directly addresses the reasons for refusal identified in the previous appeal decisions.

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. The proposal preserves and enhances the significance of the Grade II listed building, secures its optimum viable use and delivers a range of public benefits which weigh strongly in favour of granting planning permission and listed building consent.

When considered as a whole, the public benefits are substantial and clearly outweigh any limited adverse impacts arising from the proposal. The scheme therefore represents sustainable development and should be supported through the grant of Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent.

15. Conclusion

This application should not be viewed as a repetition of the schemes previously considered by the Local Planning Authority and the Planning Inspectorate. Rather, it represents a carefully considered and significantly improved proposal that has been specifically designed to address the concerns identified within both the 2020 and 2025 appeal decisions whilst retaining and enhancing the benefits expressly acknowledged by the Inspectors.

The proposal delivers a clear heritage benefit through the removal of the modern lean-to structure which currently obscures part of the rear elevation of the Grade II listed barn and detracts from appreciation of its historic form. As recognised by the Planning Inspector, this structure makes a negative contribution to the setting of the heritage asset and its removal will allow greater appreciation of the historic rear façade and original form of the building.

The proposal also responds directly to the heritage concerns identified within the 2020 appeal decision. No additional openings are proposed within the historic fabric of the building. Instead, the scheme relies solely upon the reopening and use of three existing historic openings already present within the rear elevation. The proposal therefore secures the heritage benefits previously identified by the Planning Inspectorate whilst avoiding the source of harm that led to the dismissal of the earlier appeal.

The proposal further addresses the principal concern identified within the 2025 appeal decision through the creation of dedicated private outdoor amenity space associated with each residential unit. The removal of the lean-to structure provides the opportunity to create meaningful and usable outdoor spaces suitable for permanent residential occupation whilst simultaneously delivering a positive heritage outcome. The proposal therefore resolves the deficiency identified by the Planning Inspector and provides an appropriate standard of residential amenity for future occupiers.

The application is also supported by a significantly stronger viability case than that previously available to the Planning Inspectorate. Since acquiring the property in 2021, the applicants have made substantial investment in the maintenance, upgrading and improvement of the accommodation. The business has been actively operated and marketed

over a period exceeding three years and has been given a genuine opportunity to succeed as a holiday accommodation enterprise. Despite these efforts and substantial financial investment, the business has not achieved a sustainable level of profitability.

The accompanying Optimum Viable Use Assessment directly addresses the evidential deficiency identified by the Planning Inspector in Appeal APP/B3438/W/25/3358820 and demonstrates, through detailed operational, financial and marketing evidence, that unrestricted Class C3 occupation now represents the optimum viable use of the listed building.

Importantly, the 2025 Planning Inspector accepted that the financial information submitted at that time suggested that the business was not currently viable, but concluded that further evidence was required before unrestricted residential occupation could be regarded as the optimum viable use of the heritage asset. The current application provides that additional evidence and demonstrates that permanent residential occupation now represents the most realistic and sustainable means of securing the long-term future of the listed building.

The proposal also benefits from a clear and recent Planning Inspectorate conclusion that removal of the holiday occupancy restriction would not harm the supply of visitor accommodation within the area and would not conflict with the tourism objectives of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. The loss of the holiday occupancy restriction has therefore already been found not to result in unacceptable harm to tourism provision within the Churnet Valley.

Taken as a whole, the proposal delivers a range of significant public benefits including:

• Securing the long-term future and ongoing conservation of a Grade II listed building.

• Delivering heritage enhancement through the removal of structures that detract from the setting of the heritage asset.

• Exposing and improving appreciation of the historic rear elevation.

• Reinstating and utilising existing historic openings without the need for additional intervention into the historic fabric.

• Providing suitable outdoor amenity space for future occupiers.

• Demonstrating the optimum viable use of the heritage asset.

• Reusing an existing building and existing infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

• Addressing the concerns identified by both Planning Inspectors in the previous appeal decisions.

• Securing the continued occupation, maintenance and management of the listed building.

The proposal therefore represents sustainable development that accords with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. It preserves and enhances the significance of the heritage asset, secures its long-term future, provides an appropriate standard of residential amenity and overcomes the specific reasons for refusal identified within the previous appeal decisions.

For all of the above reasons, it is respectfully concluded that the proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework, the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and the statutory duty to preserve the special interest of listed buildings. Planning permission and Listed Building Consent should therefore be granted.