

**Full Planning Application for a  
Replacement Building to  
provide an Art Gallery with  
Artists Accommodation**

**at**

**The Old Rectory  
Creake Road  
Sculthorpe  
Norfolk**

**Sworders  
December 2021**



## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 INTRODUCTION
- 2.0 THE PROPOSAL
- 3.0 BACKGROUND
- 4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY
- 5.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY
- 6.0 CONSIDERATIONS - POLICY/DESIGN & ACCESS
- 7.0 CONCLUSION

## **APPENDICES**

- 1 ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
- 2 PHASE 1 CONTAMINATION ASSESSMENT



## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for a replacement building to provide an art gallery with artist accommodation at The Old Rectory, Creake Road, Sculthorpe.
- 1.2 The application site is located within the village of Sculthorpe, approximately 2.7km northwest of the town of Fakenham centred at National Grid reference 590156, 331767.
- 1.3 It comprises a former hay barn with stabling, which is located within the extensive grounds of 'The Old Rectory' approximately 70 metres to the southwest and separated by stands of mature trees. An informal parking area is located on the buildings southern side and separates a nearby former stable block, which now provides a holiday let.

## **2.0 PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This application proposes the construction of a replacement building, in place of the existing hay barn, to provide an art gallery with self-contained serviced artist accommodation. The building will generate an income for the applicant as a short-term commercial holiday let for visiting artists.
- 2.2 The proposed replacement building will replicate the location, orientation, scale, form and massing of the existing hay barn with a gross floor area of some 167.2sqm and a gross internal floor area of some 198.5sqm across the ground and first floor.
- 2.3 The design has been carefully considered to retain the agricultural aesthetic, with the replacement building comprising a similar style of external finishes to the existing hay barn. However, the chosen finishes will provide a more contemporary clean aesthetic, comprising Zinc Panelling and vertical Cedar Cladding.
- 2.4 Fenestration comprises ground floor windows and sliding doors in addition to two skylights to the north facing sloped roof. This will provide an abundance of natural light in addition views of the open countryside to the North and East.



- 2.5 The proposed replacement building is to be entered by a door to the west elevation leading to a cloakroom, off which is a WC. The cloakroom leads through to a spacious open plan living/dining/kitchen area with a double height ceiling and associated utility room. The living/dining/kitchen area leads on to a spacious double height gallery space off which is a second WC. The first floor comprises a mezzanine with a large landing overlooking the living/dining/kitchen area and gallery. Off which are two spacious double bedrooms with adjoining ensuite bathrooms.
- 2.6 The gallery and accommodation is to be let to artists visiting the local area and as such will be marketed toward this specific demographic. The gallery will not be open to the public, however, the intention of the applicant is that the gallery could be opened for pre-arranged private viewings and, if there is sufficient local interest, there may be additional opportunities for local community groups to attend showings.
- 2.7 The proposed replacement building will utilise the existing access to the 'Old Rectory' off of Creake Road and will provide ample room for parking of a minimum of two cars.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Full planning permission and listed building consent were granted on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008 for the conversion of adjacent stables to a single unit of holiday accommodation (Application references: PF/08/1269 and LA/08/1278 respectively).
- 3.2 An application for the partial demolition of The Old Rectory (Application reference: LD/87/0645) was granted on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1987.
- 3.3 The Old Rectory is a Grade II listed heritage asset (List Entry Number: 1171473) and is therefore a building of special historic significance in both a national and local context. However, it is located some distance from the application site (approx. 70 m) and is effectively screened by trees, which will ensure that the development has no impact upon the house or its setting.



#### 4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 National planning policy is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) adopted in 2012 (as amended in July 2021) and is of material importance to the consideration of the application at hand.
- 4.2 The NPPF identifies at paragraph 7 that: *“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”* and identifies three overarching objectives, which are economic, social and environmental.
- 4.3 Paragraph 10 goes onto state: *“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development.**”*
- 4.4 Government seeks to encourage local planning authorities (LPA) to be positive in their decision making by stipulating that they: *“... should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. (Par 38).*
- 4.5 The NPPF encourages development that would support a prosperous rural economy. It states at paragraph 84 that decisions should enable: *“ **a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings** [Emphasis added]; *b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.”**



4.6 This is continued at paragraph 85 where it states that decisions should: *“recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable...”*

4.7 As with previous Government policy, good quality design is encouraged. Paragraph 124 sets the tone when it stipulates that: *“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities...”*

## **5.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY**

5.1 Local planning policy is contained within the current Local Development Framework (LDF) for the District of North Norfolk, comprising the Adopted Core Strategy and Development Management Policies, September 2008, incorporating the update of 2012, the Proposal Maps and Site Allocations, February 2011. Supplementary documents include, inter alia, ‘The Landscape Character Assessment June 2009’ and the ‘North Norfolk Design Guide December 2008’. The proposal has also been considered in regard to the policies contained within the emerging First Draft Local Plan (Part 1) 2019.

5.2 The key policies contained within this document in regard to the consideration of the application at hand are listed as follows:

- Policy SS1 – Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk.
- Policy SS2 – Development in the Countryside.
- Policy SS4 – Environment.
- Policy SS5 – Economy.
- Policy SS6 – Access & Infrastructure.
- Policy EN 2 - Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Settlement Character.



- Policy EN 4 – Design.
- Policy EN 6 - Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency.
- Policy EN8 – Protecting & Enhancing the Historic Environment.
- Policy EN9 – Biodiversity & Geology.
- Policy EC 2 - The Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside.
- Policy EC 7 - The Location of New Tourism Development.
- Policy EC 9 - Holiday and Seasonal Occupancy Conditions.
- Policy CT 3 - Provision and Retention of Local Facilities and Services.
- Policy CT 5 - The Transport Impact of New Development.
- Policy CT 6 - Parking Provision.

5.3 The relevant policies contained within the First Draft Local Plan (Part 1) 2019 are as follows:

- Policy SD 1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.
- Policy SD 3 - Settlement Hierarchy.
- Policy SD 4 - Development in the Countryside.
- Policy SD 13 - Pollution & Hazard Prevention and Minimisation.
- Policy SD 14 - Transport Impact of New Development.
- Policy SD 15 - Parking Provision.
- Policy SD 16 - Electric Vehicle Charging.
- Policy ENV 2 - Protection & Enhancement of Landscape & Settlement Character.
- Policy ENV 4 - Biodiversity & Geology.
- Policy ENV 5 - Green Infrastructure.
- Policy ENV 9 - High Quality Design.
- Policy ENV 10 - Protection of Amenity.



- Policy ECN 6 - New-Build Tourist Accommodation, Static Caravans & Holiday Lodges.

## 6.0 CONSIDERATIONS

### PRINCIPAL OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 The building subject to this application is located outside of the defined settlement hierarchy within Policy SS 1 and is therefore designated as 'Countryside' whereby development is more restricted. The proposed building will be in commercial use as an art gallery with associated artist accommodation. It is accepted by Policy SS 1 that development that supports the rural economy will be supported in principle within 'Countryside' locations. The supporting text at paragraph 2.4.12 states that; *"while some development is restricted in the Countryside, particular other uses will be permitted in order to support the rural economy, meet local housing needs and provide for particular uses such as renewable energy and community uses"*. Likewise, it is considered by Policy SS 2 and emerging Policy SD 4, that proposals for 'recreation and tourism' in addition to development of 'community services and facilities meeting a proven local need' and 'extensions to existing businesses' require a rural setting and are thus suitable forms of development within the 'Countryside'.
- 6.2 Policy SS 5 promotes the support of both the tourist industry and rural economy. A Tourism Study undertaken by Scott Wilson Associates identified gaps in accommodation provision and niche markets for future development in North Norfolk. This included heritage and cultural tourism. The proposed art gallery and artist accommodation will therefore fill a gap in an identified niche market and will help diversify the cultural tourist offering both in Sculthorpe and North Norfolk more broadly.
- 6.3 Policy SS 5 also supports in principle the extension of businesses in rural areas and in 'Countryside' locations subject to being of an appropriate scale. Given that the replacement building mirrors the design of the existing hay barn it should be accepted that the scale of the proposal is, in principle, supported by policy.





- 6.4 As the proposal is for a replacement building, externally mirroring the former hay barn in regard to its location, orientation, scale and massing, it is in principal similar to the re-use of an agricultural building in the 'Countryside' and as such weight should be afforded to Policy EC 2. Holiday accommodation is listed as a non-residential use that will be permitted within the 'Countryside' given it is appropriate in scale and nature to the location. As the scale of the replacement building is largely unchanged and is only for a single unit of accommodation, it is considered that the scale and nature of the proposal is acceptable. Furthermore, in regard to the nature of holiday accommodation in this location, it is a material consideration that the neighbouring stable was converted and has been used a single unit holiday let since 2008. Therefore, the principal of holiday accommodation at this location has already been accepted by the local planning authority.
- 6.5 New tourist accommodation is supported in principle within the 'Countryside' in accordance with Policy EC 7. This policy states that: *"Where it can be demonstrated that there are no sequentially preferable sites, no suitable buildings for re-use and that a rural location is necessary, then new build attractions and serviced accommodation may be permitted in the 'resorts and hinterland' and 'rural' Tourism Asset Zones of the Countryside where they are in close proximity and have good links to, the Principal and Secondary Settlements"*. Taking these points in turn, firstly, the hay barn by virtue of its insubstantial construction is not wholly suitable for re-use. Secondly, as is discussed in regard to Policy SS 2, 'recreation and tourism' is considered as often requiring a rural location. In addition, the rural location will have a culturally positive impact on visiting artists, providing greater creative inspiration than a non-rural location. Thirdly, the site is located within the 'rural' Tourism Asset Zone and is located only 2.7km northwest of Fakenham which is defined as a Principal Settlement within the Spatial Strategy.
- 6.6 With the above considered, the principle of a commercial use, by way of an art gallery and artist accommodation, is supported by policy within this location.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 6.7 The following section of the report takes us through the three strands of sustainable development contained within the NPPF. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is also supported by emerging Policy SD 1 which states that: *“When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of Sustainable Development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework”*
- 6.8 Economic role: The NPPF identifies this as contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, supporting growth and innovation and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure. This proposal would result in the erection of additional tourist accommodation vital to the economic landscape of North Norfolk. Visiting artists would, in turn, contribute in supporting the local services on offer in Sculthorpe and Fakenham and within the wider district. The proposal would also provide employment opportunities for local trades and suppliers during the construction phase and in the longer term by virtue of ongoing maintenance of the building and service requirements
- 6.9 Environmental role: The NPPF identifies this as contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including, inter alia, improvements to biodiversity and minimising waste. Built form is already established at the location of the proposed replacement building. Likewise, the proposed location is well screened from Creake Road, the B1355 and ‘The Old Rectory’, which is separated by a stand of mature trees. In view of the existing built form and significant boundary screening it is considered that the visual impact would be greatly reduced and that the development would not give rise to any negligible effect on the openness of the countryside. The site has an existing residential property and holiday accommodation immediately to the south and therefore the development of this site for an art gallery and artist accommodation would not be unduly out of character with the area. Furthermore, the proposal would not result in the loss of any mature trees or hedgerow.



- 6.10 The NPPF and the Practice Guidance accept that transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. In this instance there will be no need to rely on the use of private motor vehicles, due to the existence of the nearby bus stops (Stop IDs: NFODTDMD and NFODTDMG) and taxi services within Sculthorpe. However, it is likely that holidaying guests will understandably want to utilise their own vehicles, although this in itself should not make the development unsustainable. A pickup service for guests could be arranged if required from nearby hubs for public transport and provisions could be provided for their stays to reduce the number of vehicle movements where possible.
- 6.11 Social Role: The NPPF identifies this as supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities. It is clear that the proposed art gallery and artist accommodation will have positive impacts in relation to social well-being as identified at paragraph 8 of the NPPF. Likewise, the production of local art influenced by the rural North Norfolk countryside has the potential to have a positive impact on local cultural capital. As discussed prior, the local social and cultural needs of the community could be met by providing opportunities for community groups to attend showings at the gallery.
- 6.12 The creation of new artist accommodation will provide positive benefits to the locality and provide an opportunity to draw additional investment into the area. It is considered that this proposal could help to extend the tourism season and provide benefits to the local community including increased spending in local shops and services.

#### DESIGN

- 6.13 The proposed replacement building has been designed to a high quality taking inspiration from and enhancing the utilitarian agricultural design aesthetic of the existing hay barn, thus protecting and reinforcing local distinctiveness. Policy EN 4 sets out a number of criteria that new developments are expected to meet. The following sections, in turn, respond to the criteria where appropriate:



- i. Given that the proposal is for a replacement building, the proposal makes effective use of the land, while respecting the density, character, landscape and biodiversity of the surrounding area. The buildings location, orientation, scale and massing is unchanged therefore reinforcing the existing density, character, and biodiversity of the surrounding area.
- ii. The proposed design is suitable for the context. It largely retains the agricultural aesthetic of the hay barn with enhanced design features such as the use of contemporary external finishes, including vertical timber cladding to three of the four elevations as referenced from the existing building. . The placement of sliding doors and fenestration has been designed to maximise the buildings siting within the context of its countryside setting, making best use of its views to the north and east.
- iii. The proposed design retains all of the existing important landscaping and natural features and has no impact on existing boundary treatments.
- iv. The scale and massing of the replacement building largely mirrors that of the existing hay barn and therefore relates sympathetically to the surrounding outbuildings at the 'Old Rectory'.
- v. Car parking has been discreetly accommodated within the curtilage of the building, screened from view of 'The Old Rectory' and the neighbouring buildings.

#### ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS IMPACT

6.14 The proposed replacement building will utilise the existing access off Creake Road via the gravel driveway leading to the existing barn and holiday accommodation. Creake Road is not classified as a 'Principal Route'. The access arrangements are readily capable of supporting vehicular access associated with the replacement buildings commercial use as an art gallery and artist accommodation. The existing access onto the public highway provides good visibility in both directions along Creake Road in addition to good forward visibility along the unnamed public highway 50 metres south of the access leading to Saint Mary and All Saints Sculthorpe Church. Safe ingress and egress from the public highway to the application site can therefore be achieved.



- 6.15 Minimal traffic will be generated by the proposal, not to any sort of degree that would likely give rise to a material increase or change in the character of traffic utilising Creake Road and the surrounding road network. The proposal will not therefore give rise to implications for highway safety or amenity.
- 6.16 Parking provision has been considered in regard to both the Parking Standards for Norfolk 2007 (with September 2020 revised use class references added) and Appendix 1: Parking Standards of the emerging Draft Local Plan (Part 1) 2019.
- 6.17 Taking into consideration the above, the proposal is in accordance with Policy CT 5 and emerging Policy SD 14.

#### NEIGHBOUR AMENITY & HERITAGE

- 6.18 It is not considered that the proposal will have any negative impact upon the neighbouring amenity of either the adjacent holiday let or 'The Old Rectory' located some 70 metres from the application site, which are both owned by the applicant. Indeed the proposed new use will result in reducing the odour, noise, vibration and other forms of nuisance associated with previous agricultural and equestrian uses of the building.
- 6.19 Furthermore, due to the considerable distance of the proposed building to 'The Old Rectory' and also due to the fact that it is separated by buildings and a mature stand of trees, the proposed development will have no negligible impact on the setting and principal views of the heritage asset.
- 6.20 With consideration to the above, the proposal is therefore in accordance with Policies EN 4 and EN 8 and emerging Policy ENV 10.



## ECOLOGY

- 6.21 This application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment undertaken by Glaven Ecology. In summary, the Assessment found that no significant adverse effects are predicted as a result of the proposal. The barn was assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats and no further survey work was required in relation to any protected species. The applicant will be willing to incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity within the development such as for example the installation of bat/bird boxes, which can be adequately controlled by the imposition of an appropriately worded planning condition.
- 6.22 The proposal will not result in the loss of any mature trees or hedgerow.
- 6.23 Having regards to the above, it is considered that the development proposed accords with policy EN9.

## FLOOD RISK

- 6.24 The application site falls within 'Flood Zone 1' and is therefore at the lowest risk of fluvial and surface flooding. Given that the site falls within 'Flood Zone 1', a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.

## CONTAMINATION

- 6.25 A Phase 1 Contamination Assessment is submitted along with this application, it concludes that on balance, of all the evidence collected, there is a low risk to the end uses of the proposed development from potential contaminants within the shallow soils, via direct contact, inhalation and ingestion. It goes on to state that the site is suitable for the proposed use and no further assessments for potential contaminants are required.
- 6.26 It should be noted that the Phase 1 Contamination Assessment highlights the presence of asbestos containing materials forming part of the fabric of the barn. The proposed replacement building will therefore result in the removal of all potentially harmful asbestos containing materials from the site area in turn having a positive impact on human safety. This approach is supported by emerging Policy SD 13 which it states that: *"Proposals will only be permitted where, individually or cumulatively, there are no unacceptable impacts on... 2. health and safety of the public."*



## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The proposed replacement building and use as an art gallery and artist accommodation is considered to be appropriate development within the 'Countryside'. The proposal complies with the three strands of sustainability contained within the NPPF and is therefore considered to be an appropriate form of development.
- 7.2 The proposed scheme is sensitive to the locality and provides an opportunity to support a niche tourist market that will have numerous social and cultural benefits.
- 7.3 Accordingly, the proposal complies with both local and national policies and for the reasons as set out in this statement; the Council are respectfully requested to approve this application.