

Planning Statement in Support of a Bakery with Ancillary Shop, Outdoor Seating Area and for the Creation of a New Window

The Friendly Loaf Bakery, Nowton Business Centre, Low Green

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Opus House
Elm Farm Park
Thurston
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP31 3SH

T 01359 233663
E enquiries@evolution-planning.co.uk
W evolution-planning.co.uk

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The Friendly Loaf Bakery, Nowton Business Centre, Low Green

Client: Mr M Proctor

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1.0 Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 This planning statement is written in support of an application for an ancillary shop, outdoor seating area and for the creation of a new window at the Friendly Loaf Bakery.
- 1.2 Pre-application advice was sought from the West Suffolk Council prior to this planning application being submitted. The pre-application feedback confirmed that the council would support an application for the shop and picnic benches on the land around the bakery. This pre-application advice also confirmed that Planning Officers would not object to a proposal to create a new window on the front elevation of the bakery.
- 1.3 The Friendly Loaf Bakery operates from a unit in the Nowton Business Centre which is just to the south of the village of Nowton and close to Nowton Park. The business was started in 2011 and has grown to become a valued local producer of baked goods to businesses and the public. The business employs 8 local people.
- 1.4 When it was first established, The Friendly Loaf principally offered wholesale baked products to businesses across the district, providing bread, pastries and cakes to restaurants, hotels, coffee shops and pubs. However, the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdowns meant that the wholesale trade declined sharply to almost nothing. In order for the business to survive, it was necessary to adapt by selling produce to the public. The business used its ground floor produce and servery area as a small shop selling bread and other baked goods to the public directly.
- 1.5 This planning application seeks consent for the shop which is ancillary to the bakery as this has become a popular local facility. The shop is an important part of this business, creating a more diverse clientele which has made the business more resilient.
- 1.6 The room which is used for the shop is 20sqm and is positioned at the front of the bakery. The small size of this room restricts the range of goods being sold and ensures that the shop remains ancillary to the bakery operation.
- 1.7 This planning application also seeks consent for the picnic benches which have been arranged around the bakery; one on the green fronting the road, one in front of the bakery building and six benches on the grass to the west of the bakery. The position of the benches has been carefully chosen to provide a pleasant seating area close to the bakery without disturbing the residential or commercial neighbours.

1.8 Finally, this application proposes that a new window is created at the front of the bakery to provide natural light into the main bakery production area. This window will match the size and style of the existing windows in the bakery building and the adjoining property and will have no impact on the character of the area.

1.9 By permitting the continued operation of the shop, the placement of picnic benches and the creation of a new window this application has the following benefits:

- Support a local business by allowing them to continue to sell their produce directly to the public making this popular business more resilient.
- Supporting a local facility that provides high-quality goods to local residents.
- The benches provide seating for customers in an appropriate location which does not impact the amenity of the neighbouring house or businesses.
- Provide a window in the front elevation of the bakery building, providing natural light which will improve the working conditions inside the bakery for the staff.

2.0 Application Site Location, Nearby Heritage Assets and Details of the Proposals

Site Location

- 2.1 The Friendly Loaf Bakery is located in the Nowton Business Centre, off Bury Road in Nowton.
- 2.2 It is an established local company that has provided high quality artisanal baked goods to local businesses since 2011 and in recent years to the general public. The location of the Friendly Loaf can be seen outlined in red in Figure 2.1 below.



Figure 2.1 - Location of the Bakery

- 2.3 The bakery is in an area designated as countryside as it is outside of the defined settlement boundaries of any nearby towns or villages.
- 2.4 There is a public footpath that leads to the Business Park from the south and connects to the nearby village of Sicklesmere. The proposals put forward in this application will not interrupt or affect the public footpath in any way.
- 2.5 As can be seen in the extract from the West Suffolk Planning Constraints map shown in Figure 2.2, the site is not situated in a Conservation Area, Special Protection Area,

Site of Special Scientific Interest and there are no tree protection orders affecting the site. The site is also in Flood Zone 1, which is an area with a low likelihood of flooding.



Figure 2.2 - Planning Constraints Map

Nearby Heritage Assets

2.6 As shown in Figure 2.3, there are three listed buildings nearby to the bakery. These buildings are:

- 3, Low Green – Grade II listed building. Approximately 20 metres to the north west of the main bakery building.
- The Lodge Cottage – Grade II listed building. Approximately 100 metres to the north of the main bakery building.
- Newton Lodge Farmhouse- Grade II. Approximately 75 metres to the north east of the main bakery building.

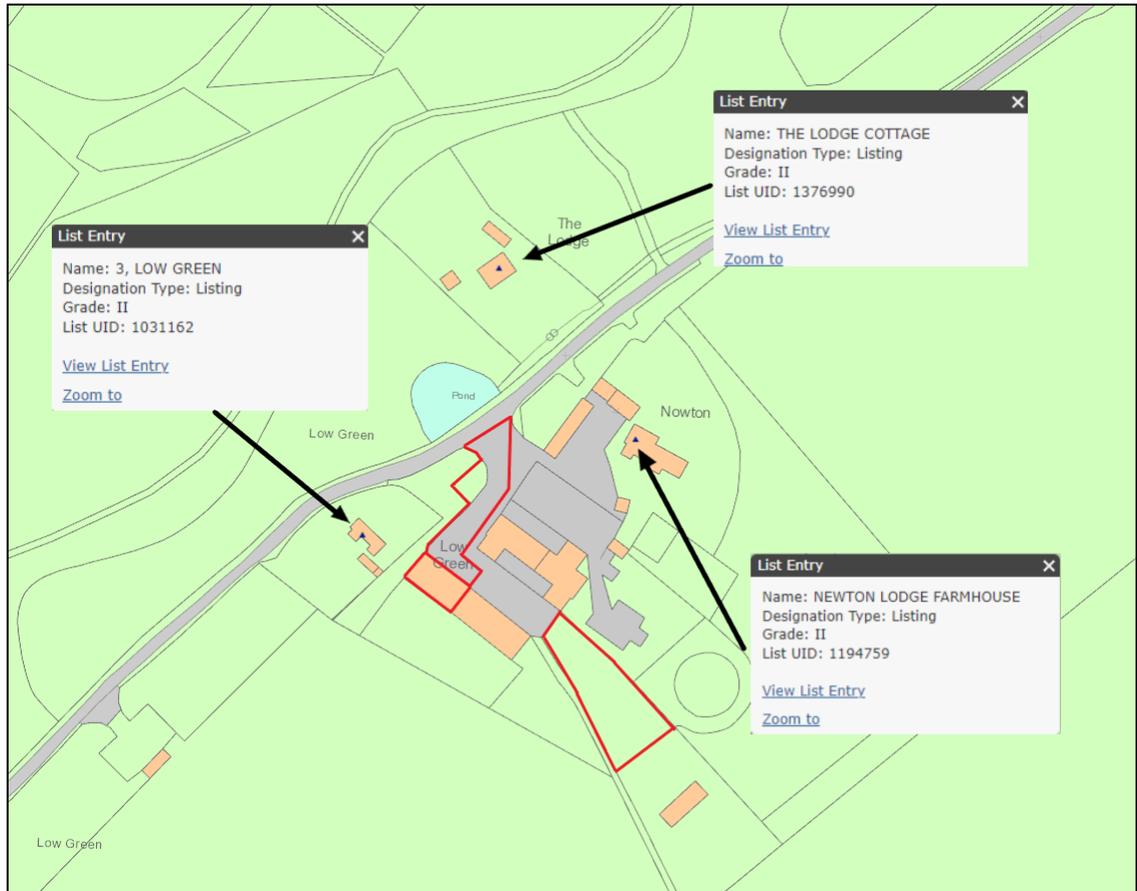


Figure 2.3 - Nearby heritage assets (application site area outlined in red)

- 2.7 The Lodge Cottage is well screened from the application site by thick trees which line Bury Road. There is no direct view from this asset to the application site.
- 2.8 Newton Lodge farmhouse is well screened from the application site by several buildings which are between the bakery and this heritage asset. The bakery building would have formed part of the wider farmyard connected to Newton Lodge Farmhouse when the wider complex was used for agricultural purposes. The site is currently used as offices and for other commercial uses and so the agricultural setting has been eroded.
- 2.9 3, Low Green to the northwest of the application site is close by to the bakery building. The front of this listed building is orientated to the north as is the bakery.

Proposed Development

- 2.10 This application seeks consent to formalise the operation of a small shop within the existing bakery building. The bakery began selling its products directly to the public from the former Produce and Servery room in the bakery during the first lockdown in

2020 as its wholesale customers such as local restaurants, hotels and shops were forced to close.

2.11 The room used as a shop is 20 square metres and can be seen in the floor plan submitted with this application and in Figure 2.4. This small size limits the range of goods to those produced in the bakery or complementary products such as jams/spreads, drinks and crisps. In the pre-application feedback which was received from West Suffolk Council, planning officers reviewed the proposals and confirmed that they would be supportive of an application to formalise the operation of the shop. It was stated that a condition would be necessary to ensure that the shop remains ancillary to the main bakery operation. It was confirmed that a condition limiting the floor area of the shop would fulfil this requirement.

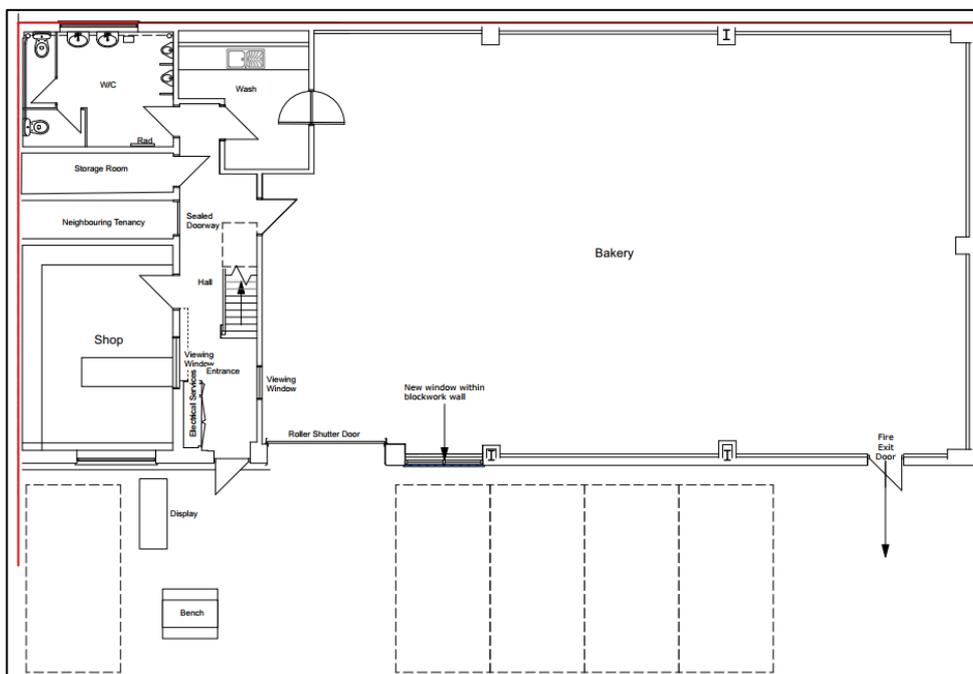


Figure 2.4 – Floor Plan Showing Shop Area

2.12 The condition put forward by the planning officer is as follows:

“The retail use hereby approved shall be limited to the area labelled as “Shop” on plan 20032-01 B unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority”.

The inclusion of the above condition would be acceptable to the applicant.

2.13 The shop will have a small outdoor sales rack display positioned near the main entrance as shown on the submitted plans and Figure 2.3. This will display the bread and other products being sold in the shop.

- 2.14 This application also seeks permission for picnic benches to be placed outside of the bakery and on the land to the southeast of the bakery which runs along the public footpath. The location of these benches is shown in the submitted plan. In the pre-application discussion with the West Suffolk Council, it was commented that *“six picnic benches proposed on the area of grass towards the public right of way are considered acceptable.”*
- 2.15 The bakery had previously positioned six benches on the green fronting Bury Road, however in order to reduce the impact on the nearby house, this has been changed to the grass area to the east of the site which is more secluded. It was commented that the Planning Authority may be hesitant to permit benches located nearby to the residential property; 3 Low Green, as this could have the potential to impact their residential amenity. For this reason, only one picnic bench is proposed on the green fronting Bury Road and this has been moved approximately 12 metres to the northwest to ensure that there is no impact on their residential amenity.
- 2.16 Finally, this application seeks consent for the installation of a new window on the front elevation of the baker building. This window will provide natural light into the main bakery area. In the pre-application feedback received from West Suffolk, the planning officer reviewing the proposals confirmed that this window would require planning consent as it would materially alter the external appearance of the building, and that; *“I am satisfied that such consent is likely to be granted”*.

3.0 Planning Policy

3.1 National planning policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 (NPPF) and local planning policy is set out by the Bury St Edmunds Core Strategy (2010) and the Joint Development Management Policies 2015 (JDMPD).

Principle of the Development

3.2 The NPPF states in Paragraph 11 that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which for decision-taking means: *“approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay”*. This principle is reflected in Policy DM1 of the JDMPD.

3.3 JDMPD Policy DM2 requires that all developments recognise the key features and characteristics of the area. The proposed new shop will not have an impact on the character of the area as it uses an existing room within the bakery.

3.4 The picnic benches are proposed in a suitable location and are a sensible number. Several neighbouring units have matching picnic benches positioned on the land around the business park. The position of the bench on the green next to Bury Road has been moved from the position proposed during pre-application discussions to be further from the property; 3, Low Green. This bench is now positioned approximately 20 metres from the boundary of this property and so there will be no disturbance caused by the public using this bench.

3.5 The new window will also not have an impact on the character of the area. It will give natural light to the bakery which will improve the working conditions for the staff. The window proposed has been designed to match the existing windows on the bakery and the adjoining neighbouring property.

3.6 JDMPD Policy DM5 is applicable to this application as the location of the bakery is in the countryside. Policy DM5 states that proposals for *“economic growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise that recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside will be permitted where:*

- *it will not result in the irreversible loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a);*
- *there will be no significant detrimental impact on the historic environment, character and visual amenity of the landscape or nature*

conservation and biodiversity interests; and

- *there will be no significant adverse impact on the local highway network*

3.7 The proposals put forward in this application will not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The only land which is affected is the proposed use of the grassed area to the southeast for the siting of picnic tables. This area is very small, under 0.1ha, and is not agricultural land as it forms part of the business park.

3.8 The shop will not have an impact on the character or visual amenity of the land landscape or on nature conservation as it makes use of a room in an existing building. The positioning of benches around the site is in keeping with the existing use of the land as several neighbouring units have benches in this area. They are also traditionally styled picnic benches which are commonly found in rural areas and are in keeping with the character. The new window does not have a view towards either of the nearby listed buildings and is in keeping with the windows in the surrounding units at ground floor level.

3.9 JDMPD Policy DM40 states that proposals for the *“change of use to provide ancillary retail sale facilities attached to... manufacturers (Classes B1 and B2) and similar establishments will, in addition to the policies and proposals elsewhere in this plan, be considered against the following criteria:*

- *The sale of goods should be small in scale in relation to the primary use or activity; and*
- *In the case of manufacturers (Classes B1 and B2) and craft workshops, the sale of goods should relate to the products manufactured on-site.*

3.10 The shop complies with this policy. The shop floor area is 20 square metres which is small in relation to the bakery floor area which is 230 square metres. A condition requiring that the shop is limited to this size has been proposed in pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority which would be considered to be acceptable to the applicant.

3.11 The goods sold are bread, cakes, sandwiches, pastries and other baked goods produced on-site. The shop also sells coffees, soft drinks, crisps, spreads and a small number of other goods which are complementary to those produced on-site. This range of foods is compliant with part b) of this policy.

Heritage Assets

- 3.12 As stated in JDMPD Policy DM5 and Policy DM15, proposals affecting the setting of listed buildings or the historic environment should not be detrimental to these assets.
- 3.13 The proposed shop does not have an impact on the nearby listed buildings. There is no physical expansion of the existing bakery building as the shop utilizes the existing internal space. The character and setting of these listed buildings will also remain unchanged.
- 3.14 The benches around the bakery will also have no adverse impact on the setting or the character of the listed buildings as they are not permanent and could be easily removed. There is one bench positioned to the north of 3, Low Green, which has been moved to be 20 metres from the property to protect the setting and amenity of this building. The picnic benches are a conventional style and are well suited to both a domestic and commercial setting.
- 3.15 The window proposed in this application faces north and is at ground floor level. The listed buildings are not overlooked by the window and it matches the existing windows in the bakery and the adjoining unit.

Highways Impact

- 3.16 JDMPD Policy DM5 and Policy DM46 require that all development provides appropriately designed and sited car parking and do not have an adverse impact on the public highway.
- 3.17 The proposals have been submitted with a site plan showing 10 car parking spaces provided for the bakery and shop. This is in line with the requirements of the Suffolk County Council's highways guidance which states that developments should provide:
- 1 space per 30sqm for use class B1/B2
 - 1 space per 16sqm for use class A1 Food Shop.
- 3.18 The bakery floor area is approximately 230 square metres and therefore it is required that 8 car parking spaces are provided ($230 / 30 = 7.67$). The shop floor area is 16 square metres and therefore this requires that 2 car parking spaces are required ($20 / 16 = 1.25$)
- 3.19 The site plan submitted with this application shows the location of these car parking spaces which are required. This site plan also shows the car parking which was

approved under application DC/20/0802/FUL for the nursery next door, and therefore confirms that there is no conflict with this approved parking plan.

3.20 The shop has been operating for almost 2 years and there have been no problems relating to parking provisions around the site.

3.21 There is an existing safe access into the site which serves all of the businesses in the business park. As shown in the crashmap extract below there has been no serious or fatal accident at the access to the business centre or on the road leading to it which is limited to 30mph. There has only been 1 slight incident that occurred in 2010.

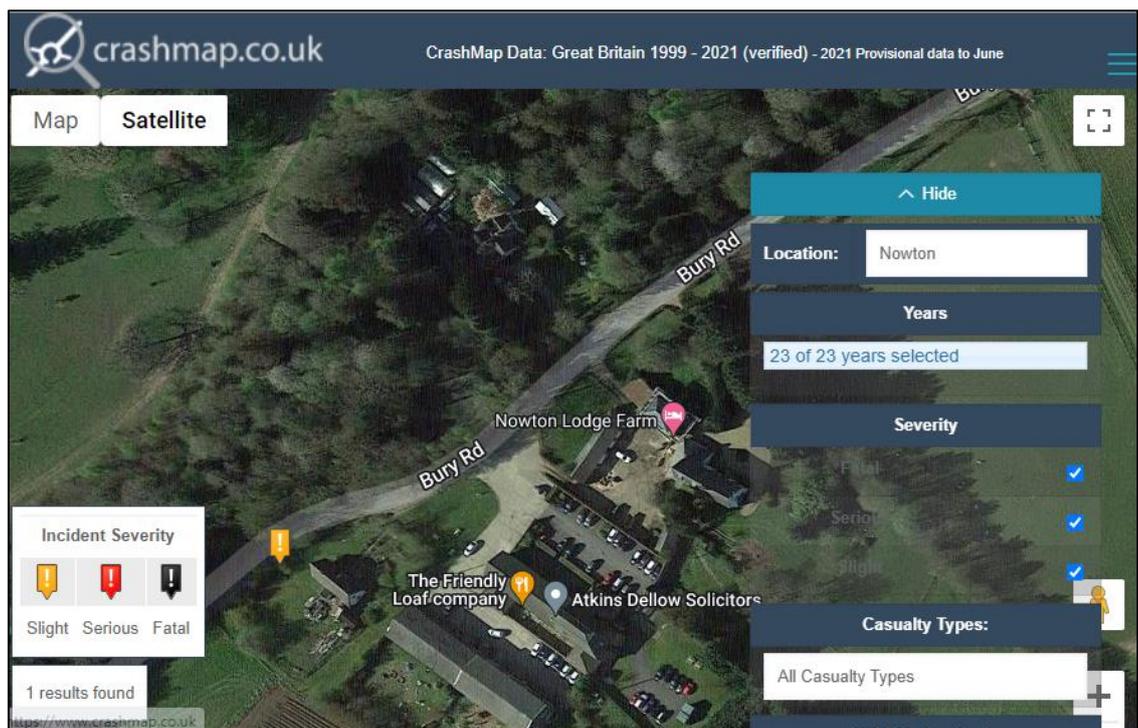


Figure 3.1 - Crashmap Record

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 This planning application seeks consent for a bakery business to continue to operate an ancillary shop, for the picnic benches it has placed on the surrounding land and for a new window to be created on the front elevation of the building.
- 4.2 The shop was initially opened during the Coronavirus lockdown in 2020 as the wholesale market for baked goods collapsed with the closure of local pubs, restaurants and hotels. In order for the business to survive the bakery began selling goods directly to the public from its servery room. This has proved very popular with walkers and local residents and provides the bakery with a new customer base which makes the business more resilient. This planning application seeks planning consent for this shop.
- 4.3 The shop is compliant with national and local planning policies which seek to support existing businesses and allow a retail use that is ancillary to commercial uses such as the bakery. The shop is limited by the size of the room and will remain small in relation to the primary use of the site as a bakery.
- 4.4 This application also seeks consent for the use of the land around the bakery for the siting of picnic benches, so that customers and walkers can consume the goods purchased in the shop. These benches have been located in areas that will not impact the other nearby businesses or residential properties such as 3, Low Green.
- 4.5 Finally, this application seeks consent for the creation of a new window in the front elevation of the bakery at ground floor level. This will provide natural light into the main bakery area. This window will be in keeping with the design and style of the other windows on the unit and the nursery next door.
- 4.6 This application seeks to formalise the shop which has become an important part of this existing business, to seek consent for the picnic benches which have been placed around the application site, and to seek consent for the creation of a new window in the bakery building. These uses do not have a detrimental effect on any of the neighbouring businesses or properties but will support a popular established local business.
- 4.7 Pre-application discussions were undertaken with West Suffolk Council prior to this application being submitted. Planning Officers confirmed their support for the proposals put forward in this application and the feedback which was provided with

regard to the car parking provision on site has been addressed. Planning Officers also suggested the wording for a condition that would ensure that the shop remains ancillary to the bakery operation on the site, which is acceptable to the applicant. This is as follows:

“The retail use hereby approved shall be limited to the area labelled as “Shop” on plan 20032-01 B unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority”.

4.8 This planning application has the following benefits:

- Support a local business by allowing them to continue to sell their produce directly to the public making this popular business more resilient.
- Supporting a local facility that provides high-quality goods to local residents.
- The benches provide seating for customers in appropriate locations which do not impact the amenity of the neighbouring businesses or houses.
- Provide a window in the front of the bakery building, providing natural light which will improve the working conditions inside the bakery for the staff.