

# Heritage Impact Assessment

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ii) change of use of barn Áo Welcome Barn and associated parking Church Farm Barns ÉÔ @ !&@Áæ { ÉÔ ã \* È



PRINCIPLE  
PLANNING

JUNE 2022

<b>Site Address</b>	Church Farm, Docking Road, Fring
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Conversion of barns to provide 5 holiday units and welcome barn, with associated parking and amenity areas
<b>Client:</b>	Oykel Farms Ltd
<b>Local Authority</b>	Borough Council King's Lynn & West Norfolk
<b>Type of Report</b>	Heritage Impact Assessment
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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in support of applications for full planning permission for:
- conversion of a historic range of barns to provide 5 units of holiday accommodation; and
  - conversion of historic 'field barn' and neighbouring farm yard to serve as 'Welcome Barn' and parking area, used in conjunction with the proposed new holiday accommodation and other existing holiday accommodation on the Fring Estate.
- 1.2 The two applications are submitted simultaneously and should be considered as connected proposals, with the Welcome Barn proposal providing access, orientation and parking for guests at the proposed new holiday accommodation within the converted barn complex.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with architectural drawings and other supporting documents submitted as part of this application.
- 1.4 The site lies within the Fring Conservation Area and approximately 50m west of the Grade II\* Listed All Saints Church. None of the barns subject of the applications are Listed.
- 1.5 This report assesses the significance of the relevant heritage assets and their settings, and any potential effect of the proposed development on this significance.
- 1.6 Historic England's Conservation Principles are key factors in this instance:  
*"Change in the historic environment is inevitable, caused by natural processes, the wear and tear of use, and people's responses to social, economic and technological change. Conservation is the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations. If conflict cannot be avoided, the weight given to heritage values in making the decision should be proportionate to the significance of the place and the impact of the proposed change on that significance. The greater the range and strength of heritage values attached to a place, the less opportunity there may be for change, but few places are so sensitive that they, or their settings, present no opportunities for change".*



Figure 1: The Sites and context. Source: Google

## 2 Historical Context of Fring

- 2.1 The Fring Conservation Area Character Statement (BCKLWN Revised 2008) provides a useful summary of the development of the settlement at Fring. The following is an edited version of the 'Origins and Historical Development' section of that Statement.
- 2.2 Fring or Frenge is a small village in a deep valley. The meaning of the name is "settlement of the Family or followers of Frea ", an old English name. Although the Roman Road Peddars Way runs close to the west of the village, the early settlers preferred the advantages of the valley which provided shelter and a water supply from the surrounding area of high chalk upland and "Frainges" is shown on the Domesday Map of 1086. Benedictine Monks of Norwich Priory also established a cell here, circa 1000, the site of which can be identified in a field north west of the church.
- 2.3 The Church of All Saints was largely constructed between 1300 and 1330; Norwich Cathedral records show a donation towards the building cost in 1327. Inside the Church are monuments and mentions of notable local families - a coffin lid to Henry, Son of Jeffrey de Frenge buried 1370; the stained glass window dated 1984 to commemorate 100 years of farming by the Coe family at Church Farm and White House Farm; and the pulpit donated by the family of 2nd Lieut. Richard Dugate who was killed in France in 1917 and whose family lived at the Hall.
- 2.4 Faden's map of 1797 indicates that the original core of the village was around the Church and Church Farm. It then extended as groups of cottages and farm buildings were built along the Docking and Bircham Roads.
- 2.5 Although Fring has never been a big village, it grew considerably in the C1900 and in 1807 Fring Hall, described as " a neat cemented mansion, upon a commanding eminence, with extensive gardens and pleasure grounds ", was burnt down in 1935 and rebuilt in 1936. The Lord of the Manor was Richard Dugate who owned most of the surrounding land at that time but, nonetheless, chose to live mainly in France.
- 2.6 Large numbers of trees were planted to create a formal setting and provide privacy for the Hall and the local network of lanes was changed to increase privacy still further.
- 2.7 In particular a new route to Sedgeford running further to the west of Church Farm is shown on Bryant's 1826 map and the 1838 Tithe Map.
- 2.8 The White House on Bircham Road was also constructed in the early 19th Century, again positioned on a slope overlooking the village but without the grand setting created around the Hall. The realignment of roads is likely to have brought about improvements to the drainage pattern at this time and possibly the creation of the bridge and pond area.
- 2.9 The school was established in 1875 and during the latter part of the 19th Century, seven pairs of estate cottages were built on Docking Road giving the village its current shape. The original hall was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1935 but in 1936 it was replaced by a "modern mansion" which still stands.
- 2.10 There has been very limited 20th Century infilling, but barn conversions on Bircham Road have provided more residential units. The school closed many years ago and is now also in residential use.

### 3 Identifying Heritage Assets and Describing Significance

#### 3.1 Identifying which assets are affected

- 3.1.1 A site visit was undertaken on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 by Principle Planning to inspect the sites and to assess their relationship with designated and non-designated heritage assets within the vicinity. The sites were walked over with views into and from the site from all accessible directions.
- 3.1.2 Both the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) and the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) have been consulted and the following heritage assets have been identified as being within the relevant vicinity of the development site:

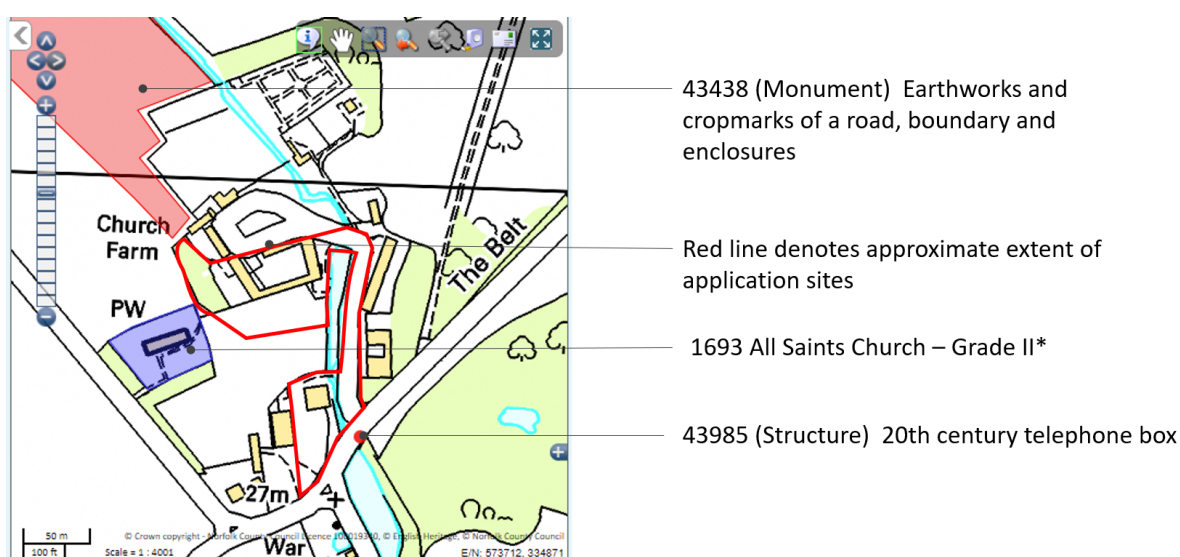


Figure 2: Heritage Gateway map showing relevant NHLE and SHER assets. Site and annotations shown in red. Source: Norfolk Heritage Explorer

- 3.1.3 The development site lies within the Fring Conservation Area. Due to the topography and intervening structures, the proposal is not considered to have an impact on Fring Hall (non-designated heritage asset) or any other Listed Building in the vicinity. This assessment will focus on the significance of, and potential impact upon, the setting of the grade II\* listed Church, and the Fring Conservation Area.

#### 3.2 Significance of the Designated Heritage Assets

- 3.2.1 The Grade II\* List Description for All Saints' Church, Fring, reads:

*Parish church. Largely C14 Decorated. Flint with stone dressings, slated roofs. West tower, nave and south porch, chancel. 3 stage west tower with set-off buttresses to west face only. Lozenge-shaped west window with four petal flower tracery; blocked low sided window on south, lancet above. Bell-stage with 4 "Y" tracery windows, partly brick parapet. 2 bay nave with 2 "Y" tracery windows with sub-cusping. On south and*

*north 2 bay chancel with cusped "Y" tracery windows on south side only. South porch with north and south windows, south and north doors with sunk quadrant mouldings, north door blocked. Priest's door and blocked arched niche on chancel south side. Chancel east window partly blocked and reduced in size with inserted mid-C19 2-light window; chancel north window blocked. Low pitched C19 roofs, earlier taller pitch roof-line visible on east face of tower. Interior: tall Decorated tower arch, double chamfered towards the nave. Fireplace in tower with re-used Norman pillar piscina with scallop capital (not seen). Nave north side c.1330 St.*

*Christopher wall-painting. Blocked round arched opening between 2 south side windows, blocked door below north side window by chancel arch. Double chamfered Decorated chancel arch with on south a niche with sub-cusped ogee head. Behind arch within chancel a blocked arched squint formerly open to south. South east window with remains of window embrasure sedilia. Good Decorated ogee-headed sub-cusped piscina with surviving credence shelf and scalloped-out soak-away. C19 altar rails incorporate perhaps C15 wooden*

*tracery. C13 octagonal Purbeck-type stone font with 2 shallow blank pointed arches to each face, rounded bowl, octagonal base, shaft with C20 repairs incement. Simple mid-late C19 tie-beam nave roof, boarded chancel. H. Munro Cautley Norfolk Churches, (Ipswich 1949), p. 199.*

- 3.2.2 The 14th century church was restored in 1897 and has 19th century roofs. Inside is an octagonal 13th century font and a series of notable 14th century wall paintings including a painted niche, the Annunciation, St John the Evangelist and St Christopher. The west tower has an attractive lozenge-shaped west opening. On the edge of the churchyard are said to be ruins of a possible cell for the priory of Norwich. The building is of high communal value, it being the sole formal place of worship within the village.

### 3.3 Significance of the Fring Conservation Area

- 3.3.1 The Conservation Area was designated in 1988. The appraisal document identifies its significant features as being: The three Listed Buildings, the high percentage of good quality unlisted buildings, the notable lack of any significant level of post-war development in the village, the consistent use of traditional materials including carrstone and chalk clunch, and the mature trees and adjacent woodland, farming activity and tranquil nature of the place.
- 3.3.2 The Conservation Area has evidential value as an example of a small rural village, largely unchanged since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is also some potential for underground archaeology. There is a level of aesthetic value, particularly around the church and Church Farm barns. In some areas this aesthetic value has been impacted by modern agricultural development, though such instances are rare.
- 3.3.3 The communal value of the Conservation Area derives from how all of the residents benefit from the preservation of the core of the village, and share responsibility for it.



## 4 History of the Site and Identifying Setting

### 4.1 Cartographic analysis

4.1.1 The earliest map to have been consulted is Fayden's Map of 1797. The map shows that the

original core of the village was around the Church and Church Farm (i.e the application sites). It then extended as groups of cottages and farm buildings were built along the Docking and Bircham Roads.



Extract from Hayden's Map, 1797. Source: <http://www.fadensmapofnorfolk.co.uk/mapBrowser.asp>

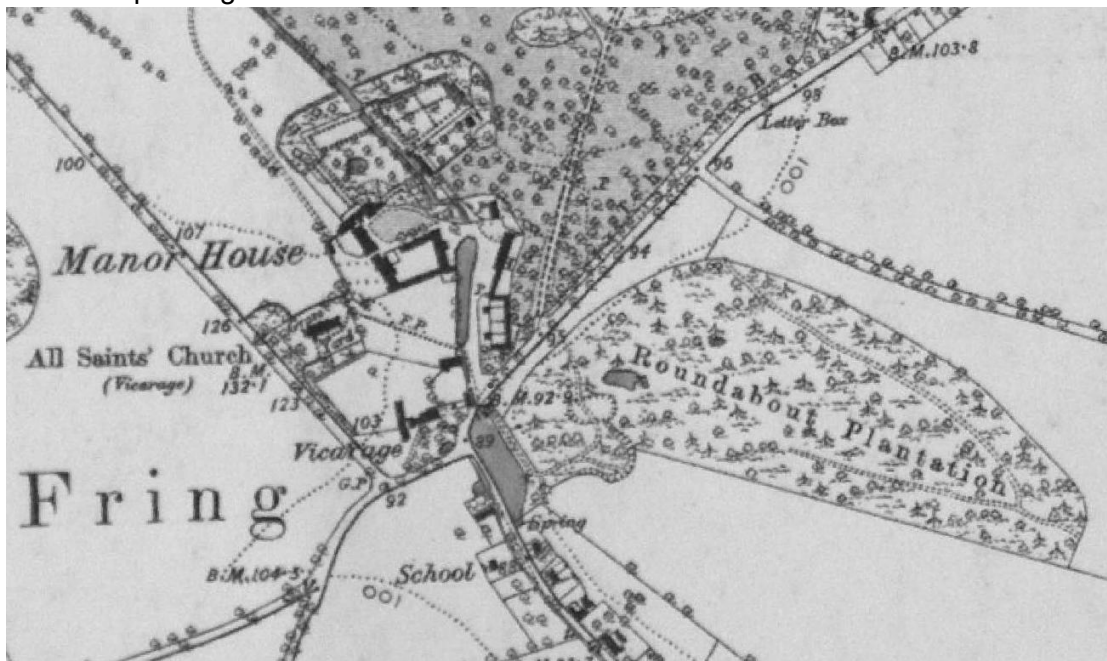
4.1.2 The Tithe Map, published circa 1840. The Tithe map shows the application sites appearing much as it does today.

4.1.3 The map shows Fring Hall, north-east of Church Farm. The Hall, built in 1807, was one of the show mansions of West Norfolk, and home to the Hon. Somerset Arthur Maxwell (1905-1942), the eldest son of Arthur Kenlis Maxwell, 11th Baron Farnham. The Hall was entirely destroyed by fire in the summer of 1934 and was subsequently rebuilt in 1936. Following construction of the original hall, in the early 1800s large numbers of trees were planted to create a formal setting and provide privacy for the Hall and the local network of lanes was changed to increase privacy still further.



Extract from Tithe Map, circa 1840. Source: Norfolk.gov.uk

- 4.1.4 The First Edition OS Map (circa 1880) shows the considerable growth of the village in the C1900. It includes the school (constructed 1875) and the now semi-mature woodland planting set around the hall.



Extract from First Edition OS Map, circa 1880. Source: Norfolk.gov.uk

- 4.1.5 Aerial photography from 1945 shows the village much as it appears today. The 7 pairs of semi-detached estate cottages set on the southern side of Docking road are clearly shown (constructed during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century).



1945 aerial photography, Source: Norfolk.gov.uk

## 4.2 Identifying Setting – Summary

- 4.2.1 The proposal site falls within the immediate setting of the Grade II\* listed All Saints Church and within the Fring Conservation Area. The area is rural in character, with limited changes to the application site and its immediate environs since construction of the original Fring Hall in 1837.

## 5 The Application Sites

- 5.0.1 The applications propose development on two application sites within Church Farm:
- i. The Courtyard Barns – proposed conversion to provide 5 holiday units
  - ii. The Field Barn and adjacent hardstanding– proposed conversion of barn and redundant farmyard to serve as Welcome Barn and parking area

### 5.1 The Courtyard Barns

- 5.1.1 The Courtyard Barns are a 'U' shaped series of barns which, with the addition of a run of stables and attached brick wall on the northern side, enclose around a central 'courtyard' area.
- 5.1.2 The barns are thought to date from the late C19 or early C20 and are predominantly constructed from masonry quoins with infill panels consisting of brick, flint and carrstone.
- 5.1.3 Rooves are traditional cut timber, comprising timber trusses at regular centres supporting a line of purlins to each elevation, with common rafters over. The rooves are finished in clay pantiles, predominantly coloured red but with sections of black where ad-hoc repairs have been effected over the years.
- 5.1.4 The courtyard range comprises:
- **The eastern wing** – substantial double height barn orientated north/south and forming the western wing of the courtyard. Towards the southern end of the barn walls constructed of coursed carrstone and red brickwork set between brick quoins. Further north the external walls are interrupted more recent (C21st) lean-to extensions presumably constructed to accommodate agricultural plant and machinery. The extensions are a mix of brick quoin and stone infill panels, and more lightweight corrugated tin sheet structures. Infill on the original barn walls becomes more random further north on the building, with the regular coursing giving way to random stone, carrstone and brick infill. The barn incorporates two large openings in the side elevations, suggesting historic use as a grain store, and a further 'personnel scale' door opening. The southernmost opening is closed by two large wooden doors, the northern opening is unsealed and provides access through into courtyard area. The southern gable end of the building also incorporates a full height and full width opening, though this has been substantially rebuilt in modern (C21) brickwork and includes a substantial concrete lintel over the opening.



*Image 1: Eastern wing, southern end of eastern elevation*



*Image 2: Rear (west-facing) elevation of eastern wing and internal face of northern wing (stables)*

- **The Southern Wing** – a single storey height barn constructed from brick quoins and carrstone rubble infill panels on the south-facing elevation, and brick piers with stone/brick/rubble infill on the north (courtyard-facing) elevation. The south-facing

roof plane incorporates sections of glass pantiles to provide limited light to internal areas, and there are two 'window' openings in this elevation (infilled with timber door hatches). There are three full height, stable door openings in the north (courtyard-facing) elevation.



*Image 3 (above): Southern elevation of southern wing*



*Image 4 (above): Northern elevation of southern wing and eastern elevation of Western Wing*

- **The Western Wing** – The western wing incorporates a single storey row of three stables (brick quoins with a mixture of rubble, stone and brick infill, and sections of coursed red brick), an open-fronted cart shed and a two storey element which, although agricultural in original, has an almost domestic appearance, with a half-hipped pantile roof, first and ground floor glazing and a single-storey lean-to extension.



*Image 5 (above): Eastern elevation of western wing*



*Image 6 (above): Two storey barn on western wing*



- **The Northern wing** – a run of stables, single storey in height with northern (external) wall constructed from brick and rubble infill, internal (courtyard facing) wall constructed from later infill Fletton brick. Timber stables doors and simple casement windows to stables.



*Image 7 (above): Southern elevation of northern wing*

- 5.1.5 The Field Barn is a large, double height barn with a pitched, pantile roof. The western end of the barn is predominantly constructed from coursed chalk blockwork. The eastern end, possibly a later addition to the original barn, is constructed from more regular brick quoins with stone infill. There is a door opening in the western gable end and a larger opening on the north-facing gable. This elevation also includes a substantial brick buttress. The east-facing gable leads on to a stone wall which encloses the farmyard and separates it from the adjacent linear pond. The southern elevation includes a small window sized opening at first floor height, however evidence within the building suggests there has been a larger opening – probably immediately opposite the opening on the northern elevation – in this wall (see image 12).



*Image 8 (above): Southern elevation of Field Barn*



*Image 9 (above): West-facing gable of Field Barn*



*Image 10 (above): East facing gable and northern elevation of field barn*



*Image 11 (above): Field barn: internal*



*Image 12 (above): Internal view of south facing elevation of Field Barn. Photo shows existing opening in wall, original brick quoin and (to left of quoin on image) irregular brickwork infill where former opening has been infilled, with timber lintel over original opening above.*

## 6 6 Proposed Development

- 6.1 The proposed development, set across two applications, would see the 'courtyard' barn complex at Church Farm converted to provide 5 units of short-stay holiday accommodation. The 'Field Barn' would be converted to a 'Welcome Barn', providing an informal reception/arrivals area and space for other associated activities.
- 6.2 The application for development of the Courtyard Barn complex is a resubmission following withdrawal of a previous proposal. The previous application (reference 21/02341/F) was withdrawn following concerns expressed regarding potential impacts on the setting of the Grade II\* church, impact on the barns themselves (identified as non-designated heritage assets), impact on the character of the Conservation Area and other technical issues relating to flood risk and highways.
- 6.3 These technical matters have been addressed and the comments regarding heritage impacts given due consideration. The resulting design changes aim to ensure the proposal minimises harm on the nearby church and strengthens the character of the Fressingfield Conservation Area.
- 6.4 Notable changes from the previously proposed scheme include:
- Removal of the proposed upgraded agricultural access to the west of the site – this being the largest single issue of heritage concern identified by consultees, the revised scheme now proposes no change to this access.
  - Reduction in number of units within the courtyard barns from 6 to 5
  - Reduction in number of bedrooms from 14 to 13
  - Relocation of parking area to existing hardstanding to front of Welcome Barn
  - Reduction in proposed fenestration on southern wing of courtyard
  - Reductions in fenestration proposed in south elevation of north cartshed and the northern elevation of south wing.
  - Proposed conversion of field barn to serve as Welcome Barn, to provide a focused arrivals point and associated services for guests using the accommodation.
- 6.5 This impact of the proposal is considered within the next section.

## 7 7 Impacts on Heritage Assets

### 7.1 Physical Impacts on Barns

7.1.1 The design of the proposed conversion has been informed by guidance within the Historic England publication 'Adapting Traditional Farm Buildings: Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse' (2017).

7.1.2 This application proposes redevelopment of the courtyard barn complex to holiday accommodation.

7.1.3 The proposal would see:

- the northern (stables) wing converted to provide 2 units (1 x 3 bed holiday unit, 1 x 1 bed) (also occupying a small part of the Eastern barn).
- the southern wing converted to provide 2 holiday units (1 x 3 bed, 1 x 2 bed units)
- the eastern wing given over to internal amenity space, to be used by all the holiday units (with the exertion of a small area at the northern end, accommodation part of unit 5)
- the western wing converted to provide a single, 4-bedroom unit, including the lowering of the existing first floor within the double height, hipped roof barn at the northern end of the wing.

7.1.4 All Holiday units in the north and south wings would be accessed via the existing farm access, leading into the farmyard to the front of the Welcome Barn. Guests would park their cars here and use electric golf buggies to take luggage to the accommodation., Alternatively, the existing network of tracks/drives within the site can be used for unloading, with cars ending up back in the parking area within the former farmyard.

7.1.5 In terms of additions and extensions, the proposed conversion would make no changes to the footprint of the barns. All existing built form would remain, and all new development would be accommodated within the existing building envelope.

7.1.6 In the eastern wing, minimal changes are proposed, with the majority of the interior of the barns given over to interior amenity space for use by the holiday units. The exception to this is the northernmost section of the east wing, which would be converted to accommodate a one bed unit of holiday accommodation (Unit 5). As such, development in this part of the barn complex is limited to repairing and restoring the historic fabric and sealing existing openings with new glazing and doors. Where new glazing is proposed existing timber doors (large openings in east and west facing elevations of the West Wing) will be retained and repaired. Similarly, the existing solid sheet, side roller bi-fold doors over the large opening in the southern gable end of the eastern wing will be retained for both conservation reasons (being part of the buildings agricultural heritage) and amenity (enabling light and activity within the amenity barn to be screened from all external views, effectively closing off the barn. Other works to the eastern barn include:

- the insertion of timber panel inserts and replacement steel framed windows to the north elevation of the north cart shed; and
- replacement glazed timber doors in existing openings on the east and west elevations of the eastern wing, and

- the infilling of existing large openings with dark coloured, aluminium framed glazing on east, west and southern elevations of the eastern wing; and
- Reopening a former doorway within the covered walk through to provide access to unit 5.
- Insertion of a mezzanine floor within the northern end of the barn to serve unit 5 (approx. 47.5 sq m, of which circa 15 sq. m would be useable floorspace, the remainder being stairway etc).
- Insertion of a mezzanine floor within the northern end of the amenity barn (approx. 39 sq m).

- 7.1.7 Viewed from outside the courtyard, the northern wing would look largely unchanged, with only the insertion of three small roof lights in the north-facing roof slope indicating the proposed change of use. It is relevant to note that, views of this elevation are only available from within the site (i.e. no public vistas) and, viewed from the north, the rear elevation of the stables building is largely obscured by mature vegetation.
- 7.1.8 Viewed from inside the courtyard, the proposed changes to the stables are more apparent, with the existing poor quality Fletton brickwork infill panels removed and replaced with good quality red brick plinths and vertical timber cladding incorporating new openings for windows and doors to serve the two holiday units.
- 7.1.9 The southern wing would be converted to provide 1 x 2 and 1 x 3 bedroom units, with primary means of access being via a new opening made in the centre of the wing to create a covered entrance area and route through from the courtyard to the meadows south of the barns.
- 7.1.10 Viewed from the south, the most noticeable change will be the introduction of two glazed panels and a central, covered, walkway through the wing. The covered walkway provides an additional access into the courtyard, off which the entrances for the holiday units are sited.
- 7.1.11 Sliding timber shutters and timber shutters across the glazed screens have been specified to minimise the visual impact of these new openings, in accordance with design guidance from Historic England..
- 7.1.12 Two further new window openings in the south elevation of the southern wing echo the existing openings, and it is proposed to utilise a 'W40' profile steel window frame to closely match the existing metal frames used elsewhere in the complex (for example the existing high level glazing on the north hipped gable elevation of the north-west 2-storey element).
- 7.1.11 It is considered that this 'W40' design represents a successful balance between replicating historic steel window profiles, whilst providing performance characteristics required both by modern Building Regulations and also the applicant, who is conscious of the need to reduce the environmental footprint of the build wherever possible.
- 7.1.12 For reference, image 1, below, shows this 'W40' profile in a recent barn conversion, with the traditional Victorian single glazed 'W20' cast iron frame retained in the upper floor window, and a modern double glazed 'W40' profile used in the window below (note colours on the scheme subject of this application are to be confirmed, but are likely to be medium grey as Image 2 elsewhere on the estate).



*Image 13: Example of 'W20' upper and 'W40' lower window frame*



*Image 14: Example of external joinery colour used across the wider estate*

- 7.1.13 To minimise activity and disturbance to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Church, no doors are proposed on this south-facing elevation. Recognition of the importance of roofscape in forming the character of the Conservation Area has resulted in rooflights in this south-facing roof plane being reduced to an absolute minimum (a single light located at the eastern end).
- 7.1.14 Other changes to this wing include the removal of soil and reprofiling of the sloping bank to the immediate south of the barns, at the south-western corner of the complex.



At present the building effectively serves as a retaining feature for this slope and removal of the soil and regrading of the bank in the immediate vicinity of the buildings will improve airflow and ease long term maintenance in this section of the barn. The existing high ground wall will be retained at the southwest corner to protect the wall between barn and church.

- 7.1.15 Viewed from within the courtyard, the south wing utilises the existing door openings in this elevation to provide glazing, again specifying timber shutters to soften the impact of the glazed areas. New windows (W40 profile) are positioned within the masonry quoins and infill panel structure of the building.
- 7.1.16 Finally, the western wing would be given over to a single unit of accommodation. Viewed from outside (west-facing elevation of the western wing), the proposal would create new window openings within the infill panels, preserving the spacing of the brick quoins. Due to the difference in ground levels at barn and church, and due to the mature screening vegetation, it is not considered these openings will impact the setting of the Church.
- 7.1.17 Viewed from inside the courtyard, the proposal uses existing openings, infilled with glazing and timber panelling, to provide light, and fills the existing open cart shed elevation with glazed timber framed doors and windows.
- 7.1.18 Internally, the existing loft floor/barn ceiling would be removed/lowered and new first floor inserted. This new floorspace would provide structural integrity to the barn and create additional accommodation space. An infilled window space at first floor level would be reinstated, with a 'W40' profile steel framed window inserted to match the existing ground floor windows (these existing frames, which are in poor condition, would also be replaced with 'W40' profiled steel units). At roof level, a single rooflight would be inserted on the west facing plane, and 2 smaller units on the south facing gable.
- 7.1.19 Within the courtyard itself, changes would be limited to the provision of new gravel pathways connecting the barns and small areas of patio out the front of each unit, with traditional parkland/estate fencing and gates. The existing wall which curves around the north-west corner of the courtyard would be retained and repaired as necessary.
- 7.1.20 Outside of the courtyard, there would be no changes to the north of the courtyard barn complex, and this area of land is included within the red line only for the purposes of access and effecting works to the north elevation of the complex during the construction phase.
- 7.1.21 To the south, a new gravel path would connect the central pedestrian entrance to the courtyard. Viewed from the church this path would be largely obscured by the proposed levels changes to pull soil back from the external wall of the south wing. To the east a new vehicle drop off point would be formed over an existing area of track.
- 7.1.22 Vehicular access to the holiday accommodation would be via the existing agricultural access and through the farmyard, past the Welcome Barn. Vehicles would then either continue on via the existing drive to a 'drop off' area outside the Courtyard barns, or remain parked in the farm yard/Welcome Barn parking area and use small golf buggies to shuttle luggage from cars to the holiday barns. Either way, guest vehicles would end up parked in the Welcome Barn area, utilising the existing hardstanding and screening

afforded by the barn (to the north), the historic wall (to the east) and the modern barn (to the west).

- 7.1.23 With regards the Welcome Barn, the biggest change will be the reopening of an original door opening in the southern elevation. This will require the re-opening of a large external opening which has, at some point in the building's past, been infilled (see figure 12, above). With the exception of that one intervention, all other openings are existing, with glazing set behind the external wall line.

## 7.2 Impact on setting of Grade I Listed Church

- 7.2.1 Following the removal of the previously proposed upgraded access drive to the west of the barns (and immediately adjacent the church), the applications propose no operational development outside any existing building footprint. Conversion of the Courtyard and Field barns would not require any extension nor addition to the existing buildings and, in this way, there would be no direct impact on the setting of the church.

- 7.2.2 The proposals will, however, makes some changes to the existing buildings and introduce a new use (holiday accommodation) which could impact the setting of the church. These changes are:

- a. The introduction of window openings to the south-facing elevation of the southern wing and west-facing elevation of the western wing of the barns; and
- b. The proposed adjustment to ground levels and introduction of a gravel path to the immediate south of the southern wing of the barns; and of the church grounds.
- c. The introduction of tourism use to an area currently used as part of the farming operation.
- d. The introduction of glazing within an existing opening in the west-facing gable of the Welcome Barn

## 7.3 Impact on character of Fring Conservation Area.

- 7.3.1 As noted in the Fring Conservation Character Appraisal, *the barns at Church Farm are not easily visible from the public highway and there is a strong sense of private space.* The appraisal also notes *This is a working farmyard and its roofscape is a very strong character feature in the conservation area.*

- 7.3.2 Given the limited public views into the site – the only direct view being at a distance of 60m+ from within the churchyard – and the limited amount of works to the exterior elevations of the courtyard barns, impacts on the character of the Conservation Area are considered to principally arise from the introduction of a new use (tourism) to the barns, with secondary impacts relating to proposed new fenestration in the south facing walls of the southern wing, introduction of rooflights and use of the farmyard for parking of cars.

## 7.4 Archaeological Impacts

- 7.4.1 In response to the previous planning application at the site, Norfolk County Council Archaeology stated:

*The proposed development lies in close proximity to the medieval All Saints parish church and to the site of the former Anglo-Saxon to post-medieval village, now visible as cropmarks. The church is of 14th century date and is probably on the site of an*

*earlier church. Churchyards were often larger in the past, so there is a possibility that human burials may be present within the proposed development area. Indeed, artefacts recovered suggest that an Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery exists a short distance to the south. Cropmarks are visible in aerial photographs a short distance to the west, of part of the former village of Fring, including a road, structures and enclosures. Late Anglo-Saxon to post-medieval artefacts have been found here, as well as Roman material. It is likely that these remains will also extend into the proposed development area. Consequently, there is potential that heritage assets with archaeological interest (buried archaeological remains) may be present at the site and that their significance will be affected by the proposed development.*

- 7.4.2 In this instance, the programme of archaeological mitigatory work will comprise the monitoring of groundworks for the development under archaeological supervision and control, and there is no objection to imposition of planning conditions to secure this work.

## 8 8 Impact Assessment

- 8.1 In assessing the heritage impacts of the development proposed across these two planning applications it is important to note that neither the barns subject of this application, nor any of the farm buildings or dwellings on the land adjacent the application site are Listed. The potential heritage impacts are to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed All Saints Church, which lies approximately 50m west of the barn complex, to the character of the Fring Conservation Area, and to the barns themselves as non-designated heritage assets.
- 8.2 Guidance for considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset is set out within the NPPF.
- 8.3 Specifically, the NPPF requires that:
- *When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be) (para 199)*
  - *Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification (para 200)*
  - *Substantial harm to or loss of (inter alia) grade II\* Listed Buildings should be wholly exceptional (para 200)*
  - *Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (para 202)*
- 8.4 In this instance, All Saints Church is a Grade II\* Listed Building and whilst the associated grounds (graveyard) are drawn reasonably tightly to the building's footprint, and no works are proposed within 50m of the church itself, the elevated position and open views from the church and grounds to the east, along with the role played by Church Farm in establishing the rural setting of the church, mean that development at these application sites has potential to impact the setting of this designated heritage asset.
- 8.5 In considering the heritage impacts associated with the proposal, the first matter to determine is whether the proposed development would cause harm to the setting of the church – if it is considered to cause harm then this will require:
- i. clear and convincing justification (para 200 NPPF); and
  - ii. Assessment as to the degree of harm, applying the tests relevant to substantial and less than substantial harm as appropriate (para 200 and 202 NPPF)
- 8.6 Turning first to the potential ways in which the development could cause harm to the setting of the church, the enclosed nature of the courtyard barns and the fact that no works beyond the existing building envelope are proposed means that there is limited potential for the proposal as a whole to impact on this setting.

- 8.7 However, the proposed change of use would introduce a new use, and a degree of new activity to the area. Further, the material changes to external elevations visible from the church (particularly the proposed windows in the south facing elevation of the southern wing) would represent a change to the rural and, specifically, agricultural, setting of the church.
- 8.8 For these reasons it is concluded the proposal would cause some harm to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Church.
- 8.9 Considering the requirement at para 200 NPPF, the clear and convincing justification for this 'harm' is to secure the future of the barns. This is a historic complex of barns which are of limited use to the Estate's modern farming operation. As such, the barns represent a maintenance liability with no practical use to justify maintenance investment. Whilst structurally sound, the barns at a stage where significant investment is required to ensure they remain so: as a commercial operation the applicants cannot commit to this investment with no prospect of a return.
- 8.10 The proposed development would secure the future of the barns in a sensitive and appropriate manner, retaining the complex in single ownership and not introducing the pressures which are often associated with conversion to residential use (subdivision of plots, allocated parking areas immediately adjacent dwellings, space for sheds, clothes lines, gardens etc).
- 8.11 It is considered that the potential to secure the future of the barns in this way presents a clear and convincing justification for the harm to the setting of the church.
- 8.12 In terms of assessing the degree of harm, whilst the barns are currently underutilised, they remain in low level agricultural use and sit within a wider site that accommodates a modern farming operation (with associated modern sheds, parking and storage requirements) and several dwellings. In this context, the development will not introduce new activity into a setting which is currently entirely undeveloped and tranquil. Rather, the limited number of vehicle movements and activity associated with the proposed holiday use will be experienced in the context of the wider site and, it is considered that in this context, this impact will not be significant.
- 8.13 When considering the degree of harm, it is relevant to note that ancillary activities such as parking and bin storage have been located in areas well screened from the church (parking in existing farmyard, which is largely screened by the modern agricultural buildings to the west, and bin store in the long cart shed to the south-east of the Courtyard Barns).
- 8.14 Turning to the proposal to adjust existing ground levels immediately adjacent the barn (where the south-western corner of the barn effectively acts as a retaining wall for the slope leading up to the church), the works are limited in scope and would not require the introduction of any retaining feature. Viewed from the church (a distance of approximately 50m), these proposed ground works would hardly be noticeable. The proposed introduction of a gravel path to the immediate south of the barns could be visible from the church, however the proposed alterations to levels would actually screen the western end of the path when viewed from the church. In any case, the proposed path is a simple, gravel pedestrian route (similar in appearance to those which run around the church and grounds) and does not provide the primary means of access to the holiday units in the southern wing. The scheme is designed to focus

activity and access into the courtyard and not spill over to the south paddock area. As such, its presence and use are considered to cause no harm to the setting of the church.

- 8.15 The final element to consider is the introduction of windows to the south facing elevation of the southern wing. This is the elevation most visible from the church grounds and the gently rising grass meadow and carrstone panels of the barn do contribute to the historic, rural character of the area and the setting of the Listed church.
- 8.16 The introduction of new glazed openings in this elevation will introduce change to the setting of the church. Significant efforts have been made to ensure this change is not negative: the openings have been located so as to fit within the masonry quoin and infill panel structure of the barn, and detailed (with a W40 painted steel frame proposed for the window openings, and timber shutters and louvres on the larger glazed openings) so as to minimise visual impact.
- 8.17 Viewed at a distance of circa 50m (i.e., from within the church), and seen in the context of the modern farm buildings, farmyard and shared access drive (all features which appear when considering the courtyard barns from the elevated aspect of the church grounds) it is not considered that the introduction of these new windows would cause substantial harm to the setting of the Listed Building.
- 8.18 Having regards to the above, when quantifying the degree of harm to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed Church, it is considered that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade II\* Listed All Saints Church.
- 8.19 Para 202 of the NPPF requires that, where a development would result in less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 8.20 In carrying out this balancing exercise it is considered that the degree of less than substantial harm occasioned by the proposed development is small (given the limited changes being made to the existing buildings, the limited degree to which these changes would be perceivable from the church yard and the limited amount of new activity associated with the proposal), and the public benefit (securing the future of a non-designated heritage asset and, in doing so, preserving a collection of buildings that make a strong positive contribution to the landscape and heritage setting of the church) is significant. There is also limited public benefit arising from the economic benefits of the proposal, both in terms of the construction process itself and an ongoing local economic benefit to the local economy arising from the proposed tourism use.
- 8.21 As such, it is considered the proposal satisfies the test at para 202 NPPF, in respect of impact on the setting of the Listed Church.
- 8.22 Considering the potential for impact on the Conservation Area (CA), the CA is a heritage designation and, as such, the tests at paragraphs 200 and 202 NPPF apply. Accordingly, an assessment must be made to determine whether the proposal causes harm to the character of the Conservation Area and, if so, then this harm must be quantified and identified as either 'substantial' or 'less than substantial'.

- 8.23 As with almost all the buildings in the Church Farm cluster, the barns are identified in the CA Character Appraisal as being 'important unlisted buildings'. When considering the character of the CA, the appraisal concludes 'The overriding impression of Fring is one of a quiet, peaceful, and well-kept village which still retains its working character'. The proposed development would result in some change to this character, most notable through the replacement of agricultural operations (based in the barns and farmyard) with a tourism use. This change could be considered to result in some harm to the character of the Conservation Area.
- 8.24 In terms of quantifying this harm, with specific reference to Church Farm, the appraisal recognises the limited visibility from public viewpoints and notes the 'strong sense of private space', however it also emphasises that the roofscape of the farm buildings (including the courtyard barns) is a 'very strong feature in the Conservation Area'.
- 8.25 The proposed development respects this character, and seeks to retain and maintain the barns which contribute to the quality of the CA. All roofs will be retained and repaired, with minimal insertions of roof lights proposed. In addition, the proposal seeks to focus activity relating to the barns within the complex and enclosed courtyard. To this end, generous internal amenity space is provided and the grass courtyard left largely untouched; this gives space for activity within the well-screened courtyard and reduces the need to 'spill over' onto the open meadow to the south of the barn or conflict with the working farm yard, which would be retained and continue to operate. Further, where glazed screens or other openings are proposed or retained, external timber shutter, timber louvres and existing agricultural bifold shutter doors enable partial or complete screening of the glazing, minimising light spill beyond the site and providing a high level of privacy for guests at the barns. It is also relevant to note that whilst the Conservation Area Character Statement notes the agricultural character of the area, the Fring Estate has operated a successful holiday let business on various properties across the landholding for a number of years. As such, the proposed introduction of additional holiday units would increase presence of an existing use, rather than an entirely new use.
- 8.26 Ultimately, the development proposed in this application seeks to deliver the Conservation Objectives set out in the appraisal by securing the future of this important barn complex in a sensitive and sympathetic manner.
- 8.27 Mindful of the above, it is considered that the development would result in less than substantial harm to the character of the Conservation Area, but that less than substantial harm is slight in nature and substantially outweighed by the benefit of securing the future of these historic buildings and, in doing so, preserving a notable area within the Fring Conservation Area.
- 8.28 Turning to the potential impact on the barns as non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 203 NPPF states:

*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

- 8.29 In this instance, the historic barns have intrinsic heritage value, as well as a wider heritage value as part of a historic cluster of buildings within the Conservation Area of Fring.
- 8.30 As such, it could be considered that all removal or alteration of original building fabric represents 'harm' to the barns. The proposed development recognises this and seeks to minimise such loss and alteration wherever possible. Where this is not achievable, changes are made in as sympathetic manner as possible – for example the proportions and detailed design of the new fenestration in the south wing and specification of timber shutters and louvres..
- 8.31 In any case, the balanced judgement required by paragraph 203 also requires recognition of the benefits delivered by the proposal. These include wider sustainability benefits (particularly in respect of supporting the local tourism economy) but also the specific – and significant – heritage benefit of taking an underused building which is beginning to show signs of decline (see comment re water ingress etc within the Structural Engineers report) and restoring it in a sympathetic manner. This process not only ensures the immediate future of the large majority of the historic fabric, but also secures the long-term future of the building by providing both a reason for, and an income stream to, maintain the building going forward.



## 9. Conclusion

- 9.1. The proposal is considered to result in less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale to the setting of the designated heritage asset All Saints Church, to the Fring Conservation Area and the barns themselves recognised as non-designated heritage assets.
- 9.2. The barns at Church Farm form an important part of the setting of the Listed Church and contribute positively to the character of the Conservation. That character is notably tranquil and rural, with agriculture featuring as the most notable generator of activity.
- 9.3. However, the proposed development is sensitively designed, appropriately scaled and of a nature which minimises the kind of ancillary impacts that would be incurred through the proposed introduction of other uses (such as a permanent residential use).
- 9.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Public benefits can be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 9.5. Any less than substantial harm to the setting of the assets will be outweighed by the public benefit securing the future of these historic buildings in a sensitive and appropriate manner. There will also be public benefits arising from the economic activity both in converting the barns and their subsequent commercial use.
- 9.6. The NPPF states “*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.*”
- 9.7. In this instance, it is considered that the proposals for changes of use of the Courtyard and Field Barns would preserve those elements of setting that make a positive contribution to the Listed heritage asset (Church) and the Conservation Area.
- 9.8. The proposal demonstrates an understanding of the significance of the heritage assets alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance. It preserves the setting of the heritage assets by being of an appropriate design, following guidance in the relevant English Heritage publication.
- 9.8. It is considered that the development complies with the requirements of Section 66 (1) of the Planning (LB and CA) Act, section 16 of the NPPF, Historic England’s Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 - Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment July 2016 and Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 – The Setting of Heritage Assets December 2017, policy DM15 of the Local Plan