



# PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

on behalf of William Scott

Conversion of barn to one dwelling

at Fleming's Hall Farm, Bedingfield

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For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

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

Date: April 2022

Reference: PP22/40232

**1.1** This Planning Statement has been prepared by Brown & Co to support a planning application submitted on behalf of Mr William Scott. The application proposes the conversion to one dwelling of a barn at Fleming's Hall Farm, Bedingfield, together with the demolition of existing farm building.

**1.2** A separate application has been submitted for Bedingfield Hall Farms Ltd for an extension of an adjacent farm building.

**1.3** The purpose of this statement is to set out the background to the applicant's proposals and the key planning issues raised by them. The statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 1:** introduction
- **Section 2:** describes the physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings;
- **Section 3:** outlines the proposed development;
- **Section 4:** summarises the relevant national and local planning policy context;
- **Section 5:** provides a planning assessment of the key considerations raised by the proposal; and
- **Section 6:** sets out in brief our overall conclusions on the proposal.

**1.4** This Statement should be read in conjunction with the following application documents submitted as part of the application:

- Planning application form
- Site Location Plan
- Existing Site Plan
- Proposed Site Plan
- Existing Floor Plans
- Existing Elevations
- Existing Roof Plan
- Proposed Ground Floor Plans
- Proposed First Floor Plans
- Proposed North & East Elevations
- Proposed South & West Elevations
- Proposed Roof Plan
- Proposed Cart Shed
- Preliminary Roost Assessment (Glaven Ecology); and
- Structural Report (J P Chick & Partners Ltd).

**1.5** Bedingfield Hall Farms is a second generation farming business, whose operations consist of arable, livestock and contract farming. The business currently farms around 350 hectares of its own land, as well as farming a further 325 hectares through contract farming agreements. The business employs two full-time staff, as well as a further two casual employees over the harvest period. The main farm business operates from three sites: Fleming's Hall Farm, Bedingfield House Farm and Bedingfield Hall.

## SITE & SURROUNDINGS

**2.1** Fleming's Hall Farm is located within an area of generally open countryside around 1.4km to the south-east of the village of Bedingfield. The farm complex extends in total to around 1.4 hectares and includes a number of farm buildings of different sizes and ages, together with extensive concrete hardstandings. There are currently three points of access to the farmyard from Hall Road. Existing buildings are used mainly for agricultural storage.

**2.2** The barn proposed for conversion is located at the north-western end of the site frontage, adjacent to the road. It is of traditional design, with timber clad and black painted elevations under clay pantiled and corrugated sheet roofs. The building is part two storey and part single storey. The building is a mixture of timber framed construction and masonry construction. Due to its small size and internal subdivision, the barn is no longer suitable for modern agricultural use.

**2.3** Immediately to the rear of this building is a modern agricultural building, which would be dismantled to allow the proposed conversion to take place. Immediately to the south of this building is another agricultural building, which it is proposed to extend with a lean-to addition to its north-eastern elevation.

**2.4** The farmyard is bounded to the south, east and west by open fields, and to the north by the landscaped grounds of Fleming's Hall, a Grade II\* listed building. Immediately to the north, on the opposite side of Hall Road, are a series of traditional former farm buildings, some of which have been converted to ancillary accommodation to the Hall.



Figure 1 Aerial view of application site [Google Maps]

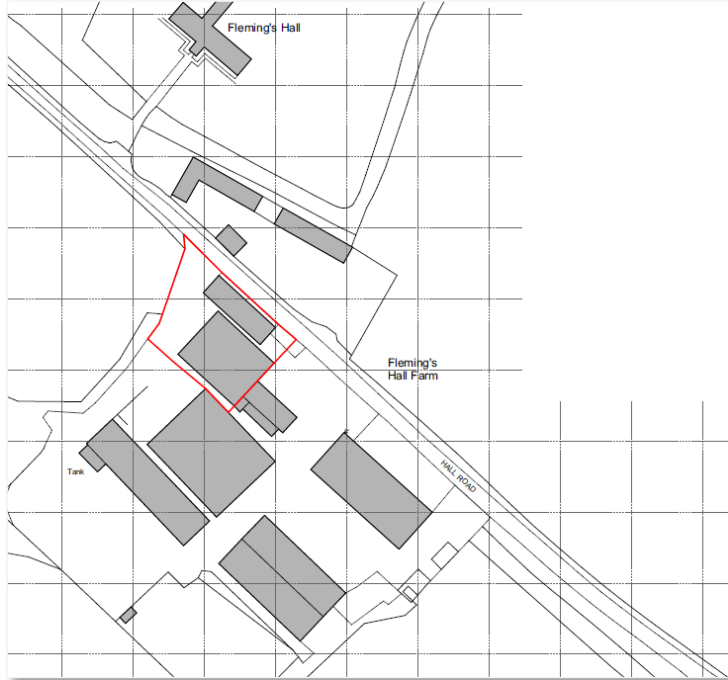


Figure 2 Site Location Plan

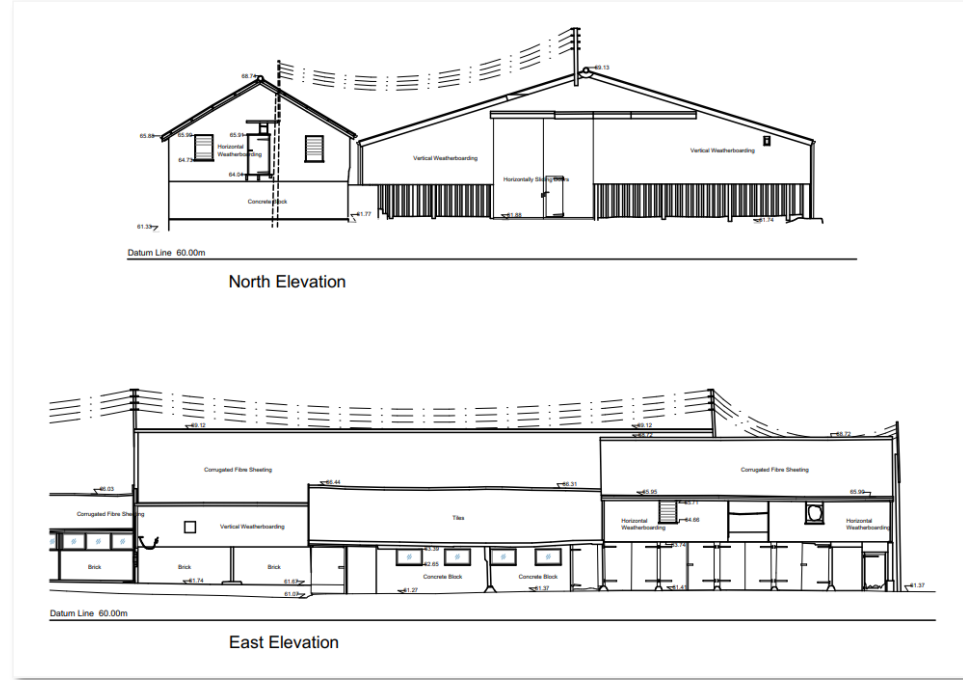


Figure 3 Existing Elevations



Figure 4 - Front of barn



Figure 5 - Front of barn



Figure 6 - Rear of barn



## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

**3.1** Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of a barn at Fleming's Hall Farm into one dwelling. The farm building immediately to the rear would be removed. The proposed dwelling would be occupied by the applicant who is employed in the farming business. Being able to live on the holding would assist with the applicant with farm duties and improve security for the farmyard.

**3.2** The conversion scheme would create a 5 bedroom dwelling, with living accommodation and home office space on the ground floor and bedrooms above. The scheme maintains the overall form of the barn, with existing traditional materials and features retained, including existing openings and black weatherboarding. Corrugated roofing sheets to the two storey barn would be replaced by pantiles. A small gabled extension is proposed to the rear.

**3.3** It is proposed to remove two adjoining farm buildings to the rear to facilitate the residential conversion. The larger of the two barns is used for grain storage and it is proposed that this will be relocated to the rear of the farm complex where it would relate better in operational terms to the farm and where more suitable access arrangements can be made. A separate prior approval application will be made for the relocation of this barn.

**3.4** The smaller building is used as a farm workshop and welfare facilities, but it due to its

small size and outdated facilities is no longer suitable for this purpose. It is proposed to replace this by extending an adjacent farm building. This proposal is covered in a separate application.

**3.5** A residential curtilage would be formed to the rear (south) of the converted barn, providing private garden space and car parking. A cart shed style garage would be erected to the rear of the

barn. The garden would be enclosed by new hedging and post and rail fencing.

**3.6** Access to the converted barn would be via the existing entrance immediately to the west of the building. New gates would be provided, set back from the road. Access to the extended farm building would be continue to be via the main central access to the farmyard.

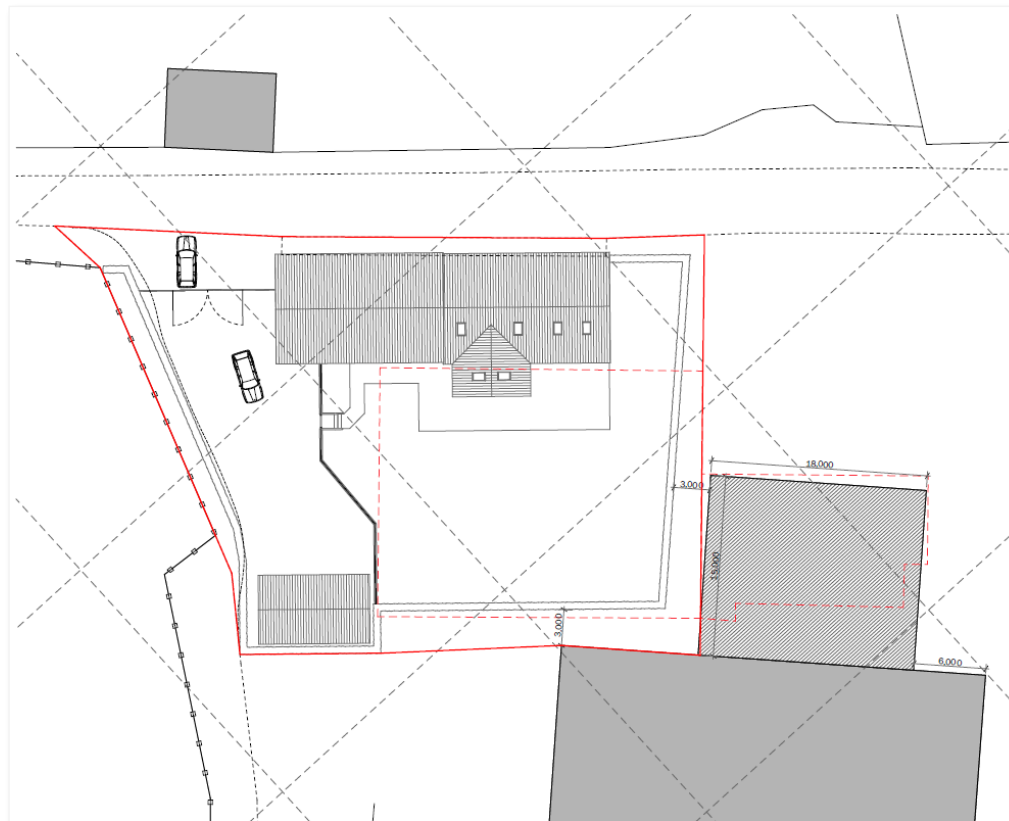
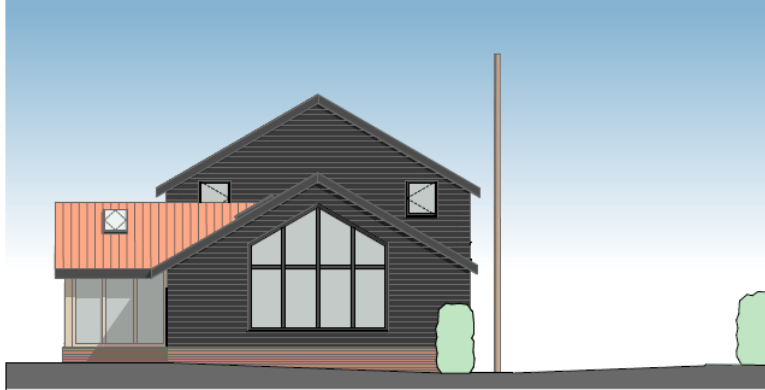


Figure 7 - Proposed site layout



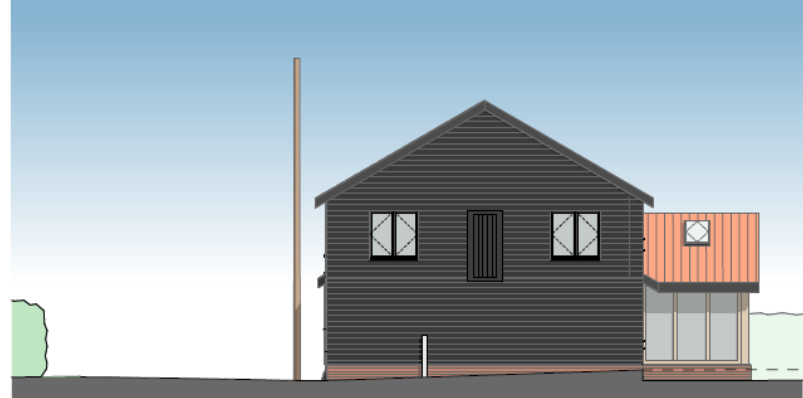
North Elevation



East Elevation



South Elevation



West Elevation

Figure 8 - Proposed Elevations

**4.1** Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan is, therefore, the starting point for the assessment of all planning proposals. Development plan policies of particular relevance to this application are summarised below.

**4.2** The Government's planning policies, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), are also a significant material consideration in deciding planning applications.

### Development plan policies

**4.3** In Mid Suffolk, the development plan currently comprises the:

- Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008)
- Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focussed Review (2012); and
- the saved policies of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998).

**4.4** Development plan policies of relevance to this proposal are outlined in the inset box to the right

### Emerging Policy

**4.5** Together with Babergh District Council, the Council has prepared a new joint Local Plan. This was submitted to the Government for examination

#### Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008)

**Policy CS2—Development in the countryside**—which indicates that in the countryside development will be limited to a range of appropriate uses, including agriculture.

**Policy CS4—Adapting to climate change**—which indicates that developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems, where feasible, avoid pollution and enhance biodiversity.

**Policy CS5—Mid Suffolk's environment**—which says that the District's rural landscape and biodiversity network should be conserved, and that new development should be of a high quality design.

#### Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012)

**Policy FC1—Presumption in favour of sustainable development**—which proposals will be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

**Policy FC1.1—Mid Suffolk's approach to delivering sustainable development**—which says, amongst other things, that proposals should conserve local character and promote sustainable development.

#### Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998)

**Policy H9 - Conversion of rural buildings to dwellings** - which permits the conversion of buildings that are in keeping with their surroundings, provided that certain criteria are met.

**Policy GP1—Design and layout of development**—which says that poor design will be rejected.

**Policy HB1—Protection of historic buildings**—which places a high priority of protecting the character and setting of historic buildings.

**Policy H16—Protecting Existing Residential Amenity**—which says that development that would harm the local amenities will not be permitted.

**Policy CL8—Protecting Wildlife Habitats**—which states that important wildlife habitat will be protected.

**Policy T9 - Parking** - which requires adequate parking to be provide to serve new development.

**Policy T10 - Highway considerations** - which says that planning decisions will take into account whether safe access can be provided and likely impacts on existing roads.



in March 2021. The Local Plan Inspectors indicated in December 2021 that a number of changes were required to the Local Plan. Consequently, only limited weight can be given to the draft Local Plan at this stage.

### National Planning Policy Framework

**4.6** The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these are expected to be applied, and advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Three objectives of sustainable development are identified: economic, social and environmental.

**4.7** The economic objective includes ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. The social objective includes supporting healthy communities by creating high quality environments with accessible local services. The environmental objective includes protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environments.

**4.8** At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, the presumption in favour means approving developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and where there are no relevant development plan policies or the most important policies for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse

impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

**4.9** In rural areas, NPPF paragraph 79 says that new housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. NPPF paragraph 80 goes to say that planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside other than where special circumstances exist. These circumstances include the conversion of disused or redundant rural buildings where this enhance the immediate setting.

**4.10** Other core principles of particular note in relation to the development proposed include:

- conserving the natural environment and heritage assets;
- achieving well-designed places; and
- managing patterns of growth to make fullest use of sustainable transport, whilst recognising that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport will vary between urban and rural areas.

### National Planning Practice Guidance

**4.11** The Government’s Planning Practice Guidance provides a web-based resource of national planning guidance covering a wide range of topics. Of particular relevance to this application is the guidance set in the sections of the NPPG relating to housing development needs and land supply, rural housing, the natural environment, design and the use of planning conditions.

**4.12** In relation to rural housing, the NPPG acknowledges the importance of new housing in supporting the broader sustainability of villages and smaller settlements. Rural housing is considered to be essential to ensure viable use of local facilities, such as schools, shops, places of worship and community facilities. The Guidance goes on to advise that all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas.

## Principle of development

**5.1** Although the site is located in an area of countryside where generally restrictive planning policies apply, Local Plan Policy H9 permits the conversion of rural buildings to residential use provided that certain criteria are met. These criteria are examined in more detail below. National planning policy allows for the conversion of rural buildings to housing where this would enhance the immediate setting.

**5.2** Local Plan Policy H9 applies to buildings whose form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. In this respect, it is noted that the barn proposed for conversion is of traditional form and design, with timber clad and black painted elevations under pitched roofs. The shape and proportions are typical of vernacular farm buildings in the area.

**5.3** Whilst some alterations have been made to the building in the past using modern materials, including corrugated roofing sheets and painted blockwork, these elements do not undermine the traditional appearance of the building. Due to its location and general appearance, the barn has a strong visual relationship with the traditional former farm buildings directly opposite.

**5.4** It is considered therefore that the proposal falls within the scope of Local Plan Policy H9.

**5.5** The first criterion of Policy H9 is that the proposed conversion scheme should respect the structure, form and character of the original building, retain architectural features and re-use existing openings wherever practicable. These principles have been followed in the design of the proposed conversion.

**5.6** The structure of the existing building would be retained and no alterations are proposed to its shape and form, other than a modest addition to the rear. The Structural Report<sup>1</sup> which accompanies the application notes that the condition of the barn is good, with no obvious evidence of ground movement or significant distortions to the structure. Whilst there are inevitably areas where poor detailing or water ingress has led to decay, the vast majority of the structural elements appear to be in fair to good condition, and are easily capable of reuse in a domestic setting. Where decay is noted, the affected area tends to be isolated and as such, a targeted repair would be suitable to facilitate reuse.

**5.7** The proposed conversion has also been designed to be sympathetic to the character of the existing building. Almost all existing door and window openings would be re-used, and where this would not be practicable, evidence of the original openings would be retained.

**5.8** To the rear, where there are only a few existing openings, new openings would be kept to a minimum to maintain the simple agricultural character of the barn. Overtly domestic features such as entrance porches and chimneys have been avoided.

**5.9** Existing timber cladding would be retained, and extended to cover areas of painted blockwork to give the barn a more cohesive appearance. Brick slips would be applied to existing walling at low level to create a brick plinth to the barn. Corrugated roofing on the main barn would be replaced with pantiles to further enhance the appearance of the building.

**5.10** The second criterion of Policy H9 is concerned with additions to existing buildings. A modest single storey extension is proposed to the rear of the barn. The extension would be largely glazed to give it a lightweight appearance and to reflect the timber framed construction of parts of the main barn. The design would also allow good levels of natural lighting to be achieved in the open plan kitchen/dining room. Matching materials would be used for the low plinth wall and roof covering.

**5.11** The proposed residential curtilage would be largely located to the rear of the barn and would thus be screened from public view. Native hedging

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1. Structural Report, J P Chick & Partners, February 2022.

is proposed to the boundary to further screen garden areas and domestic paraphernalia from view.

**5.12** The last criterion of Policy H9 is concerned with wider impacts on the surrounding area. For the reasons set out above it is considered that the proposal would respect the character of the existing barn and enhance its appearance by replacing unsympathetic materials and ensuring its long-term maintenance. Permitted development rights could be removed by appropriately worded conditions to enable the Council to control future alterations.

**5.13** The setting of the barn proposed for conversion would also be enhanced by the demolition of the more modern building to the rear, the scale and bulk of which is not in keeping with the traditional proportions of the application barn.

**5.14** Taking all of these matters into account, it is concluded that the barn is suitable for conversion and that the proposed conversion would be in sympathy with the character of the existing building and would its appearance and immediate setting. As such the proposal would accord fully with Local Plan Policy H9 and the guidance set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

**5.15** Alongside the proposed residential conversion, separate proposals to relocate and replace the buildings to be demolished would form part of a programme of rationalisation and modernisation of

the range of existing farm buildings at Fleming's Hall Farm.

**5.16** On this basis it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and would amount to sustainable development to which the presumption in favour applies.

### Effects on local character

**5.17** Core Strategy Policies CS5 and FC1.1 seek to protect the landscape character of areas of open countryside. The Council's Landscape Guidance provides further detailed advice on the design of new development in the countryside.

**5.18** The proposed barn conversion would have a very limited impact on the surrounding rural landscape. As already noted, the overall form and design of the building would remain unchanged. New building work in the form of the proposed rear addition and cart shed garaging would be small in scale and discreetly located to the rear of the barn. To the extent that these elements would be visible, they would be seen in the context of the established farm complex and as minor elements in the landscape. The removal of the large farm building to the rear would also give the site a more open appearance.

**5.19** Due to its location close to the road, the existing barn is a relatively prominent feature in the street scene. The works to enhance the

appearance of the building, including the addition of timber cladding to blockwork walls and the replacement of corrugated roofing with clay pantiles, would be particularly beneficial to the appearance of the locality therefore.

**5.20** As noted above, the proposed conversion works would be in sympathy with the simple agricultural character of the barn. No new openings are proposed to the front elevation or front roof slope. Throughout timber window and joinery would be simple and robust in its form and design to reflect the utilitarian form of the buildings. Good quality materials and finishes would be used throughout, and outside spaces would be landscaped to enhance the overall appearance of the scheme.

**5.21** Fleming's Hall, which is Grade II\* listed, is located around 75 metres to the north of the application site. As a substantial medieval manor house which was largely rebuilt in the sixteenth century, the significance of the Hall is derived largely from its architectural features, historic fabric, its position in landscaped grounds and wider rural setting. Reference to historic mapping would suggest that the application barn originally formed part of a larger complex of farm buildings in the grounds of the Hall, parts of which remain opposite (see Figure 9).

**5.22** Due to the screening afforded by mature trees and intervening buildings there is very little intervisibility between the application site and the Hall. As a traditional farm building, the application building forms part of the rural setting of the Hall, but this would effectively be undisturbed by the proposals. The improvements to the appearance of the application buildings brought about due to the conversion scheme and the removal of the modern building to the rear would, if anything, enhance the wider setting of the Hall.

**5.23** Taking all of these matters into account, it is considered that the proposal would comply with Local Plan Policies CS5, FC1.1, GP1, and HB1, which indicate that all new development should be

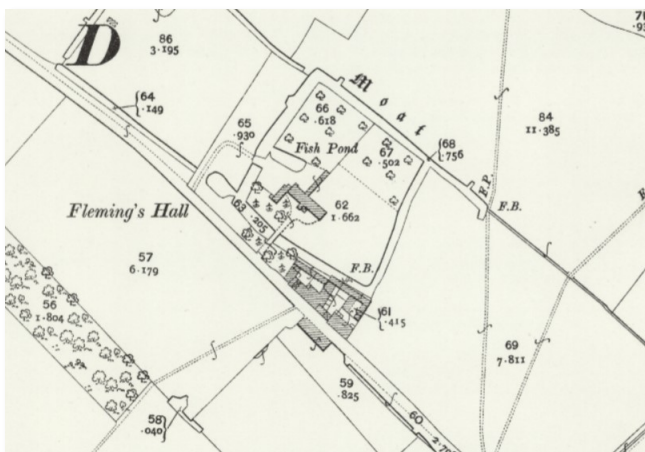


Figure 9 - Extract from OS 25 Inch map 1892-1914 (courtesy of National Library of Scotland)

of high quality design, respect the character of its surroundings, and preserve or enhance heritage assets.

### Residential amenity

**5.24** Due to its relatively isolated location, the proposed development has limited potential to impact on local amenity. Three upper floor windows would face towards the former farm buildings opposite, but views toward the ancillary accommodation would be largely screened by the thatched barn opposite. There are no other residential properties in the vicinity of the site.

**5.25** Future residents of the proposed would also enjoy a high standard of amenity, with all habitable rooms benefitting from good levels of natural lighting and an open outlook. A good sized private garden would be provided to the rear.

**5.26** Due to its position on the edge of the farm complex and away from the main farm access, it is not considered that the proposed dwelling would be unduly affected by existing agricultural activities. However, if this were to be a concern, occupation of the proposed dwelling could be limited to persons employed in agricultural on the farm.

**5.27** Taking all of these matters into account, it is concluded that the proposed development would provide an acceptable standard of amenity for

both existing and future residents. The proposal would thus accord with Local Plan Policy HQ/1 and the guidance in the District Design Guide, which seek to promote high standards of design and avoid unacceptable impacts on the amenities of neighbouring residents and future occupants.

### Access

**5.28** Access to the proposed barn conversion would be gained via the existing entrance to the farm complex immediately to the west of the building. This section of Hall Road is straight and good visibility is available in both directions for emerging vehicles. Ample space would be provided in the site for parking.

**5.29** It is not anticipated that the proposals would result in any material increase in traffic movements to and from the site. The proposal would not affect conditions on the surrounding road network therefore.

**5.30** Consequently it is considered that safe and suitable access to the proposed development can be achieved in accordance with Local Plan Policies T9 and T10, together with the guidance set out in NPPF paragraph 111.

## Ecology

**5.31** A Preliminary Bat Roost Appraisal has been undertaken<sup>2</sup>. This found that the buildings proposed for conversion and demolition had negligible potential for bats, with minimal roosting opportunities noted. On this basis no further bat surveys were recommended.

**5.32** Proposed mitigations and precautionary measures would include removing roof tiles by hand during construction and minimising external lighting. Site clearance works would take place outside the bird nesting season or under ecological supervision.

**5.33** Proposed wildlife enhancements would include the provision of bird and bat boxes, bat access tiles and the use of native planting for landscaping.

**5.34** There are no statutory nature conservation sites within 2km of the application site, and the site does not fall within any SSSI impact risk zones.

**5.35** On this basis it is considered that the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policies CS4 and CL8, which indicates that new development should aim to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

## Other matters

### *Drainage*

**5.36** The application site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore considered to be at low risk of fluvial flooding. The site is not identified as being at risk from surface water flooding on the Environment Agency's flood risk maps, though a small area immediately to the south is shown as being at low risk. The removal of buildings and hardstandings would increase the permeability of the site.

### *Ground conditions*

**5.37** Given the previous agricultural use of the building, contamination risks are considered to be low. The barns have not been used in the past for the storage of agricultural chemicals or fuel oil, and have concrete floors throughout. The applicant is not aware of any chemical or pollutant spills having taken place in the past.

**6.1** Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of a barn to one dwelling and the demolition of an adjacent farm building. Access to the development would be gained off the Hall Road.

**6.2** For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the barn is suitable for residential conversion development. The building is of traditional design and appearance and is structurally sound. The proposed conversion scheme would maintain the character of the building and enhance its immediate setting. The setting of nearby heritage assets would also be preserved.

**6.3** No harm to the amenities of neighbouring properties would be caused and the wildlife interest of the site would be enhanced. Safe and suitable access can be provided, and the site is not liable to flooding.

**6.4** Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would accord with relevant planning policies and would represent sustainable development, and as such should be approved in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

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2. Preliminary Roost Assessment, Glaven Ecology, December 2021.