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Planning and Heritage Statement to accompany a full planning application for the change of use of the Weavers Business Centre, 6 Hamlet Road, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 8EE from office to residential. Principle only - no building

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1. Introduction

This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for the proposed change of use of 6 Hamlet Road, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 8EE from office use (Class E) back to its original function as a single dwellinghouse (Class C3).

The property is a Grade II listed building. Importantly:

- The building was historically in **residential use** before conversion to office use.
- The proposal involves no internal or external alterations.
- A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) report has been prepared and confirms a minimum 10% net gain on site.
- Adequate **off-street parking provision** exists to support the proposed residential use.

The Statement sets out the site context, the planning proposal, heritage considerations, and detailed policy analysis. It concludes that the proposal is fully consistent with local and national planning policies, causes no harm to the listed building, and constitutes a sustainable and beneficial development.

2. Site and Surroundings

6 Hamlet Road is a late 15th century property located close to the town centre of Haverhill, Suffolk.

The immediate street scene is predominantly residential, with a mix of traditional dwellings and some small-scale commercial and community uses.

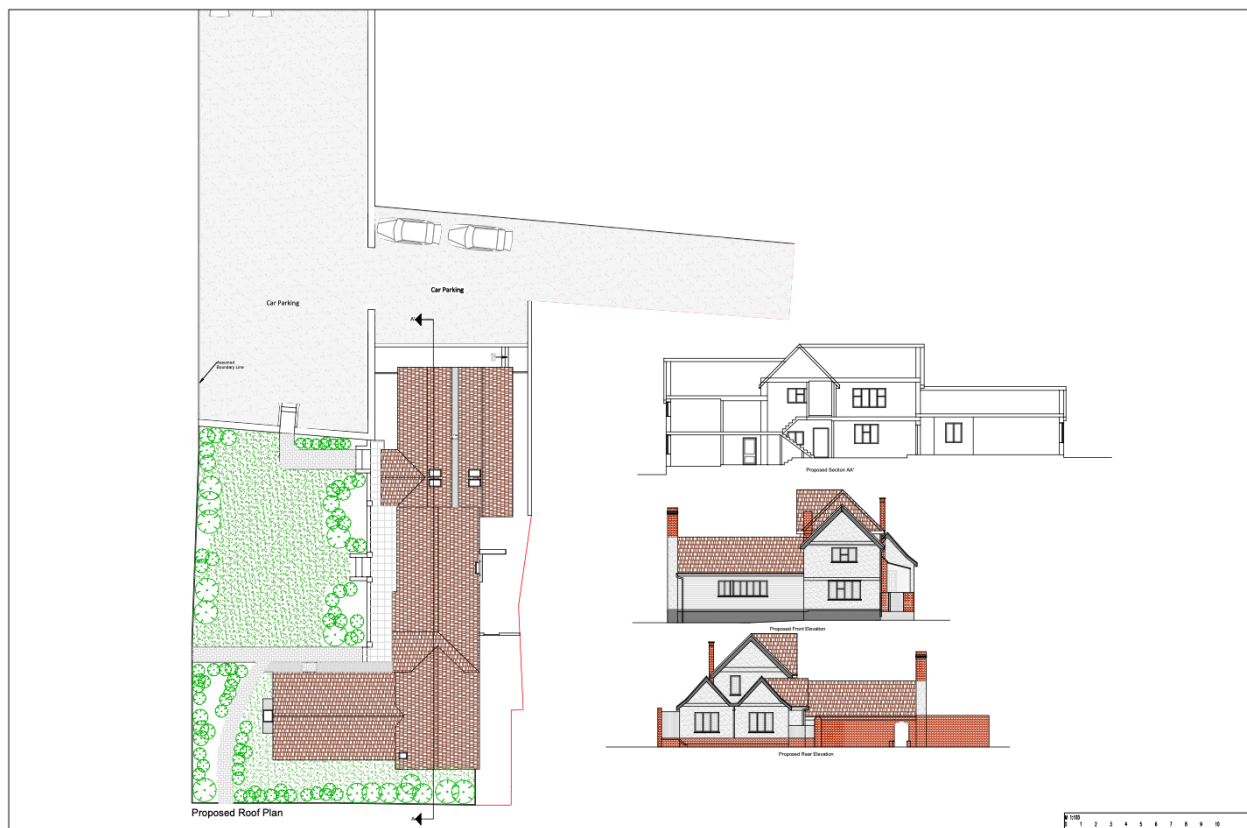
The property is of two storeys with architectural features typical of its period. It sits within a sustainable settlement, with excellent access to local amenities, shops, schools, health facilities, employment opportunities, and public transport links.

The site includes existing parking provision which comfortably meets the requirements of a single dwelling.

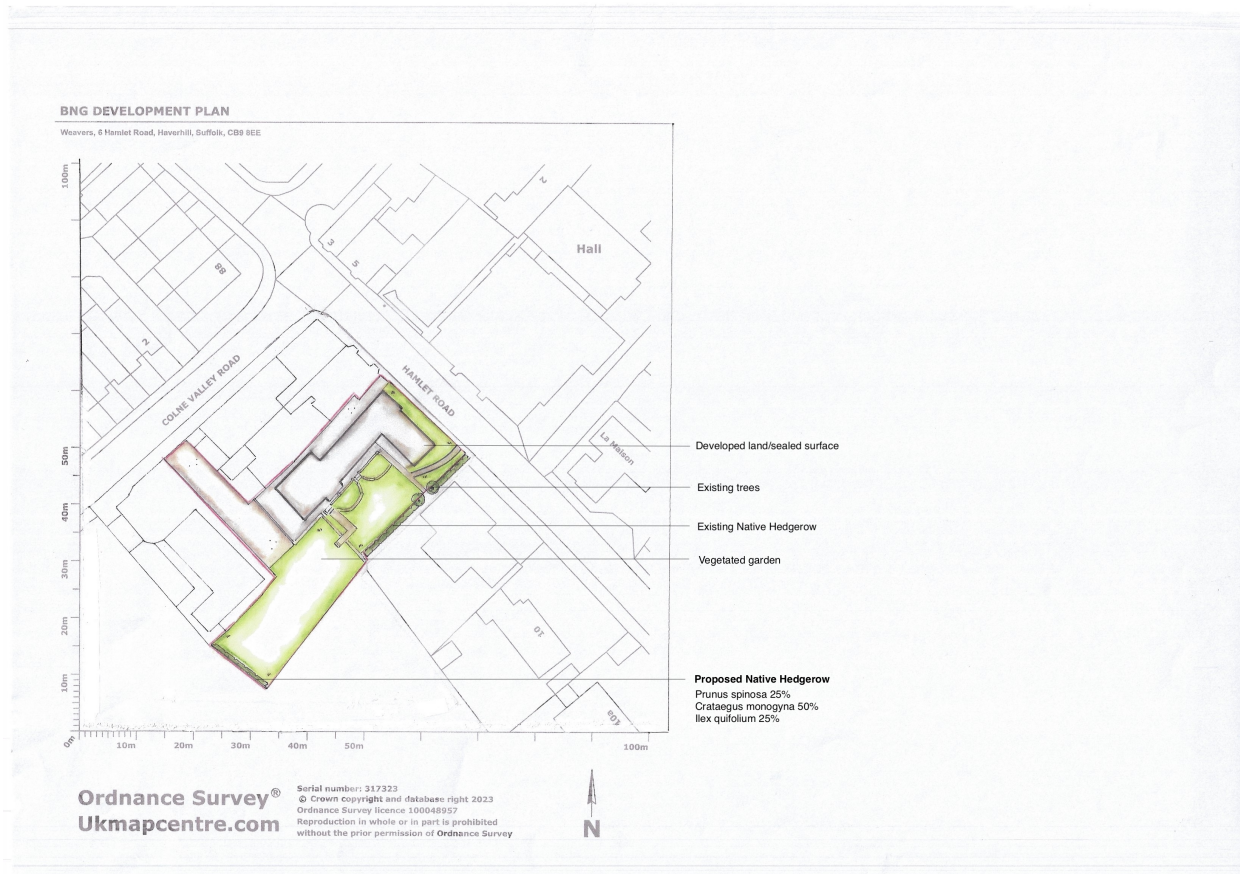
3. The Proposal

The application seeks planning permission to:

- Change the lawful use of the property from office (Class E) to single dwellinghouse (Class C3).
- Retain the building in its current form without any internal or external works.
- Deliver a 10% BNG uplift as evidenced in the accompanying ecological report.
- All car parking will be retained so the proposed parkign exceeds the minimum for residential use readily.



Taking into account the BNG work the Landscape Plan (below) and attached. Note the 'vegetated garden' is not part of this proposal but an option considered in development.



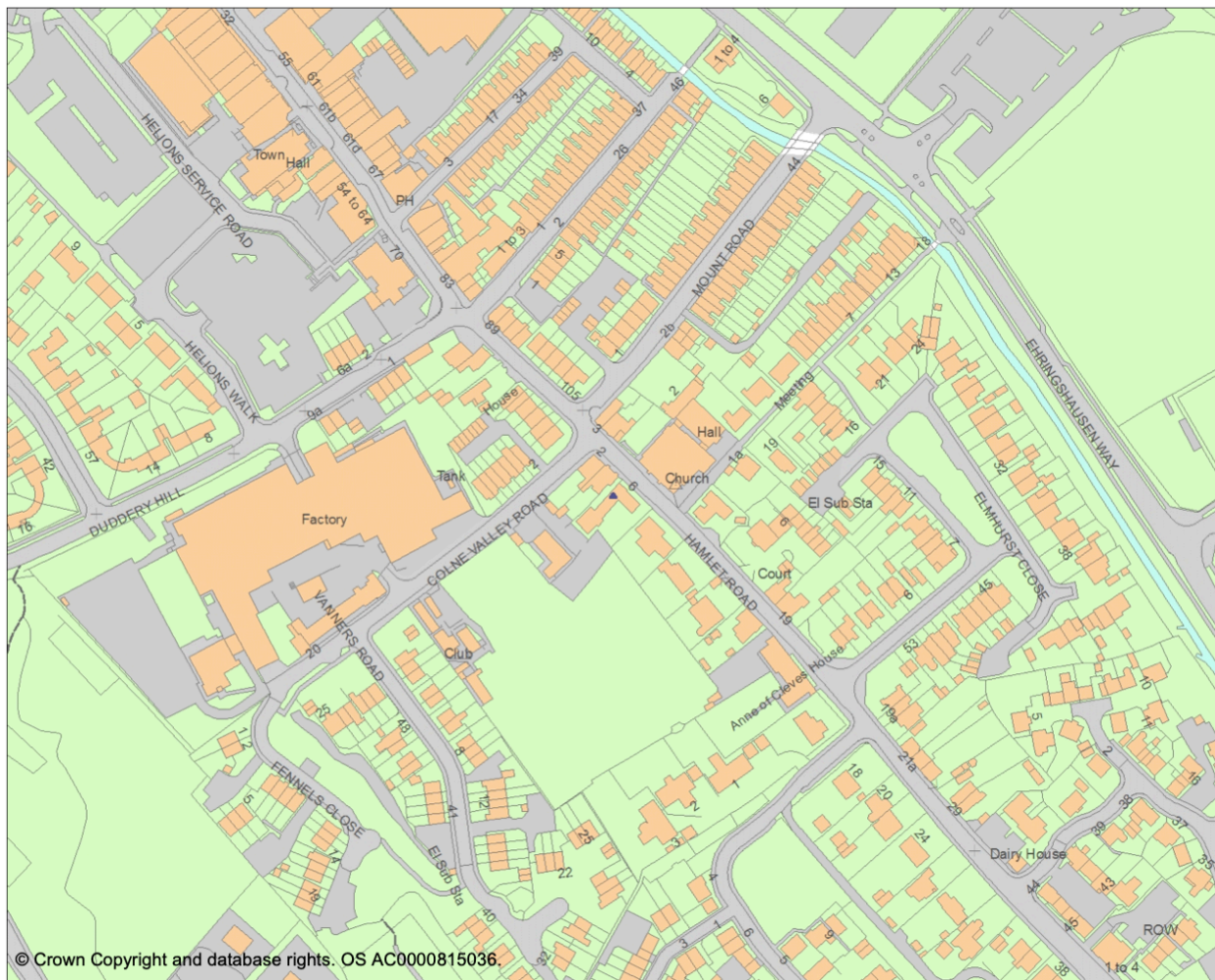
The change of use restores the building to its most historically appropriate and sustainable use.

4. Heritage Context

4.1 Statutory Duty

Under Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, decision makers must have “special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

The present proposal involves no works to the listed building and therefore preserves its architectural and historic interest in full.



4.2 Listing Description

The building is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as:

List Entry Number: 1375512

Name: Weavers

Grade: II

Date first listed: 9 May 1973

Listing Details:

House, later school, and converted to offices late C20. Original range late C15 with early C17 wing extending back at right end: later alterations and C20 fenestration. Both parts timber-framed, original range weatherboarded to street, plastered and colourwashed at rear; pantile roof with gable end external brick stack: extension has plain tile roof with brick stack piercing roof slope. EXTERIOR: single-storey range with 2-storey gable ended extension wing to right. Entrance at rear of single-storey range. Street front pierced by one 5-light and one 2-light early C19 metal casements arranged continuously. Rear: plank door to right of a 5-light and a 2-light early C19 metal casements. Extension gable wall lit through a ground-floor 4-light C20 metal casement and a similar 3-light casement to first floor. Drip plank at eaves line. Rear gable end has C20 plank door under a hood on consoles. One C20 top-hung casement either side on both floors. INTERIOR: early range has principal studs of heavy scantling. Roof of 3 tie beams, the centre one cambered and with arched braces dropping to wall posts. North tie beam on knuckle braces. Plastered ceiling. Extension has exposed timber-frame of meagre scantling and roof of tie beams on arched braces. Chamfered bridging beams. C20 staircase.

4.3 Heritage Impact

- No alterations are proposed, so the architectural features described in the listing are unaffected.
- The building reverts to its original use as a dwelling, thereby enhancing its long-term viability.

-
- The significance of the heritage asset is therefore preserved without harm.
 - The setting of the heritage asset is unchanged and therefore unharmed.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 National Policy – NPPF (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2023) sets the government's planning policies. Relevant provisions include:

- **Paragraph 8 – Achieving Sustainable Development**

Establishes the three overarching objectives of the planning system:

- Economic: supporting growth and innovation.
- Social: providing housing to meet present and future needs.
- Environmental: protecting the natural, built and historic environment.

This proposal contributes to all three objectives through re-use of an existing building, provision of housing, and biodiversity net gain.

- **Paragraph 11 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

Requires that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

- **Paragraph 61 – Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes**

Emphasises the need to significantly boost housing supply. This proposal restores one dwelling to the housing stock.

- **Paragraphs 124 & 128– Making Effective Use of Land**

Encourages the reuse of under-utilised or vacant buildings, especially in settlements. Reverting this property to residential use meets this policy directly.

- **Paragraph 131 – Achieving Well-Designed Places**

Requires planning to create sustainable, inclusive, and attractive places. Returning this house to residential use reinforces local character and community identity.

- **Paragraphs 202 - 221 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment**

- Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their

significance.

- Great weight must be given to their conservation.
- Where proposals do not harm significance, they should be supported.

This proposal results in no harm to the listed building.

- Paragraph 192 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
Requires measurable net gains for biodiversity. The accompanying BNG report demonstrates a 10% uplift, directly satisfying this requirement.

5.2 Local Policy – West Suffolk Local Plan (2024)

SP8 - Biodiversity Net Gain and Enhancements:

The Environment Act 2021 mandates a minimum 10 per cent biodiversity net gain (BNG) which was implemented in spring 2024. Biodiversity net gain is a legislative requirement, with the detail of how it is implemented set out in regulations and accompanying guidance. Biodiversity net gain is calculated using the statutory metric and a biodiversity gain plan, submitted prior to the commencement of any development, sets out how a development will deliver the biodiversity gain objective. However, guidance is clear that it is important for net gain to be considered throughout the planning process.

Policy SP8 Biodiversity net gain and enhancements

In line with biodiversity gain hierarchy biodiversity net gain will preferentially be delivered on-site where this would deliver the most appropriate outcome for biodiversity and to provide local benefit.

Locally defined ecological networks identified in the local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) will be the focus for the delivery of registered off-site habitat and landscape scale biodiversity net gain.

For meaningful contributions to nature recovery, biodiversity net gain actions and biodiversity enhancements should seek to deliver bigger, better, more and joined up habitat, safeguarding and enhancing habitat connectivity at a site level, locally and at the wider landscape scale.

For developments which fall outside the scope of mandatory biodiversity net gain, enhancement for biodiversity must be included as part of the proposals, commensurate with the scale of the development.

The purpose of this policy is to link biodiversity net gain to other strategic objectives and the overall place-making strategy, enabling a holistic approach to ecological enhancement across West Suffolk.

SP14 Housing Needs:

Strategic policy SP14 sets out the strategic housing requirement for the district and the needs of the community over the plan period to 2041.

Policy SP14 Housing needs

To meet West Suffolk's local housing need, provision is made for at least 13,005 new homes (net) and associated infrastructure to be delivered in the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2041 (an average of 765 new homes (net) per annum).

14,875 homes (net) have been identified in this local plan to meet the overall housing requirement.

Provision is met through existing planning commitments, site allocations in the development plan and a windfall allowance.

Supporting communities make provision to meet local housing needs

Support will be given to communities to make provision for housing by taking forward neighbourhood plans and proposals which support locally identified housing needs through the provision of rural exception sites, community led schemes such as community-led, community right to build orders or a neighbourhood development order.

SP30 - Historic Environment

The historic environment is central to West Suffolk's cultural heritage and contributes significantly to the local economy and identity of the district, adding to the quality of life and well-being of residents and visitors.

Policy SP30 Historic environment

The council will balance the need for development with the proper conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment through a positive strategy to ensure that:

- a. Heritage assets are sustained in viable uses which are compatible with their significance.
- b. The wider social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits of conserving the historic environment are recognised and promoted.
- c. The positive contribution made by the historic environment to local character and distinctiveness is understood and used to inform the design of new development so it respects its surroundings.

LP35 - Listed Buildings:

Buildings are listed in recognition of their special architectural or historic interest (significance) and any works which affect the character of a listed building require listed building consent. Significance is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest which may be from its archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic qualities.

The purpose of this policy is to set out how proposals to alter, extend or change the use of listed buildings, or developments that affect their setting will be assessed.

Policy LP35 Listed buildings

Proposals to alter, extend or change the use of a listed building, or development affecting its setting, will be permitted where, as appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal, they:

- a. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the building including the contribution made by its setting.
- b. Contribute to the preservation of the building.
- c. Are not detrimental to the building's character or any architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic features that contribute towards its significance.
- d. Are of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, and design which respects the existing building and its setting.
- e. Use appropriate architectural details, materials and methods of construction which respect the character of the building.
- f. Respect the historic internal layout (which may include later remodelling) and other internal features of importance.
- g. Respect the setting of the listed building, including inward and outward views and how it is experienced and understood.
- h. Respect the character, appearance and setting of a park, garden or training yard of historic or design interest, particularly where the grounds have been laid out to complement the design or function of the building. A curtilage and/or setting which is appropriate to the listed building, and which maintains its relationship with its surroundings should be retained.
- i. Have regard to the present and future viability or function of the listed building.

Proposals to demolish all or part of a listed building will only be permitted in very exceptional circumstances. Applicants must demonstrate that all reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the ongoing appropriate repair of the building; sustain existing uses or find viable new ones, and that they have addressed the considerations set out in national legislation and guidance. Where appropriate, the recording of the building to a specified standard will be required prior to the commencement of demolition.

Retrofitting proposals should be supported by a statement demonstrating an understanding of the building's environmental performance and be accompanied by an assessment of the building's current fabric and energy performance. The level of detail submitted should be sufficient to evaluate and or

LP24 - Safeguarding employment

The purpose of this policy is to protect and safeguard employment land and existing businesses across the district.

Policy LP24 Safeguarding employment

In order to meet our overall employment needs over the plan period this policy seeks to protect and safeguard all employment land and existing businesses, across the district which include:

- a. Land designated as a general employment areas and rural employment areas.
- b. Sites allocated for employment purposes (including employment land as part of a mixed-use allocation).
- c. Land and existing businesses which are not specifically identified in the local plan.

Policy SP22 sets out the uses permitted in each general employment area and rural employment area.

Individual site allocations in this plan set out uses that will be permitted in each allocation.

It is recognised that there are a number of existing businesses and employment uses across the district that are not designated on the policies map that lie outside of the defined general employment areas, rural employment areas and employment allocations as detailed above (category c). These businesses make an important economic contribution within West Suffolk and the council will support and work with businesses across the district to enable them to grow, expand and diversify and find suitable accommodation to meet their needs.

Proposals resulting in the loss of employment land or an existing business falling within categories a and c to an employment use which generates jobs but do not neatly fall within the employment uses set out in policy SP22, will only be permitted where the proposal complies with the following criteria d to h, as appropriate:

As a minimum, evidence of 12-month marketing of the site and premises in accordance with guidance in appendix J, demonstrating that genuine attempts have been made to sell and/or let the site and premises in its existing use (or last previous use) and other suitable employment uses (where supported by the policies in the development plan) and no alternative business use has been found.

- d. Evidence is provided demonstrating there is sufficient supply of alternative and suitable employment land available.
- e. The existing use has created over-riding environmental problems (such as noise, odours or traffic) and permitting an alternative use would be a substantial environmental benefit that would outweigh the loss of an employment site.

- f. An alternative use would assist in urban regeneration and offer greater benefits to the community in meeting local business and employment needs and would provide other sustainability benefits that would outweigh the loss of the existing employment use.
- g. Is for an employment related support facility such as employment training and/or education.
- h. It is demonstrated to support business operations and diversifications such as on-site renewable energy development.

To ensure the long-term protection of employment land across the district, proposals for non-employment uses on sites allocated on the policies maps for employment purposes (which fall within category b) will only be considered if it can be demonstrated it is no longer required in a review of the allocation in a subsequent local plan.

LP37 - Conservation areas

The purpose of this policy is to set out how proposals for development within or in the setting of a conservation area will be assessed.

Policy LP37 Conservation areas

Proposals for development within, or within a setting of a conservation area, as appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal, should:

- a. Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area or its setting, and views into, within, and out of the area.
- b. Be of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which respect the area's character or appearance and its setting.
- c. Retain important natural features such as open spaces, plot divisions, boundary treatments, and trees and hedges, which contribute to the special character or appearance of the area.
- d. Retain important traditional features that contribute to the area's character or appearance such as original doors, windows, shop fronts and boundary structures.
- e. Include fenestration which respects its setting.
- f. Use materials and building techniques which complement or harmonise with the character or appearance of the area.
- g. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the conservation area and/or its setting. The proposal should demonstrate how the key characteristics of the character or appearance of the area have been addressed.

New shop fronts, fascias, awnings, canopies, advertisements and other alterations to commercial premises must be of a high standard of design which respects the character or appearance of the conservation area and the building to which they relate, having regard to the content of West Suffolk Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guidance. Standardised shop fronts, unsympathetic 'house' signs, projecting box signs, internally illuminated signs and externally lit signs will not normally be granted consent. In rural locations with low levels of street lighting and where it can be demonstrated that premises rely principally on trading after dark, externally illuminated signs sympathetic to the character of the building and the surrounding area may be permissible.

Proposals to demolish buildings or structures that make a positive contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area will require clear and convincing justification and will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- The building or structure is structurally unsound and beyond reasonable repair, or the proper repair of the building would result in the loss of the qualities which give it architectural or historic interest.
- All possible measures to sustain an existing use or find an alternative use have been explored and failed, and redevelopment would bring substantial public benefits.
- In both cases planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the site and a contract for the carrying out of the works has been made.

The level of detail of any supporting information should be sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance and/or setting.

Development proposals which cause harm to the significance of a conservation area including its setting will require clear and convincing justification.

Where a proposal would result in harm to significance the relevant tests of the National Planning Policy Framework, or successor document, will apply.

Outline applications will only be accepted where sufficient information is provided to identify how the proposals will impact upon the elements which contribute to the significance of the conservation area.

6.3 Historic England Guidance

Historic England has published guidance documents that are material considerations:

- **Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (2008)**
States that the most sustainable way to conserve heritage assets is to maintain them in a viable use that is consistent with their character.
- **Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Good Practice Advice Note 2, 2015)**
Advises that the key consideration is whether a proposal causes harm to a heritage asset's significance. Here, no harm arises.
- **The Setting of Heritage Assets (Good Practice Advice Note 3, 2017)**
Explains how development can affect heritage setting. As no changes are proposed, the building's setting remains entirely preserved.

Collectively, this guidance confirms that the re-use of the building for its original residential purpose is wholly appropriate and beneficial, ensuring its continued care without harm.

7. Policy Compliance Commentary

The proposal complies with national and local policy in the following ways:

- Heritage: The listed building is preserved in full. The building is returned to its original use as a dwelling thus representing
- Housing: The dwelling contributes to local housing supply.
- Sustainability: Re-uses a building, minimises carbon, and provides biodiversity uplift.
- Design/Character: Reinforces Hamlet Road's residential character.
- Access/Parking: There is more than adequate existing provision.

8. Sustainability

- **Environmental:** Avoids construction impacts, secures 10% biodiversity net gain.
- **Social:** Supports housing supply and community vitality.
- **Economic:** Maintains viable occupation of a listed property.

9. Conclusion

The proposed change of use of 6 Hamlet Road, Haverhill from office (Class E) back to a dwellinghouse (Class C3) is:

- Fully compliant with NPPF and West Suffolk policies.
- Supported by Historic England guidance as an appropriate, viable re-use.
- Neutral to beneficial in heritage terms, enhancing the listed building's significance by returning it to its original use.
- Delivering sustainability benefits.

The application should therefore be approved without delay.