

**PLANNING JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT**

**RELATING TO**

**BARNS AT AMERICA FARM, WARMINGTON**

**ON BEHALF OF**

**MR G MARTIN**

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Dated: February 2020

## **1. Introduction**

This Statement is prepared in support of a planning application for Mr George Martin, and relates to the proposed conversion of a range of former farm buildings at America Farm, Morborne Road, Warmington PE8 6UP into three residential dwellings. This Statement will set out the planning background and historic context for the application, and will assess the scheme against current National Policies and Development Plan Policy.

## **2. America Farm**

America Farm is situated approximately 3 km to the east of Warmington on the Morborne Road. America Farm includes a former farm cottage, together with a range of agricultural buildings. The buildings are of varying traditional construction and have limited ongoing agricultural use. They comprise of a two storey semi-detached red brick former granary built under a concrete tiled roof, with large cart entrances and an adjoining lower story workshop under a corrugated tin roof. They have an enclosed crew yard to the rear formerly used for housing livestock. Opposite and detached from the main building is a smaller single storey workshop/store built in brick under a pitched fibre cement sheeted roof. The barns are accessed from a farm track off the Morborne Road which is separate to the access to the farm cottage.

## **3. Development Proposals**

The buildings are proposed for conversion into three residential dwellings, having previously been consented separately for a similar form of development. Detailed plans illustrating the conversion proposals, are included as part of the application, and replicate the previously approved plans for the main barn with minor amendments to the plans for the smaller building. The scheme includes a comprehensive layout for all three proposed dwellings utilising their own shared access and with individual amenity, parking and bin storage areas. The dwellings provide a range of accommodation and incorporate 2, 3 & 4 bedrooms respectively.

## **4. Planning Background**

Proposals for the change of use of the buildings at America Farm were initially put forward in 2000. In line with planning policy at that time, permission was sought to change the use of the larger stone buildings to B1 (office/light industrial) use. Planning Permission was eventually granted for this change of use in 2003. Feasibility studies were undertaken at the time to establish whether a conversion of the buildings to B1 use was viable, and in light of the absence of Grant Aid at that particular time, proposals were not taken forward, as the scheme was not deemed to be viable. The planning consent subsequently lapsed.

In 2014, changes were introduced to the General Permitted Development Order which allow for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use subject to certain criteria. An application was submitted in November 2014 seeking prior approval for the conversion of one of the stone buildings to residential use, and this application was permitted in December 2014 (**14/02132/PDU**).

In March 2015, a full application was submitted for the conversion of the adjoining stone barn into a second residential dwelling and this was approved in May 2015 (**15/00494/FUL**). Finally in July 2015 permission was granted to convert the final barn in the range to residential use (**15/01247/FUL**). In October 2017, retrospective permission was granted for the creation of the new access track which now serves as a means of access to the barns (**17/01678/FUL**). This Statement will set out the justification for the grant of a new permission to replicate the individual consents previously granted but in a comprehensive manner.

## 5. National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy is set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was revised in July 2018. The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It also seeks to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable inclusive mixed communities.

Whilst the NPPF discourages housing development in the Open Countryside, it identifies special circumstances where permission should be granted. Paragraph 79 sets out the exceptions to the normal presumption against residential development in the Open Countryside, and includes the following criteria which are relevant to the consideration of this application.

- i) Where such development will represent the optimal use of a heritage asset or be appropriate in enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets, or
- ii) Where the development would reuse redundant or disused buildings and enhance their immediate setting.

These criteria will be considered in the justification set out below.

National regulations also allow for the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use under Permitted Development Rights subject to certain criteria. This underlines that the principle of residential conversion is acceptable under national policy.

## 6. Development Plan Policy

Development Plan Policy is set out in the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Spatial Strategy which was adopted in July 2016 and covers a plan period up to 2031, and the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan which was adopted in July 2011 which covers a period up to 2021. The Core Strategy repeats the general presumption against development in the Open Countryside, whilst the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan contains specific policies relating to rural buildings. Policy 23 states as follows:

*“Planning permission will be granted for the adaption or reuse of buildings in the countryside for employment generating or tourism, including tourist accommodation, or residential use, where the location of the building is more appropriate for such a use and provided that:*

- a. The character of any buildings of historic or visual interest is conserved with proposals supported by detailed drawings indicating the layout, size, and external appearance of the building after conversion, the materials to be used, the means of access and landscaping proposals.*
- b. Schemes are limited to situations where buildings are substantially intact, though structural surveys will be required for proposals relating to buildings which are unoccupied and show evidence of some dereliction and*
- c. Conditions are imposed withdrawing Permitted Development Rights to prevent future extensions where these would result in an adverse impact on the character and surrounding area.”*

Consideration of this policy will be dealt with in the justification set out below.

East Northamptonshire Council are in the process of producing a new Part 2 Local Plan although this has not yet reached the stage of Examination. The intention is that this policy document will continue support appropriate reuse of rural buildings including residential use

## **7. Planning Justification**

### NPPF

The NPPF outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Whilst residential development in the Open Countryside is not regarded as being wholly sustainable, the reuse of redundant buildings, and making best use of existing built assets, can in certain circumstances represent sustainable development. The buildings have historically had consent for conversion to residential use, following appropriate assessment against criteria for sustainable development. Policies have not changed significantly since these consents were granted and therefore the principle of allowing this comprehensive development plan is consistent with earlier decision making.

Furthermore, whilst the buildings are not designated as heritage assets, they are of traditional vernacular, typical for this part of Northamptonshire, and as such, are a reflection of the agricultural heritage of the area. They would therefore fall into the category of non-designated heritage assets. The principle of retaining and converting these buildings to alternative use was previously accepted and this current proposal seeks to reflect those earlier decisions and ensure that the buildings are put to a new use, thereby ensuring their preservation. This in turn, will lead to an enhancement of the character and setting of this isolated but prominent farmstead.

### Development Plan Policy

Policy 23 of the Rural North Oundle and Thrapston Plan, indicates that residential use of buildings in the countryside will be considered favourably, where the location or the building, is more appropriate for such a use. Despite previous attempts by the applicant to find suitable alternative commercial uses for the buildings, this proved to be unviable, and residential use, has subsequently been accepted as being an appropriate use for the buildings as evidenced by the 2014 and 2015 permissions.

The plans submitted with the application replicate the proposals previously approved and respect the character of the original buildings, whilst also leading to an enhancement of the overall setting. Policy has not changed since the 2014 and 2015 decisions and therefore this comprehensive application for the same overall form of development should be judged in the same way as those earlier consents.

## **8. Conclusion**

This proposal seeks planning permission for the conversion of the redundant farm buildings at America Farm into three residential dwellings. The scheme replicates the earlier permitted proposals for these buildings and will secure the long term viable use of the entire range of buildings for residential purposes. In line with National and Development Plan Policy, it is considered that residential use of the buildings is the most appropriate use, in this location. The buildings themselves whilst undesignated, are heritage assets, and the proposal will respect their traditional and historic character. The viable conversion of undesignated heritage asset, complies with the guidance of the NPPF, and in line with Development Plan Policies, it is considered that residential use is the most suitable use for the building, bearing in mind the historic consents granted, and the fact that alternative commercial uses have proved unviable in the past.