

Report to	<b>Planning Committee</b>
Date	<b>9 April 2026</b>
By	<b>Director of Placemaking</b>
Local Authority	<b>Chichester District Council</b>
Application Number	<b>SDNP/25/03508/FUL</b>
Applicant	<b>Mr and Mrs Allison</b>
Application	<b>Erection of three agricultural barns with access improvements, landscaping, and other associated works.</b>
Address	<b>North Marden Farm, East Marden Road, North Marden, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9JU</b>

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**Recommendation:**

- 1) That Planning Permission be granted subject to the conditions set out at paragraph 9.1 of the report, and any amendments or other conditions required to address technical matters.**

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**Executive Summary**

Key Matters

- The application proposes a new modern farmstead comprising of three buildings – a grain store, hay store and workshop. It is proposed on North Marden Farm, a 450-acre holding which was purchased in 2024 and separated from a larger holding. The new owners are seeking a more regenerative and sustainable farming approach but currently the Farm does not benefit from any buildings, from which to manage its farming operations.
- The key considerations include demonstrating the agricultural need under SD39 to justify the principle of development, in conjunction with the exception criteria of SD25 – namely the essential need for a countryside location. In these respects, SD39 is accorded with insofar the need has been justified and the scale of the proposals are commensurate with that need. A satisfactory alternative site assessment also justifies this to be the best suited site on the Farm. SD25 is also met for these reasons and given the very agricultural nature of the proposals.
- It is a greenfield site within a tranquil and sensitive landscape, largely absent from visibly apparent development - particularly in views from the site. That said, the barns would have a typical and acceptable agricultural scale, character and appearance akin to modern farm buildings, which are not unduly incongruous within this farmed landscape.



## **1. Site Description**

- 1.1 The site is within a large agricultural field approximately 320 metre (m) south of North Marden, a hamlet of dwellings (some listed) with a conservation area and grade I listed church. The site is accessed via the B2141 and East Marden Road (a rural lane) which runs through North Marden. East Marden Road passes the site and leads towards East Marden, approximately 0.9km south which also has a conservation area.
- 1.2 The site is part of a wider 450 acre farm known as North Marden Farm, purchased in 2024 and formerly part of a larger holding. The Farm comprises of land immediately surrounding the site and across the wider valley. This area is highly tranquil and largely absent of other agricultural barns and has a dispersed settlement pattern. From the site, no buildings are particularly visible within the wide open views to the south. There are no public rights of way (PROW) which either pass through or adjacent to it.
- 1.3 The site is a rolling field with the higher slopes on its eastern side. The proposed barns would be on its lowest western side which also slopes southwards alongside East Marden Road. The roadside hedgerow defines the western site boundary and a hedgerow field margin defines its southern boundary. To the north, the site boundary is defined by a woodland copse, where there is also a fertiliser store, and further hedgerow margins. The eastern boundary follows a newly planted hedgerow which reinstates a historic field margin. There are no protected trees on site. The main access is on East Marden Road and there is a smaller secondary access further south.
- 1.4 The site is within the wider buffer zone of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels Special Area of Conservation and the core area of the Dark Night Skies Reserve. It is also within a chalk mineral safeguarding area and is at low risk of flooding (flood zone I). There are power lines which run through the site.

## **2. Relevant Planning History**

- 2.1 There is no relevant planning history.

## **3. Proposal**

- 3.1 Three agricultural barns are proposed, arranged around a yard area and open storage for farm machinery. The existing access would be used and a new track created into the proposed yard. They would be used as a hub for the farming operations of North Marden Farm.
- 3.2 The size and use of the barns would be:
- Grain store – 25m x 30.7m, 10.4m high. (767.5sm)
  - Workshop barn – 24.6m x 12m, 8m high. (430.5sqm)
  - Hay store – 24.6m x 17.5m, 9.5m high. (295.2sqm)
- 3.3 The grain store would be a steel framed barn with concrete and vertical timber clad walls and a metal corrugated roof. It would have four roller shutter doors and could store up to 1,000 tonnes of grain.
- 3.4 The workshop similarly would be steel framed with concrete panels and timber cladding for its walls. Its pitched roof would have grey corrugated metal. It would be used to store farm machinery and equipment, general storage, and farm worker facilities. The roof would have solar panels. The hay store would utilise the same materials as the other buildings and have open bays.

### Amendments during application process

- 3.5 Amended plans and further supporting documentation were received and re-consulted upon in response to consultee advice and representations (notwithstanding fundamental concerns). This report assesses these plans and information and amended scheme as follows:
- More compact layout, with reduced hardstanding.

- Farmstead moved 8m south onto a lower area, avoiding existing power lines.
- Reduced engineering on eastern side of the buildings.
- Reduced access track width by 3m.
- Reduced access radii for site entrance.
- Due to re-positioning and proposed ground levels, lower building floor levels reduce overall heights by 0.5m (not building dimensions).
- Additional tree planting at the access and around the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) basin.
- Re-positioned boundary fencing.
- Additional written agricultural justification/need also provided.

#### Layout

- 3.6 The existing main access would be used with a new track leading into the yard area. The existing access would be widened to better accommodate farm vehicles and machinery. It would also be fenced either side and a gate set back from the road.
- 3.7 The grain store would be the closest building to the road and its longest rear elevation (30.7m) would back onto it. South of the building would be a permeable hard surfaced area for open machinery storage.
- 3.8 The hay store would be the most southerly building and sited next to the aforementioned open storage area. It would face northwards onto the yard and due to this orientation its smaller side elevation would face the road. It would be the smallest building at 24.6m x 12m, but second highest at 9.5m.
- 3.9 The workshop would be opposite the grain store on the currently high ground level of the site (proposed site levels described below). It would have a north-south orientation parallel with the grain store, facing onto the yard. It would avoid the existing power lines running through the site. It is the middle-sized building at 24.6m x 12m, and 8m high.

#### Proposed site levels

- 3.10 The land would be lowered and levelled to accommodate the buildings and yard area. The land would be lowered by 3m on the eastern side of the site. The western area of the site adjacent to the road would also be lowered around the grain store. The proposed access would be graded down to the yard area.

#### Landscape scheme

- 3.11 Tree planting is proposed within the area between the road, new access, and grain store. Supplementary hedge and tree planting is proposed within the existing roadside hedgerow. South of the buildings, a new stock fence would contain the farmstead, beyond which further tree planting and a SuDS pond are proposed. The newly planted native hedgerow on the east boundary would further contain the site.

#### Biodiversity net gain and other ecological enhancements

- 3.12 On site, a 11.69% net gain in habitat and a 107.61% net gain in hedgerow enhancements are proposed. This comprises of:
- New eastern boundary species rich native boundary hedgerow.
  - Supplementary planting/enhancement of existing roadside hedgerow.
  - Grassland.
  - Tree planting.
  - Pond habitat (SuDS basin).
- 3.13 In addition, the following are proposed:

- Bird and bat boxes.
- Two log piles and two hibernacula.

Drainage

- 3.14 Rain collected off roofs and the yard is proposed to be piped to a new SuDS basin south of the buildings. The basin would be 0.8m deep, with a 300m<sup>3</sup> capacity. It would involve banking on its eastern side through lowering adjacent land. A private foul system on site is proposed. The open storage area would have a permeable surface.

Highway safety and traffic

- 3.15 The existing access already accommodates agricultural traffic tending the application site, but it would be widened to facilitate improved manoeuvring. Available visibility splays in either direction would be retained. There would be new fencing and gate set back from the road.
- 3.16 There would be two members of staff, with ample parking on the yard. Estimated vehicle movements of farm vehicles/machinery to/from the site would increase by between 2 – 5 two-way visits each month, with a peak between July-October during harvests.

**4. Consultations**

- 4.1 The following responses have been received. Please note that there is no formal Parish Council for North Marden. Consultee comments with an **asterisk** highlight those which have not submitted additional comments in response to the re-consultation exercise regarding amended plans.

- 4.2 **Drainage\***: No objection in principle; further clarification needed regarding:

- Clarify impermeable/permeable surface areas.
- Supply construction details for proposed permeable parking area.
- Provide specifications for yard gullies and outfall/control structure for the pond.
- Revise SuDS documentation to reflect pollution risks from materials and surfacing proposed within the development.
- Review adequacy of the proposed oil separator based on updated pollution loadings.
- Clarify how the oil separator will be accessed, maintained, and cleaned.
- Confirm protection measures for the 225 mm pipe against tree root ingress.
- Update maintenance document to include gullies, chambers, downpipes, guttering, and repair procedures following pollution or machinery damage.
- Consider adding a pollution control chamber at the end of the yard drainage run to isolate spills before they enter the wider system.

**Officer note:** The underlying principles of the drainage scheme are accepted and the queries raised by the consultee are of a technical nature, the detail of which can be addressed via condition.

- 4.3 It is also noteworthy that the Lead Flood Authority raises no objection, subject to condition. Officers are cognisant of scrutinising the need for an appropriate drainage scheme that attenuates the water in a sustainable way including addressing water quality, via condition.

- 4.4 **Ecology:** No objection, subject to conditions.

- 4.5 **Environmental Health (Chichester District Council):** No objection.

- 4.6 **Environment Agency:** Awaiting response, Members will be updated.

- 4.7 **Highways Authority:** No objection, subject to conditions.

- 4.8 **Landscape\*:** Objection, as follows:

- Farming needs and new buildings supported in principle, but site unsuitable.

- Landscape harm outweighs benefits to the farm enterprise.
- Applicant should work with officers to identify an alternative site.
- Long term land management benefits not dependent on this site.

Application documentation

- Missing full landscape character assessment and independent Landscape Visual Appraisal.
- No systematic comparison of alternative sites using landscape and visual criteria.
- Assessment focusses on minimising cut and fill, rather than addressing fundamental issue of introducing built form here.

Landscape impact

- Surrounding landscape characterised by:
  - Very low-density, dispersed settlement.
  - High tranquillity and strong sense of remoteness.
  - Narrow hedged lanes.
  - Rolling topography with constantly changing views.
  - Large, straight-sided 18th–19th century fields.
  - Well-wooded landscape with ancient woodland and later plantations.
- Significant negative landscape and visual impacts cannot be mitigated.
- Uncharacteristic siting of buildings; remote undeveloped landscape; Purpose 1 conflict.
- Highly sensitive area with no history of settlement and areas of no visible buildings.
- Built form would introduce a permanent, unmitigable impact in a location where development is rarely perceived.
- Exposed site in near and long distance views; largest building 10m high.
- Harm to tranquillity and sense of remoteness – visually and audibly.
- Access widening would harm character of narrow rural lane.
- Harmful landform changes and SuDS basin; soil and engineering impacts not mitigated.
- Indirect effects of increased vehicle movements on narrow lanes and village; long term erosion of landscape character and tranquillity.

Potential positives

- Reinstatement of field boundary (but no map regression provided to show this is characteristic) and biodiversity benefits.

**Officer note:** An assessment of landscape impact is in section 7. It outlines that the site is reasonably well contained within the landscape by virtue of topography, woodland and hedgerows and limited public rights of way. The site is in a highly tranquil area but the proposals conserve the overall prevailing landscape characteristics summarised in bullet point form in this consultee response. The proposed barns are large but akin to modern barns. Whilst they would be prominent in the road, their agricultural form and appearance would not be incongruous in this agricultural landscape.

**4.9 Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA): Objection:**

- Insufficient detail; requires a proportionate Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and drainage strategy.
- Requirement to prevent flood risk impacts and ensure long-term SuDS performance.

- Incomplete drainage strategy – need to address a clear hierarchy and ‘SuDs pillars’ in design; FRA; missing full network calculations; and layout.

**Officer note:** The LLFA previously provided a no objection response to the original plans and the matters raised have been provided in response to amended plans. The drainage scheme has not, however, fundamentally changed. Also details such as a drainage layout has already been provided.

- 4.10 The LLFA’s latest comments have been queried with them in light of their original response and members will be updated. In the meantime, the latest comments are addressed in the drainage related section below. The site is not within a flood risk area (flood zone 1) and within the vicinity of a watercourse.
- 4.11 The scheme would introduce new areas of hardstanding and roofs which would require surface water needing to be appropriately attenuated. The FRA would need to give further consideration to this. The current plans show a reasonable approach to drainage and technical matters are conditional in the recommendation.
- 4.12 **Natural England:** Awaiting response, Members will be updated.
- 4.13 **Public Rights of Way (West Sussex County Council):** Awaiting response, Members will be updated.

## 5. Representations

- 5.1 19 objections and one supportive representation have been received, as follows:

### Objections

#### Principle and farming

- Support farming, but insufficient evidence for development and claimed agricultural need.
- Doubts over stocking and cropping figures.
- Weak business case; land historically farmed without on-site buildings, with local alternatives for storage, machinery sharing, and contract farming.
- Alternative site search inconsistent, biased, and not robust; chosen location questioned- not driven by operational need and conflicts with Purpose 1.
- May follow a pattern of barn conversions in North Marden.
- Excessively large, industrial, and unnecessary for this size of farm; other farms operate without comparable infrastructure; size not commensurate with DEFRA guidance.
- Major development and conflicts with SD3, SD4, SD5, SD25, SD34, NPPF.
- Economic benefits disputed; development replaces facilities lost through land sale.
- Risk of precedent for unjustified agricultural development.
- Lack of clarity on proposed use; contradictory information and livestock figures.
- Request for independent agricultural appraisal and full business plan.
- Amended proposals do not address core objections, including concerns regarding landscape, scale and design issues.

#### Landscape

- Development of a greenfield site.
- Poorly located, visually intrusive, and detached from existing farmsteads and settlement.
- Incongruous scale and massing, urbanising, harmful to open and tranquil valley.
- Cumulative impact of barns, yard and access.
- Significant visual impact to immediate and wider views, especially in winter; insufficient viewpoint analysis in submission.

- Area valued for tranquillity, dark skies, and unspoiled rural character.
- Light pollution.
- Conflict with historic landscape character; reinstated hedgerow not adequate mitigation.
- Out of keeping with character of North and East Marden.
- Represents first major development in generations, fundamentally altering the landscape.

#### Design

- Scale (10m high building) and industrial appearance; oversized barns.
- Lack of detail on internal layout.
- Massing, form, and materials bear little resemblance to traditional farmsteads.
- External lighting and rooflights a concern plus potential future alterations; preference for modest, unlit structures.
- If minded to approve, request smaller landscape sensitive design and siting.

#### Drainage

- Not informed by winter ground monitoring.

#### Amenity

- Increased noise (including from grain store plant), traffic, and light pollution.
- Should be located further away from residential properties.
- Reduced amenity for recreational users visiting the area.

#### Highways

- Highways safety impact from increase in traffic on narrow rural lane.
- HGV and large agricultural vehicles inappropriate on narrow rural lane; site unsuitable as a 'hub' for farm traffic.
- Increased activity if used by other third-party operators.
- Application misrepresents access issues.
- Lack of robust data in Transport Statement.
- Road floods in winter.
- No swept path analysis to show the site can be safely accessed.

#### Heritage

- Harm to setting of North Marden; its conservation area and listed buildings.
- Properties retain historic design and craftsmanship qualities; proposals would detract from this.
- Area has a notable historical connection to Bertrand Russell who wrote about the unique beauty and continuity of the surrounding landscape.

#### Other

- If approved, strict controls requested: Construction Management Plan, no external storage, limits on hours, lighting restrictions, traffic management, use restricted to North Marden Farm and no non-agricultural uses.
- Avoid signage.
- No agricultural machinery, trailers, horseboxes, caravans should be stored outside.
- No building to house livestock.

- Support via Permitted Development rights unfounded.
- Risk of crime.
- Precedent for change of use in the future. Query whether conditions could adequately protect against future change of use.
- Councillor Potter does not represent Ward nor constituents affected by the development; and 'generic' representation.

5.2 **Councillor Henry Potter (Chichester District Council):** Support, as follows:

- Support appropriate rural development that sustains local agriculture, communities and the South Downs.
- Aligns with National Park's environmental, social, and economic objectives.
- Barns essential for mixed farming operations and sustainable land management.
- Agriculture vital to rural economy.
- Improved farm efficiency benefits local employment, contractors, and supply chains.
- Reduces unnecessary vehicle movements.

Landscape

- Responsible, landscape-compatible rural development.
- Barns sensitively sited to respect historic downland character.
- No harm to vistas, field patterns, or tranquillity.

Design

- Buildings appropriately scaled, agricultural in form, and use suitable materials.
- Grouping barns reduces visual impact and improves operational efficiency; supports environmental land management.

**6. Planning Policy Context**

6.1 The Development Plan comprises the South Downs Local Plan (SDLP) (2019). The most pertinent policies are listed below. A longer list of relevant policies is in Appendix I.

6.2 Most relevant policies of the adopted SDLP (2019)

- SD4: Landscape Character
- SD5: Design
- SD25: Development Strategy
- SD39: Agriculture and forestry

The New South Downs Local Plan

6.3 The First Publication (Regulation 18 Consultation) of the New South Downs Local Plan took place in 2025, with future consultation planned to take place in Summer of 2026. Currently, the New South Downs Local Plan does not carry weight in decision making. As it progresses through the adoption process, it will gain more weight for the purposes of decision making.

6.4 Relevant supplementary planning documents (SPD) and other guidance

- Design Guide SPD (2022)
- Ecosystems Services (non-householder) Technical Advice Note (TAN)
- Biodiversity Net Gain TAN
- Dark Skies TAN

6.5 Most relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

- Section 6: Building a Strong, competitive economy
- Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 12: Achieving well designed places
- Section 14: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

6.6 Most relevant objectives of the South Downs Partnership Management Plan (2026-2031)

- Objective 1.2 – Support land-based businesses.
- Objective 2.2 – Support farmers to deliver nature recovery

**7. Planning Assessment**

Context

7.1 The application sets out the following Farm composition and activities (table 1) to justify the new buildings.

<b>Farm Holding</b>	<b>Activities/produce</b>	<b>Proposals</b>
<p><u>Total 450 acres</u>                      390 acres – arable/grazing                      60 acres – non cropped (woods, tracks etc), including 16 acres of grass margins &amp; wildflower areas.</p>	<p><u>Arable (% = area of arable land)</u>                      Winter wheat (60%)                      Winter oil seed rape (15%)                      Spring barley (25%)                      Total grain production: 984 tonnes (note proposed grain store capacity)  <u>Livestock grazing</u>                      300 Aberfield ewes, producing 170 lambs. Ambition to increase flock to 800 through regenerative farming system.                      Additional 200 ewes brought in for winter grazing.  <u>Straw/hay storage requirement</u>                      480 tonnes, 3,460m3 storage area. – Note proposed capacity.</p>	<p><u>Grain store</u>                      1,000 tonne capacity.  <u>Hay store</u>                      3,240m3 capacity. Shortfall in requirement manageable operationally. Some straw bales to be kept outside also.  <u>Workshop</u>                      Space needed for seed, fertiliser, bulk input, shearing equipment and machinery.</p>

Table 1: Farming operations

7.2 Since 2024, the Farm has been transitioning to a mixed arable and livestock enterprise, with permanent pasture and rotational grazing in a traditional downland farming system. The supporting information outlines that the Farm is developing a regenerative, environmentally conscious farming system to improve its sustainability with reduced artificial inputs, soil management, balanced livestock and arable operation, habitat creation and species recovery initiatives.

7.3 The following environmental enhancements have also either been undertaken or are planned within ongoing projects:

- Sown eight acres of wildflower mixes.

- Eight acres of rough grassland for habitat diversification.
- Linking hedgerows and small woodlands; 260m of native field hedgerow to be re-instated as per historical mapping (1875 OS).
- Introduction of 100 Grey native partridges to support population recovery.
- Enhancements aim to see increases in farmland bird populations.
- Creation of two dew ponds.

7.4 The overall intended regenerative farming approach and enhancements above are supported. However, these wider farming strategy and environmental initiatives are not aspects to be secured via this application and the Planning process. Whilst they provide a context for the proposals, greater weight should be given to the agricultural justification for the buildings for the purposes of SD39, assessed further below.

Reasons for proposing this site

7.5 The application includes an assessment of eight other potential locations within the Farm, based on the following:

- Accessibility and connection with main roads;
- Highway safety;
- Efficiency for daily operations;
- Landscape character and visual impact;
- Cultural heritage;
- Any conflict with public access (PROW);
- Minimising engineering works and loss of mature landscape features;
- Potential ecological and landscape enhancements;
- Environmental conditions (eg, shelter); and
- Amenity of local residents.

7.6 The proposed site was chosen because:

- Well located within the holding and met operational needs.
- Offered proportionate cut and fill; reducing engineering and construction costs.
- Lower in the valley with limited views of the site.
- Better screened, with the wooded copse to the north.
- Reinstatement of historic hedgerow.
- Close to being Permitted Development (in Applicant's view)

7.7 Representations raise concern about the robustness of the alternative sites assessment. Officers consider that it does set out and reach reasonable conclusions about each location and there are 'trade-offs' between the merits of each site. This information is a relevant consideration given the policy criteria of SD39 (addressed below) but, ultimately, the proposals must principally be assessed on its own individual merits and site-specific considerations.

The SDNPA Partnership Management Plan 2026-2031 (PMP)

7.8 The newly adopted PMP recognises the key role farming plays in the rural economy, local communities, and shaping the landscape. It acknowledges the changing pressures on farming, including evolving practices, food production needs, nature restoration, and climate change. It supports farm businesses to diversify and become more sustainable, while also recognising that supporting farming is essential to achieving nature recovery. The PMP is a relevant material planning consideration which is given some weight in this instance.

SDNPA 2025-6 Corporate Plan

- 7.9 The Corporate Plan also sets a specific priority for delivering the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, which is a broad indication of support for the farming economy and nature recovery. This is relatively less of a material consideration compared with the PMP but noteworthy to highlight.

Summary

- 7.10 All of the above provides a context for the proposals. However, its needs to be ‘tempered’ by assessing the proposals against the Local Plan, purposes, and statutory duty. The latter of which equally includes considering the impacts upon the local community and a broad range of concerns are raised in representations to consider in the planning balance.

Principle of development

- 7.11 The pertinent Local Plan policies concerning the principle of development are SD1, SD4, SD25 and SD39.
- 7.12 Policies SD1 and SD4 are addressed below in the landscape related sub-section. Regarding SD25, exceptionally, development is permissible within the countryside where it accords with other relevant policies, responds to the context of the broad area, and meets at least one criteria in SD25(2).
- 7.13 SD25(2)(b) is relevant because it requires an essential need for a countryside location to be demonstrated. The proposals are farming related within an existing holding which, by their very nature and use, necessitates a countryside location. As the Farm does not have an endorsed Whole Estate Plan, SD25(3) is not relevant which would otherwise have offered further in principle support. Nevertheless, SD25(2) is met for the aforementioned reasons. As outlined below, the proposals also meet other relevant Local Plan policies to accord with the Local Plan as a whole.
- 7.14 More specifically, SD39 supports new agricultural buildings where there is a demonstrated need and their scale is commensurate with that need. Representations raise concern about the viability or business case and whether there is a genuine agricultural need, plus challenge the scale of the buildings versus the Farm’s requirements and level of produce. They also contend that an independent agricultural appraisal should be sought.
- 7.15 Officers sought further information on the agricultural justification and are satisfied that it is proportionate and sufficiently justifies the proposals for the purposes of policy SD39, without the need for additional independent scrutiny.
- 7.16 As summarised in Table I, an overall justification is based on the Farm’s strategy and needs (eg, amount of grain produced, winter feed, machinery storage etc) and the scale of the buildings, overall, appear commensurate with it. For instance, the amount of grain produced is akin to the capacity of the grain store.
- 7.17 Also, the Farm was part of a larger holding until its purchase in 2024. Previously, it was an off lying arable area where machinery, grain, straw, were transported to and from the previous Landowner’s main holding at West Harting. As a result, the Farm does not currently have any buildings or operational hub which the proposals seek to address, enabling it to be more independent and sustainable.
- 7.18 SD39(1)(b) requires assessing whether this is the best suited site to meeting Purpose 1. The policy also prioritises re-using or redeveloping existing buildings or locating them so as they are physically and functionally to them and the Farm enterprise, unless there is an exceptional agricultural need for a more isolated site.
- 7.19 It is implicit in criterion (b) to consider alternative sites. This is met as the application includes a satisfactory assessment and no previously developed sites are available. Although the buildings would be on a relatively isolated greenfield site, the submission sufficiently justifies that this location is well related to the Farm’s operations. Criterion (b) is therefore satisfied in these respects. Its landscape related suitability is addressed further below, and it is re-enforced that regardless of the merits of alternative sites, or otherwise, the proposals need to be assessed on its own individual merits.

7.20 SD39(1)(c) is accorded with because, as outlined under landscape considerations, the buildings are in keeping with their context and of a design which reflects their agricultural use. As the Farm does not have any buildings, SD39(1)(e) and (f) are not applicable because they relate to existing buildings; whether any have been sold or converted in the past three years, and whether unattractive buildings could be removed.

7.21 In summary, the proposals substantially accord with policies SD25 and SD39. Of key further consideration is the landscape impact of the proposals, assessed below.

Major development

7.22 Representations also contend that the proposals are major development for the purposes of SD3 and the NPPF. The proposals are not of a sufficient scale, design, impact, nor of a nature and use to be considered as major development for the purposes of policy SD3.

Permitted development rights

7.23 The submission also contends that the scale of the proposals fit within permitted development rights were it not for the site's proximity to the road. Whilst permitted development rights are acknowledged, by virtue of a full application being required greater weight should be given to assessing the proposals against the Local Plan and other material considerations. Also, permitted development is proposed to be restricted in the conditions given landscape sensitivities and the scale, nature and use of the proposals.

Landscape Impact

7.24 Overarchingly and more generally, new development upon any greenfield site raises the question as to how it can accord with Purpose 1, which can be applied at different scales. This is a greenfield site within a valley which, particularly when experienced in wider views from the site, appears remote from development and is broadly characterised by:

- Very low-density, dispersed settlement.
- High tranquillity and strong sense of remoteness.
- Narrow hedged lanes.
- Rolling topography with constantly changing views.
- Large, straight-sided 18th–19th century fields.
- Well-wooded landscape with ancient woodland and later plantations.

7.25 Consultee advice and representations raise concern about the visual impact of the barns. There would be immediate views of the proposals when passing along the road, however, the visual impact is predominantly limited to this locality as opposed to any extensive wider PROW views, whereby the wider landscape scale characteristics above would be conserved. The buildings would be relatively well contained in the landscape given the buildings would be on the lower area of the field and sunken down, the surrounding topography, woodland screening and distant PROW.

7.26 The Local Plan supporting text for SD39 (para 7.186) outlines that *“appropriately sized and located agricultural buildings are part of the National Park’s rural character and, generally, their functional and minimal design is related to their integral relationship with the management of surrounding land.”*

7.27 The barns would be prominent along this stretch of East Marden Road but their scale, utilitarian form and appearance is akin to modern agricultural buildings. They would also be characteristically arranged around a yard area. As such, they would not visually appear incongruous within this prevailing farmed landscape, even in such a tranquil area.

7.28 Their prominence has sought to be reduced by re-siting them lower down on the site with less land re-contouring but still reducing their overall heights and set back from the road. Additional new planting would help to screen and filter views (will vary seasonably) when travelling either north or south past the site and to provide a setting for the buildings.

- 7.29 It is, however, likely that this would be most effective for the hay store and workshop, whereas the grain store would be mostly visible from the road. The landscaping offers some landscape and ecological enhancements, including the reinstatement of a historic field boundary.
- 7.30 The revised layout is more compact with reduced hardstanding which, overall, limits the extent of development on site and visually contains the yard activity between the buildings. The grain store would also provide some shielding of the open storage area when viewed from the north along the road. A large extent of the proposed cut and fill to create the yard would be behind the workshop and hay store on the eastern side of the site, which would largely be visually apparent only from within the site. Re-grading on the western side would also be contained between the rear of the grain store and roadside hedgerow.
- 7.31 The existing access is already prominent and wide. Its widening has been reduced and whilst fencing and a new gate would formalise it more, this would not be uncharacteristic of other typical farm entrances. Its surfacing, boundary treatment and new planting could be undertaken as sensitively as possible via these details being conditioned. The access track leading into the yard area has been narrowed and would now be screened by a larger area of tree planting.
- 7.32 The SuDS basin would be on the lowest part of the site. It would involve re-contouring of the land to construct it. Whilst some levels details are included on the Landscape Plan, the recommendation includes a requirement to provide specific cross sections and levels to ensure a suitable re-grading and minimising engineering works. It is not envisaged that it would be unduly prominent from the road and appropriate planting around it would soften its appearance as this establishes.
- 7.33 Overall, on balance, the amended proposals would accord with policies SD4 and SD5 in particular for the reasons above.

Tranquillity

- 7.34 As above, there would be an immediate visual impact when passing the site, but otherwise the buildings would not be incongruous in this farmed landscape. Their anticipated use would be relatively low key for much of the year apart from harvest time. The barns could also mean less vehicle movements like transporting it back to South Harting as previously was the case. Overall, any impact upon tranquillity is not so significant as to justify a reason for refusal under policy SD7.

Dark Skies

- 7.35 The site is within a core area of the Reserve. The lighting plan and specification provided seeks to minimise light pollution in an acceptable approach. Condition 14 would secure further details to achieve an appropriate external lighting scheme. The proposals could, therefore, accord with policy SD8.

Impact on surrounding amenities

- 7.36 The site is reasonably distant from North Marden, with intervening woodland and hedgerows and the site is lower in the valley. There is unlikely to be any significant impact upon dwellings regarding loss of outlook, privacy, noise and disturbance from the site, or create an overly dominant form of development. For a large part of the year the levels of activity on site are likely to be relatively low and peak during harvest season.

Highways and parking

- 7.37 Based on the submitted traffic survey, East Marden Road carries very little traffic. The proposals would increase movements, but not to a level considered materially harmful. Although representations raise safety concerns about additional traffic and large agricultural vehicles on a narrow lane, the Highways Authority has not objected. On this basis, policy SD19 in particular is accorded with. Given the modest traffic expected, a refusal on highway safety or amenity grounds could not be justified.

- 7.38 It has also been demonstrated that the proposed access can accommodate the anticipated vehicles and machinery. There would also be sufficient staff parking. Conditions 14 and 15 secure sufficient visibility at the access and parking.

Drainage and flood risk

- 7.39 A planning condition (no.16) is recommended to secure further technical details of the private foul drainage system. Surface water drainage would be a pipe to SuDS basin solution. This would capture run off from the permeable areas. A surface water drainage condition is recommended to secure the more detailed specifications of the drainage scheme, in the interests of sustainably attenuating water and water quality measures in order to accord with policies SD17 and SD50 specifically.

Ecology

- 7.40 Sufficient biodiversity net gain is proposed to achieve the mandatory 10% minimum requirement. In addition, the proposed landscape scheme and ecological features are sufficient enhancements to accord with policies SD2 and SD9. Conditions 9-12 secure these enhancements.
- 7.41 The County Ecologist does not object to the proposed external lighting and recommend that it follow best practice guidance of the Bat Conservation Trust. These more technical details are proposed to be secured via condition (no.13).

Cultural Heritage

- 7.42 The site is not within, nor within the setting of, a conservation area. It is also not within the setting of a listed building. There is no apparent intervisibility between the site and the North Marden conservation area or grade I listed St Marys Church given the distances and intervening woodland, hedgerows and topography. The East Marden conservation area would not be impacted upon for similar reasons. There would, therefore, be no conflict with policies SD12, 13, and 15.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

- 7.43 The site lies within the wider buffer of the Singleton and Cocking Tunnels Special Protection Area (SPA). Given its location, scale, site characteristics, proposed lighting, landscaping, and ecological enhancements, the development would not adversely effect the integrity of the SPA or its bat interest features.

**8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 Sufficient justification is provided to demonstrate a need for the proposed buildings and their scale is commensurate with that need. Their location can also be justified under policies SD25 and SD39 regarding the principle of development. Whilst there would be some immediate visual impact of their presence on site, there would not be a wider landscape impact that would affect the broader recognised landscape characteristics of the area. The revised plans also reduce the impact. Therefore, the proposals accord with SD4 and SD5.
- 8.2 Any impacts upon wider amenities either from the physical presence of the buildings or associated activity, including traffic, are not so significant to justify a reason for refusal on these grounds. The setting of nearby conservation areas and listed buildings would also be conserved.
- 8.3 The proposals, therefore, sufficiently accord with the Development Plan, NPPF 2024, and National Park Purposes and relevant legislation as a whole. There are no material considerations of sufficient weight which would justify not granting planning permission for the reasons outlined.
- 8.4 The NPPF outlines overarching economic, social and environmental objectives to sustainable development. The proposals would have economic and environmental benefits in regard to the farming activities. There are unlikely to be any notable social benefits given the nature of the proposals, which are also unlikely to significantly affect the enjoyment of recreational visitors to the area given the distant PROW and the site being reasonably well contained in the landscape and no significant intervisibility with the cultural heritage in nearby hamlets.

8.5 The application is, therefore, recommended for approval subject to conditions outlined below.

**9. Reason for Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions below, and any amendments or other conditions required to address technical matters.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the plans listed below under the heading "Plans Referred to in Consideration of this Application".

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Use

3. The development hereby approved shall be solely used for the purposes of agriculture and for no other use whatsoever.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control the development of land.

Materials

4. Prior to reaching slab level of any building, a schedule of materials and samples of such materials, finishes and colours to be used for external walls, windows and doors, roofs, and rainwater goods of the building, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The buildings shall, thereafter, be constructed in full accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

Levels

5. The development shall be undertaken in full accordance with the approved site levels as detailed on plans 1865.L1005.P01 and 1865.L1002.P05.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

6. Prior to the construction of the surface water drainage basin, a minimum of two cross sections in a north-south and east-west orientation showing existing and proposed levels shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall, thereafter be undertaken in full accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory form of development in the interests of the character and appearance of the area.

Landscaping

7. Notwithstanding the details provided, prior to any building being brought into use, a detailed Scheme of Soft and Hard Landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include, but not be limited to:

- a. Written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment);
- b. Planting methods, tree pits & guying methods;

- c. Schedules of plants, species, planting sizes, proposed numbers/densities as appropriate;
- d. Retained areas of trees and hedgerows;
- e. Details of all hard-surfaces, including paths, kerb edges, access ways, boundary treatments, bin and cycle stores and parking spaces, including their appearance, dimensions and siting;
- f. Details of the siting, specifications and management of the Sustainable Drainage systems;
- g. A landscape schedule and management plan designed to deliver the management of all new and retained landscape elements to benefit people and wildlife for a minimum period of 5 years including details of the arrangements for its implementation; and
- h. A timetable for implementation of the soft and hard landscaping works.

The scheme of Soft and Hard Landscaping works shall be implemented in full accordance with the approved details and timetable. Any plant which dies, becomes diseased or is removed within the first five years of planting, shall be replaced with another of similar type and size, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To achieve an appropriate landscaping scheme to integrate the development into the landscape and provide a setting for the new development.

#### Trees

8. Prior to the commencement of development, details of tree protection measures to protect existing boundary trees to be retained, in particular the woodland adjacent to the access, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall, thereafter, be undertaken in full accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: To safeguard existing trees to be retained.

#### Ecology

9. The development shall be undertaken in full accordance with the avoidance, mitigation, and enhancement measures set out in sections 7 and 8 of the Ecological Impact Assessment by South Downs Ecology (dated August 2025). These measures shall be implemented in full by the substantial completion of the development and thereafter retained.

Reason: To protect and enhance wildlife and biodiversity.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain

10. The Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be prepared in full accordance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Metric prepared by South Downs Ecology (version 2, dated 03.03.2026).

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), policy SD9 of the South Downs Local Plan (2014-33) and the SDNPA Biodiversity Technical Advice Note.

11. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The HMMP shall accord with the Biodiversity Gain Plan and include:
  - i. A non-technical summary;
  - ii. The roles and responsibilities of the people or organisations delivering the HMMP;

- iii. The planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- iv. The management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved; Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the first use of the development;
- v. The monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat; and
- vi. Provision for the identification, agreement and implementation of contingencies and/or remedial actions where the results from monitoring show that the conservation aims and objectives of the HMMP are not being met.

The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall thereafter be managed, maintained and monitored in accordance with the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act, policy SD9 of the South Downs Local Plan (2014-33) and the SDNPA Biodiversity Technical Advice Note.

12. Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, a completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements set out in the approved Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act, policy SD9 of the South Downs Local Plan (2014-33) and the SDNPA Biodiversity Technical Advice Note.

#### Lighting

13. Prior to any building being brought into use, details of any external lighting to be used on the buildings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include its location, type and specification of all lighting. The specification shall not exceed 500 lumens and 3000K and be of a design which is sensor controlled and minimises upward light spill. Internal lighting shall also be sensor controlled and not exceed 500 lumens and 3000K in order to minimise light spill. Lighting shall thereafter be only implemented in accordance with the approved details and thereafter retained.

Reason: To conserve dark night skies, ecology, and create a suitable level of amenity for future occupiers.

#### Highways

14. The development shall not be occupied until the vehicle parking and turning spaces on site have been constructed in full accordance with the approved site plan 1865.LI001.P10 and retained thereafter.

Reason: To provide adequate on-site parking and turning space for the development.

15. The visibility splays shown on plan ITB201140-GA-001A within the Transport Statement prepared by i-Transport LLP (ref: GT/AJ/ITB201140-001A, dated 01.08.2025) shall be implemented in full and retained.

Reason: To ensure adequate visibility for highway safety.

#### Drainage

16. Prior to commencement of the development, detailed designs of a surface water drainage scheme shall be submitted in writing to and agreed with the Local Planning Authority. This shall be in accordance with the approved Drainage Statement by Aqua Callidus, 6th August 2025. The design shall follow the NPPF, PPG Flood risk and coastal change and National Standards for SuDS. The submitted details shall include, but not be limited to:

1. The results of detailed infiltration testing in accordance with BRE Digest 365 in locations where winter groundwater levels show a 1m unsaturated zone from the base of infiltration allows.
2. Provision of surface water attenuation storage, sized and designed to accommodate the volume of water generated in all rainfall events up to and including the critical storm duration for the 3.33% and 1% annual probability rainfall events (both including allowances for climate change). Hydraulic calculations and detailed construction drawings shall be used to demonstrate this.
3. Detailed drainage layout plan, which corresponds with the hydraulic calculations.
4. An exceedance flow routing plan demonstrating no increase in surface water flood risk on or off site. The plan must include proposed levels and flow directions.
5. Evidence that the surface water drainage system meets the four pillars of SuDS/Standard 4-7 of the National Standards for SuDS.
6. Construction method statement for the surface water drainage system.
7. Maintenance and management plan for all elements of the surface water drainage system and any ordinary watercourses/culverts within the phase.

Reason: To ensure the design meets the National Standards for SuDS and does not increase flood risk elsewhere.

#### Construction Management Plan

17. No development shall commence, excluding site clearance and set up preparatory works prior to construction, until an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the approved CEMP shall be fully implemented and adhered to throughout the entire construction period. The CEMP shall provide details as appropriate, including:
  - a. The anticipated number, frequency and types of vehicles used during construction and routing of vehicles;
  - b. Management of deliveries in terms of vehicles entering and leaving the site and timings;
  - c. The method of access and routing of vehicles during construction;
  - d. The parking of vehicles by site operatives and visitors;
  - e. The loading and unloading areas of plant, materials and waste;
  - f. Measures to control surface water run off;
  - g. Construction timings to avoid disturbance of protected species;
  - h. Dust suppression, mitigation and avoidance measures;
  - i. Noise reduction measures;
  - j. Details of site monitoring and logging of results;
  - k. Hours of operation during construction;
  - l. The storage of plant and materials used in the construction of the development;
  - m. The erection and maintenance of security hoarding;
  - n. The provision of wheel washing facilities;
  - o. A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from construction works;
  - p. Construction lighting and its operation;
  - q. A programme of and phasing of demolition (if any);
  - r. The arrangements for deliveries associated with all construction works;

- s. Methods and phasing of construction works;
- t. Access and egress for plant and machinery;
- u. Location of temporary site buildings, compound, materials, plant storage areas; and
- v. Construction work shall only take place in full accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety, the amenities of the area and managing the environmental considerations during the construction phase.

18. Notwithstanding the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no buildings, structures or works as defined within Part 6 of Schedule 2, Class A shall be erected or undertaken on the site unless permission is granted by the Local Planning Authority pursuant to an application for the purpose.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control the development of land in the interests of the character and appearance of the area and amenity.

**Tim Slaney**

**Director of Placemaking**

**South Downs National Park Authority**

Contact Officer: Richard Ferguson

Tel: 01730 819268

Email: [Richard.Ferguson@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Ferguson@southdowns.gov.uk)

Appendices: Appendix I- Legislation and policies

SDNPA Consultees: Legal Services, Development Manager.

Background Documents: [SDNP/25/03508/FUL | Erection of three agricultural barns with access improvements, landscaping, and other associated works. | North Marden Farm East Marden Road North Marden Chichester West Sussex PO18 9JU](#)

[South Downs Local Plan \(2014-33\)](#)

[South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan](#)

[SDNPA Supplementary Planning Documents and Technical Advice Notes](#)