

PLANNING and HERITAGE STATEMENT

on behalf of Mr B Williams

Proposed change of use of agricultural barn

at Hill Farm, Fenny Drayton.

Prepared by: Simon Tindle.

For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

Brown & Co is a leading provider of agency, professional and consultancy services across the whole range of rural, commercial, residential, and agricultural markets.

Date: November 2023.

Reference: 050223.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Brown & Co to support full planning application submitted on behalf of Mr Williams for change of use of agricultural buildings to commercial/storage uses with a part of open-air storage and ancillary parking at Hill Farm, Fenn Lanes, Fenny Drayton.
- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the background to the applicant's proposals and the key planning issues raised by them. The statement is structured as follows:
- **Section 2:** describes the physical characteristics of the **site and its surroundings**;
 - **Section 3:** outlines the **proposed development**;
 - **Section 4:** summarises the relevant national and local **planning policy context**;
 - **Section 5:** sets out an assessment of the **heritage** implications of the development;
 - **Section 6 :**provides a **planning assessment** of the key considerations raised by the proposal; and
 - **Section 7:** sets out in brief our overall **conclusions** on the proposal.
- 1.3 This statement shall be read in conjunction with the following application documents submitted as part of the application:
- 22.108.L0101_P1 - Location Plan
 - 22.108.S0001_P1 - Site Plan As Existing
 - 22.108.S0011_P1 - Barn 1 - Plans As Existing
 - 22.108.S0012_P1 - Barn 1 - Elevations as Existing
 - 22.108.S0021_P1 - Barn 2 - Plans and Elevations as Existing
 - 22.108.K0001_P1 - Site Plan As Proposed Phase 1
 - 22.108.K0002_P1 - Site Plan As Proposed Detail Phase 1
 - 22.108.K0003_P1 - Site Plan As Proposed Phase 2
 - 22.108.K0011_P1 - Barn 1 - Plans as Proposed
 - 22.108.K0021_P1 - Barn 2 - Plans and Elevations as Proposed

2. Site and surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises of an irregular-shaped parcel of land and agricultural buildings located to the east of Fenny Drayton. Access to the site is taken from Fenn Lanes.
- 2.2 Fenny Drayton is classified as a Rural Hamlet approximately 1.7 miles east of Witherley, 6-mile northeast of Hinckley and 4.4 miles from Nuneaton. Public transport services include a two hourly bus service, to Wetherley, which further connects to Nuneaton and Measham. The site is half a mile away from borough's biggest existing employment site, MIRA on Watling Street in Higham on the Hill.
- 2.3 The site is currently in agricultural use and hosts several redundant agricultural barns which have been most recently occupied as a part of the landowner's farm business. Modern farming methods have moved on from this type of barn and a few structures are no longer suitable in terms of current farming practice and the scale of modern farming machinery. The applicant has reviewed the business and is looking for a more economic

use of the buildings. Following Brexit and with the impending loss of agricultural subsidies, farmers are increasing pressure to diversify to make best use of existing assets.

- 2.4 The site is located in Flood Zone 1, the site is also not subject to surface water flooding. However, there is low risk of surface water flooding on parts of the access road to the site.
- 2.5 The site is in the vicinity of Bowl Barrow heritage asset with grid reference SP35608 /97250. The cluster of buildings on site also contains a listed building. This is discussed further in Section 5.



Figure-01: Site Layout

Planning History of the farmstead

- 2.6 21/00245/AGDO - The proposed building is to be a steel portal framed structure for agricultural use, approved in 2021.
- 2.7 21/00325/LBC - Replacement of 2 external doors in a Grade II Listed Building, approved in 2021.
- 2.8 11/00525/LBC - Alterations to Listed Building. Approved in 2011.
- 2.9 07/00543/GDO - Extension to Agricultural Building. Approved in 2007.
- 2.10 95/00208/FUL - Agricultural Building. Approved in 1995.
- 2.11 79/00477/4 - Erection of Agricultural Building. Approved in 1979.
- 2.12 77/00831/4M - Erection of Agricultural Building. Approved in 1977.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of two agricultural buildings into a flexible commercial use, (use classes E(g) and B8). An additional open area to the south of the larger barn is also proposed to be used for open storage (B8). No additional floorspace is proposed.
- 3.2 The application also seeks permission in phase one for a short length of revised access road, to take the main farm access to the west of the smaller barn, this will allow for the barns to be separated from the main farm use and to allow ease of movement between the two barns, without conflicting with agricultural traffic.
- 3.3 Permission is also sought for an area of car parking and landscaping to the south of the barns. This parking area would be implemented as a second phase, should the buildings be used for uses requiring a greater level of parking provision.

4. Planning policy context

- 4.1 Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise¹. The development plan is, therefore, the starting point for the assessment of all planning proposals. Development plan policies of particular relevance to this application are summarised in paragraphs 4.3 to 4.13 below and discussed in detail, further in chapter 6.
- 4.2 The Government's planning policies, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), are also a significant material consideration in deciding planning applications. National planning policies of particular relevance to application site are described in paragraphs 4.14 to 4.20 below.

Development plan policies

- 4.3 In Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, the Development Plan currently comprises of the Local Development Framework (Core Strategy) 2009 and the Local Plan 2006 - 2026 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD set the policy framework. Witherley Neighbourhood Plan referendum resulted in 52% votes against the Neighbourhood Plan, did not proceed to adoption and hence it is not considered as a part of Hinckley and Bosworth's development Plan.
- 4.4 A replacement Local Plan is under preparation and at the time of writing and due to delays with the Regulation 19 consultation, the New Local Plan making process has been delayed overall. As such it holds minimal weight in decision making.

Core Strategy

- 4.5 This planning statement demonstrates in detail that the proposed development is inherently in line with relevant Core Strategy Spatial Objective 1 (Strong & Diverse Economy) in that the proposals aim to diversify the economy by providing sufficient,

¹ Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

sustainably located, good quality land and premises, to encourage appropriate sectors with growth potential.

Development Management Policies DPD

- 4.6 Policy DM1 propose that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.7 Policy DM4 aims to protect the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character, the countryside will first and foremost be safeguarded from unsustainable development. Amongst other points, development in the countryside will be considered acceptable where;
- The proposal involves the change of use, re-use or extension of existing buildings which lead to the enhancement of the immediate setting, or
 - It significantly contributes to economic growth, job creation and/or diversification of rural businesses,
- and
- It does not have a significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value, beauty, open character and landscape character of the countryside; and
 - It does not undermine the physical and perceived separation and open character between settlements; and
 - It does not create or exacerbate ribbon development.
- 4.8 Policy DM10 sets out the criteria for ensuring good design of new development and safeguarding the amenity of neighbouring buildings.
- 4.9 Policy DM11 promotes the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment throughout the borough. This will be done through the careful management of development that might adversely impact both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 4.10 Policy DM 12 requires that all development proposals affecting heritage assets and their setting secure their continued protection or enhancement, contribute to the distinctiveness of the areas in which they are located and contribute to the wider vibrancy of the borough.
- 4.11 Policy DM 15 sets out the local policy landscape in respect of the conversion of redundant rural buildings. This is supported by the Council subject to the following;
- a) The applicant demonstrates the building is no longer viable in its current use; and
 - b) The applicant has adequately demonstrated the building is in a structurally sound condition and is capable of conversion without significant rebuild or alteration; and
 - c) Any proposed extension(s) or alterations are proportionate to the size, scale, mass and footprint of the original building and situated within the original curtilage; and

d) The proposed development accords with Policy DM10: Development and Design and relevant design guidance, DM11: Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment and DM12: Heritage Assets.

All development proposals for the re-use of redundant rural buildings should result in the enhancement of the immediate setting.

4.12 Policy DM17 requires that new development;

- Seek to make the best use of existing public transport services and, where appropriate, provide opportunities for improving and sustaining the viability of those services;
- Seek to ensure that there is convenient and safe access for walking and cycling to services and facilities;
- Demonstrate that there is not a significant adverse impact upon highway safety

4.13 Policy DM18 requires that all new development provide an appropriate level of parking provision for all transport modes.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.14 Paragraph 81 – Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions to promote business investment, expansion, and adaptability. In doing so, a significant weight should be given to the need to support economic growth and productivity with respect to local business needs, wider opportunities for development and particularly due to which Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation.

4.15 Paragraph 82 – Elaborates in four parts that how planning policies should promote strategic economic vision and site delivery:

- a) To set clear economic strategy and vision to positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, considering the Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
- b) Set criteria or identify strategic sites for local and inward investment to match the strategy;
- c) Address potential barriers to investment including infrastructure;
- d) Adaptable to changes like new and flexible working practices and address rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

4.16 Paragraph 83 – Promotes cluster formation for policy and decision making based on locational requirements of different sectors (e.g., creative, or high technology industries; storage and distribution, etc.) in suitably accessible locations.

4.17 Paragraph 84 – Demonstrates that policies and decisions should enhance rural economy and support the need to enable sustainable growth and expansion in rural areas by conversion of existing buildings as well as well-designed new buildings. This paragraph also points out development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

- 4.18 Paragraph 85 – Promotes recognition of employment sites adjacent to or beyond existing settlements or the ones without adequate public transport services. In doing so the development should be sensitive to its surroundings, should not have unacceptable impact on local roads and it should promote sustainable modes of transport (including walking and cycling). The development sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements and which use of previously developed land should be encouraged.
- 4.19 Paragraph 105 - The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be considered in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 4.20 Paragraph 119 - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. In this regard, an efficient use of previously developed or 'brownfield' land should be prioritised.

5. Heritage Statement

- 5.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared to accompany the application. The Statement is prepared in accordance with The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition), 2017, considering the requirements of the Development Management Policies DPD Policy DM11 and National Planning Policy Framework.

Identification of Heritage Assets that may be affected

- 5.2 The following known heritage assets are close to the site, the listings are as follows;

- Hill Farmhouse – Grade II – first listed 1989 – Ref: 1074189

Farmhouse. Late C18. Red brick, slate roof and brick ridge stack to right of centre and end stack to left. 3 storeys with toothed eaves course; reduced proportions to second floor. Regular 3-window front; 3-light casements with segmental heads to ground and first floors. On the second floor the 2 outer windows are blind but painted in imitation of glazing bar casements. Door to right of centre with rectangular overlight and bracketed hood.

- Bowl barrow at Fenny Drayton – Scheduled Monument – Ref: 1010198

The barrow is roughly round measuring 25m in diameter at the base and about 2.5m high with a flat top measuring 8m across. There is no evidence for a surrounding ditch.

Assessment of the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset

- 5.3 Significance of a heritage asset is defined in the Glossary of the NPPF as;

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”

- 5.4 Planning Practice Guidance indicates that Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 5.5 The National Planning Policy Framework definition further states that in the planning context heritage interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.
- 5.6 The listed farmhouse is listed as a good example of a building of its time and for its architectural merit. The existing farmhouse sits among a range of more modern agricultural buildings and as such lacks the historic farm setting. The farmhouse can only really be appreciated from a relatively short range, in and around the farmstead. From longer ranges, the listed building sits amongst a range of modern buildings and is not easily discernible as a building of note.
- 5.7 The bowl barrow is a historic earthwork located around 500m from the application site. The barrow is not easily evident in the wider landscape from long range. From shorter range, when viewed from Fenn Lanes for example, several farmsteads and the village of Fenny Drayton are perceptible. The setting of the barrow is derived from its rural location.

Assessment of the effect of the proposed development

- 5.8 Other than the car parking, the changes in the proposed use of the buildings will have a neutral impact on the ability to appreciate significance of the listed building. In terms of the car parking, it will be contiguous to the existing farm buildings and from long range, will be read as a part of the farmstead. From a shorter range, the buildings will form an intervening barrier to the farmhouse and thus the parking will be difficult to read in the same vista. It is considered that impact of the proposed development will be less than substantial.
- 5.9 In terms of the barrow, the development proposed will be read as part of a farmstead group and will therefore have negligible impact upon the setting of the heritage asset.

Proposed mitigation

- 5.10 The proposed change of use (phase one) will have a less than substantial impact upon the setting of the listed building. In terms of mitigation, this will be limited to additional landscaping including hedgerow planting and tree planting associated with the physical works in phase two. This will aid in screening the buildings from wider view. Tree and hedge planting will consist of native species appropriate to a rural location.

Heritage Conclusion

- 5.11 The proposed development will have minimal impact upon heritage assets directly, or by altering their setting, in fact the proposed development is considered to have a positive

impact upon the assets and provide public benefit by providing an economic use to underused buildings, along with additional rural employment creation.

6. Planning assessment

Principle of development

- 6.1 The proposed development seeks the change of use of two agricultural barns into flexible storage/office/light industrial use suitable for business in current times. Local Plan Policy DM 15 specifically supports such a development, providing several criteria which are suitably fulfilled by proposals.
- 6.2 Farming businesses in the country are adjusting to the post-BREXIT economic landscape and there have been multiple changes in farming business models. DEFRA are currently offering business support to farmers in the early years of this transition to identify how, what and when they may need to adapt their business models. As such, the applicant has reviewed his current land holding and determined that there are several farm buildings which are redundant in farming terms.
- 6.3 The buildings proposed for change of use have limited openings and a restricted height. In recent years the applicant has erected more modern farm buildings (21/00245/AGDO), reducing the usefulness of the buildings at hand. The buildings have limited usefulness in modern farming.
- 6.4 Likewise, the alternative income stream achievable from the commercial use of the buildings will provide diversification and an alternative business model for the farm business, offering longer term financial security away from purely agriculture.
- 6.5 Both buildings are structurally sound and capable of conversion to a storage use without alteration. The application also seeks permission for a E(g) use, however this is most likely to be small scale research and development and/or industrial uses which can take place within a residential area. As such substantial alteration will not be required.

Demand

- 6.6 To consider the size and longevity of proposed (warehousing) facility, a study has shown there has been a yearly (2021-2022) 187% increment in take-up of a particular sub-sector of storage facilities, i.e., 'Self-Storage' within Europe². Similarly, the whole warehousing market at local and national level in the UK, has remained strong and the take-up has been unshaken despite the macro-economic uncertainties³. Critically, a boroughwide review by the Council has shown a severe lack of smaller warehousing units and it is anticipated that such smaller units are critical for local businesses to thrive⁴. It is highly evident from a specific experience out of Hinckley Park (offering 465 – 1860 sqm of office and

² De Rijk B., 2023. Why Self-Storage is an Interesting Investment Opportunity. Savills. Available at: <https://www.savills.co.uk/blog/article/348761/commercial-property/why-self-storage-is-an-interesting-investment-opportunity.aspx>.

³ BE Group, 2022, Employment Land and Premises Study – Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, pp. 144-145. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/3476/employment_land_and_premises_review_-_2020.

⁴ BE Group, 2022, Employment Land and Premises Study – Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, pp. 144-145. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/3476/employment_land_and_premises_review_-_2020.

warehousing spaces) that has shown the importance of allowing some degree of flexibility to market forces and not limiting the options with Design and Build basis;

- 6.7 Moreover, the recent consultation and site assessment for Fenny Drayton include sites with similar uses and have shown proposals at sites LPR88 and AS579 totalling to 192,000 sqm and 22,123 sqm of warehousing spaces, respectively⁵ ⁶. The above sites under consideration can be delivered in the period of 6 – 15 years and show that storage facilities are highly viable locally. On the other hand, the area matrix at offer from the proposed site consists of smaller barn (c. 180 sqm) and bigger barn with open air space (c. 1200sqm) with further division on demand and only needs change of use. Hence, apart from being locally viable, the development is also found to be vital for diversification and flexibility of the sizes available for similar facilities. The development shall be ready-to-use in the shorter term and is hence expected to be weighed positively.
- 6.8 The proposed development ultimately accords with Spatial Objective-01: Strong and Diverse Economy of Core Strategy that particularly seeks rural business diversification to help farmers sustain their businesses.

Cluster Formation

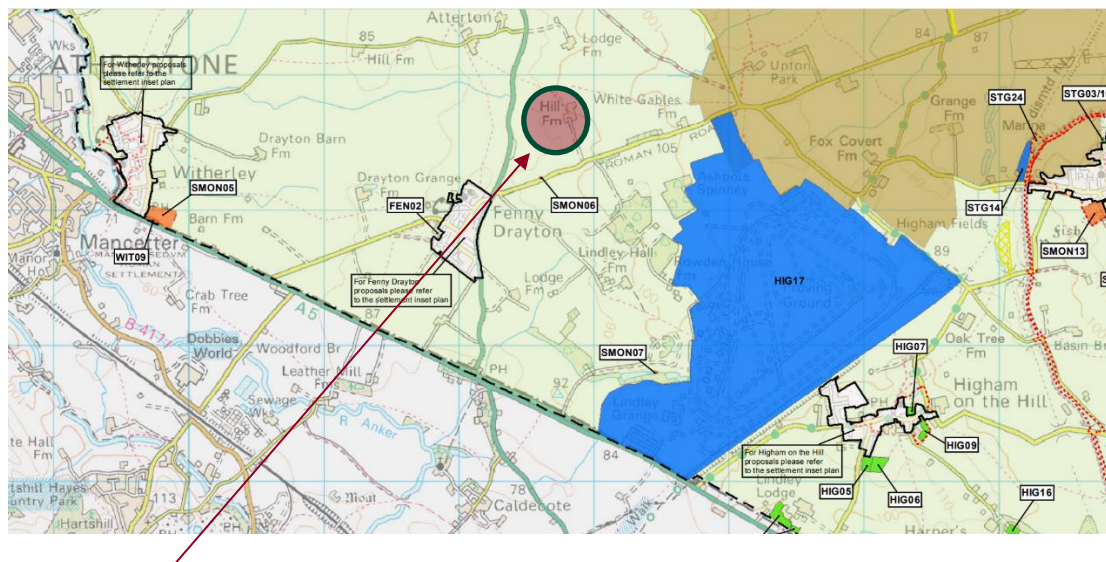


Figure-02: Hill Farm Strategic Location⁷

- 6.9 Further, regarding the local business viability, an intricate aspect of ‘Cluster Formation’ is brought in light that helps to amplify economy generation and job creation easily by use of readily available facilities. For storage facilities, there is a high dependence on the distance from supporting road network, i.e., A-roads and M-roads. As shown earlier, the nearby A5 and M69 are planned to be enhanced because of nearby presence of biggest employment site (HIG17) in the borough, an Enterprise Zone at MIRA Technologies Research Centre. The close connection as illustrated in Figure-03, MIRA research centre (site HIG17 – a nationally important Enterprise Zone) positively influences the application site for cluster

⁵ Hinckley and Bosworth Council, 2022. Employment Site Assessment Appendix 3. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/7368/shelaa_employment_site_assessment_appendix_3.

⁶ Hinckley and Bosworth Council, 2022. Preliminary Site Selection Paper Regulation 19 Consultation 2020-2039. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/7715/hinckley_and_bosworth_local_plan_preliminary_site_selection_paper.

⁷ Hinckley and Bosworth Council, 2016. Borough Wide Policies Map. Available at: https://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/downloads/file/5297/borough_wide_policies_map.

formation. NPPF Paragraph – 83 promotes development that form cluster including the ones like the proposed usage of storage and distribution.

Permitted Rights

- 6.10 It should be noted that the development proposed with above-mentioned principles, is partly also able to be converted under Permitted Development Rights Class-R. The applicable limit of Class-R is up to the development of 500 sqm, whereas the proposed requirement is more. Nevertheless, should the application be unsuccessful then the landowner would seek to use permitted development rights to their fullest. This should be considered as a fall-back position and a significant material consideration.

Design/ Landscape/ Landscape Character

- 6.11 Policy DM4 raises several conditions to achieve suitable development, condition (c) that considers development in countryside as sustainable if it contributes significantly to job creation, economic growth and /or rural business diversification. Another condition (b) of the same policy considers the re-use, change of use or extension of existing buildings to be sustainable if the development enhances the immediate setting. On the other hand, Policy DM4 restricts the development which has a significant adverse effect on the intrinsic value of beauty and open landscape character of countryside. The case of the proposed development that creates jobs, contributes to economy, is based on change of use of barns and will have negligible negative impact on open landscape. It follows that the proposed development falls in line with Policy DM4.
- 6.12 Policy DM15 similarly frames criteria for development outside settlement boundary and promotes re-use and/or adaptation of redundant or disused buildings. With the proposed business uses; storage and offices, the diversification of business will lead to an efficient use of the existing barns. The proposed change of use thus provides the opportunity to turn the redundant barns into productive buildings, without significantly impacting upon their external appearance.
- 6.13 Policy DM10 named as ‘Development and Design’ frames those principles of good design with respect to privacy and amenity of the occupants as existing and within the proposed development. The policy further iterates the contextual design elements including scale, mass, and architectural elements. Design considerations should be given to incorporating eco-friendly solutions, safe infrastructure, and parking standards. Finally, the policy gives special considerations for outstanding and innovative designs. The buildings will not be altered and the car parking, will utilise quality materials with native hedgerow and tree planting. Electric charging points can also be incorporated. This can be dealt with by condition and accord fully with DM10.
- 6.14 While there are two dwellings on site, the landowner is in control of both properties, there is not considered to be any potential implications in terms of noise or privacy.

Highways and access to the site/ Parking

- 6.15 Policy DM17 requires the development to make the best use the existing public transport services. Furthermore, the development should ensure walking and cycling convenience as well as demonstrate minimal residual cumulative impacts including that over traffic movement on highway. Overall, this policy promotes sustainable modes of transport.
- 6.16 Nevertheless, Policies DM4 and DM15 support in principle the conversion of rural buildings, particularly where there is an enhancement to the immediate area, the

development contributes to economic growth, job creation and/or diversification of rural businesses. The NPPF paragraph 105 also states that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be considered in decision-making.

- 6.17 Fenny Drayton (3/4 of a mile – 15 min walk) and Stoke Golding as well as the extensive MIRA site are all in relative proximity to the site. A bus service is available from Fenny Drayton. Likewise, cycle parking can be made available on site and this can be controlled via planning condition. The site is relatively well connected for a rural location.
- 6.18 It is advocated that the proposed change of use is overall in accordance with the development plan, when considered alongside the NPPF.

Highway Safety

- 6.19 The site is accessed from Fenn Lanes via a significant agricultural access. It is considered that access is suitable for a shared agricultural and commercial/ industrial use. Good visibility is available in both directions along Fenn Lanes, commensurate with the speed limit in force.

7. Summary

- 7.1 In summary, a full planning application is sought for change of use of two agricultural buildings that shall not only support the applicant's business, but also add positively to the economic benefits within the local area. In doing so, an optimum usage of the property will be achieved without any adverse impact upon landscape or character of the area.
- 7.2 The development as proposed will have negligible impact upon heritage assets either directly, or by altering their setting. The proposed development will have a positive impact upon the assets and provide public benefit by providing an economic use to underused buildings, along with additional employment creation.
- 7.3 While the development is located within a rural area, it must be considered that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. The site is located within relative proximity to Fenny Drayton and the significant employment location of the MIRA site. As such, the site should be considered as sustainable in a rural context.