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agricultural barn to Welcome Barn and use of existing hard standing
for parking



PRINCIPLE
PLANNING

June 2022

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| Site Address | Church Farm, Docking Road, Fring |
| Development Proposal | Conversion of barn and adjacent hard standing to provide Welcome Barn and parking |
| Author: | Fergus Bootman MRTPI |
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Appendix 1: Consultation Response from EA to submission of FRA and FMA..... Error!
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement, incorporating Design and Access Statement, is submitted in support of an application for change of use of a barn to serve as a 'Welcome Barn', together with associated parking.
- 1.2 The application is submitted in conjunction with a second application on an adjacent site. That application proposes the change of use of a complex of barns to provide new units of holiday accommodation. The development proposed in this application would provide the principal means of vehicle access to that new holiday accommodation, along with parking and a 'Welcome Barn', giving a focussed point of arrival and centre for various associated guest facilities and services (akin to a reception).
- 1.3 Accordingly, this Statement should be considered in association with the accompanying application ref PP-11313808 for 'Change of use of historic barns and associated building works to create 5 units of holiday accommodation including associated internal and external works and amenity space'.
- 1.4 This application is supported by the following information:

Location Plan – 20.024 FB01B Prepared by Tidswell Childs
Existing Block Plan – 20.024.FB02B prepared by Tidswell Childs
Existing Elevations - 21.019 FB03B prepared by Tidswell Childs
Existing and Proposed Floor Plans – 21.019 FB04C prepared by Tidswell Childs
Proposed Block Plan 21.019 FB05C prepared by Tidswell Childs
Proposed Elevations – 21.019 FB06C prepared by Tidswell Childs
Contaminated Land Screening Form
Flood Risk Assessment Rev A (2536-RE-07-20-01 rev A) prepared by Evans Rivers and Coastal
Flood Modelling Assessment (2536-RE-07-20-02) prepared by Evans Rivers and Coastal
BCKLWN Flood Risk Proforma for Sequential and Exceptions Tests
Ecology Report and Surveys prepared by Phillip Parker Associates
Ecology Mitigation Plan prepared by Phillip Parker Associates

2 The Application Sites

- 2.1 The application site comprises an agricultural barn located at Church Farm, in the centre of the hamlet of Fring.
- 2.2 Figure 1, below, shows the location of the site.



Courtyard Barns subject
of conjoined application

Field Barn and hard
standing subject of this
application

Figure 1: Aerial Location Plan (image: Google Earth)

- 2.3 The barn is located at the centre of a cluster of development positioned between Docking Road and Fring Road, with the roads curving around the eastern, southern, and western boundaries of the cluster, separating it from the row of buildings to the south, along Bircham Road.
- 2.4 Broadly speaking, this cluster can be divided into four-character areas: The Walled Garden (private gardens); Dwellings and associated gardens and drives; Agricultural

(a mixture of modern and historic agricultural barns and out buildings); and Church and setting (All Saints Church, a C13Grade II* Listed Building).

2.5 Figure 2, below, illustrates these areas.



Figure 2: Character Areas

- 2.6 The majority of this wider area is in the ownership of the applicant, with the notable exceptions of the Church (see Location Plan for details) and the private dwellings No. 35 and 37 to the north-east of the barns..
- 2.7 Fring is a small, rural settlement set in its own parish, which extends to just 7 sq. km. The settlement is formed of circa 41 households, with most set alongside either Docking or Bircham Roads.
- 2.8 Given its small size, and with the exception of the church, there are no services or facilities in Fring. However, the nearby village of Docking (2.4 miles) offers a doctors surgery, post office, convenience store and public house.
- 2.9 The application site comprises an agricultural barn, thought to date from the late 19th or early 20th century.
- 2.10 As is common with historic buildings of his nature, the barn has been subject to change over its lifetime and adapted to suit agricultural needs over the years. In particular, it is noted that the original large opening in the southern elevation has, at some point, been infilled and reduced to a single small window at first floor level.
- 2.11 The barn are is considered to be a good quality building, with the south, east and west wings being constructed from masonry quoins with infill panels of flint, rubble, chalk block and carrstone. The roof is a pitched, pan tiled roof.

- 2.12 To the immediate south and west of the barn is the area of hard standing (yard) proposed to be repurposed as a car park area serving the proposed holiday units. The western edge of this yard is demarcated by a modern agricultural building, which affords a degree of screening between the yard and the Church located on higher ground some 50 to the west.
- 2.13 Access to the barn and yard is via a pair of private drives, both terminating at Docking Road. A private track turns east off the north edge of the yard, crossing the river via a small bridge and joining up with other private drives to give access to the Courtyard Barns and other parts of the Fring Estate.

The barn is not Listed, but lies approximately 50m south-east of the with the exception of All Saints Church (Grade II*). The application site lies within the Fring Conservation Area.

- 2.14 Due to its size, location within the farm and historic design, the barns is not well suited to modern agricultural needs and, whilst still occasionally used for agricultural storage and currently by the estate gamekeeper, it is no longer needed as part of the day-to-day agricultural operations of the farming business, which is accommodated in various modern sheds located both within the wider Fring site and further afield across the Fring Estate.
- 2.15 Accordingly, in conjunction with the new accommodation proposed at Courtyard Barns, it is considered that the barn represents a good opportunity for the farming business to diversify further into tourism, to complement its agricultural operations, to provide a centralised arrivals and meeting point for the various tourism accommodations across the wider site, and secure the future of this historic buildings in a sympathetic and sustainable manner.

3 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 This application proposes the change of use of the barn to provide a Welcome Barn. The barn would serve as point of arrival for guests at Church Farm/Fring Estate, and enable the applicants to offer a range of services and facilities to guests. The yard outside the barn would serve as parking for the Courtyard Barn accommodation, and the existing access points would be signed to give a dedicate point of access for guests and a separate, dedicated access for farm traffic.
- 3.2 In terms of operational development the works are largely limited to infilling existing openings with glazing (set behind external buildings lines and retaining timber shutters where possible). The exception to this is the proposal to reinstate the large central opening in the southern elevation. This would see the existing infill panel removed and the opening glazed, providing a view through the building and on towards the Courtyard Barns.
:
- 3.2 Parking would be provided within the existing yard. In keeping with design guidance from Historic England the proposal would not see formal demarcation of bays or landscaping of the area. Rather, the intention is to retain the agricultural feel of the yard, with ample space for parking provided.
- 3.3 The existing track off the northern edge of the yard would be upgraded and finished in gravel, with a similar treatment proposed for the track leading away from the norther elevation of the barn.
- 3.4 Further detail regarding and analysis of the proposed works to the buildings is contained within the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment.

4 Planning Policies

4.1 Adopted Core Strategy (2011)

4.1.1 The following policies from the Core Strategy are considered relevant:

4.1.2 **CS06: Rural Areas**

The strategy will be supportive of farm diversification schemes and conversion of existing buildings for business purposes in accordance with Policy CS10 providing any proposal:

meets sustainable development objectives and helps to sustain the agricultural enterprise;

is consistent in its scale with its rural location;

is beneficial to local economic and social needs;

does not adversely affect the building and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity.

4.1.3 **CS10: The Economy**

The Council will support the rural economy and diversification through a rural exception approach to new development within the countryside; and through a criteria based approach to retaining employment land and premises.

Permission may be granted on land which would not otherwise be appropriate for development for an employment generating use which meets a local business need.

Any development must satisfy the following criteria:

It should be appropriate in size and scale to the local area;

It should be adjacent to the settlement;

The proposed development and use

will not be detrimental to the local environment or local residents.

4.2 Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016)

4.2.1 The following policies from the adopted SADMP are considered most relevant:

4.2.2 **Policy DM 3 – Development in the Smaller Villages and Hamlets**

New development in the designated Smaller Villages and Hamlets will be limited to that suitable in rural areas, including:

small scale employment uses (under Policy CS10);

community facilities (under Policy CS13);

smaller scale tourism facilities (under Policy CS10);

conversions of existing buildings (under Policy CS06);

rural exceptions affordable housing; and

development to meet specific identified local need, including housing to support the operation of rural businesses (under Policies CS01 and CS06);

4.2.3 In addition, the following policies will also be relevant in determining this application:

DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM15 – Environment, Design & Amenity

DM17 – Parking Provision in New Development

4.3 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.3.1 The following sections of the NPPF are considered relevant:

NPPF 6 : Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

NPPF 12 : Achieving well-designed places

NPPF 14 : Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

NPPF 15 : Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

NPPF 16 : Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

5 Assessment

5.01 This application proposes the change of use of an agricultural building and adjoining land to provide a Welcome Barn, parking and vehicular access for proposed new units of holiday accommodation elsewhere on the Estate land. The following matters are considered to be material to the determination of this planning application:

- Principle of the development
- Heritage impacts
- Flood risk
- Ecology impacts
- Landscape impacts
- Highways impacts
- Amenity impacts

5.02 These matters are considered in turn, below.

5.1 Principle of the development

5.1.1 Policy CS06 supports the principle of farm diversification schemes and schemes for the conversion of existing buildings subject to the satisfaction of certain defined criteria. These criteria are considered below:

The proposal meets sustainable development objectives and helps to sustain the agricultural enterprise

5.1.2 The application proposes the reuse of a historic barn, retaining the original historic fabric wherever possible and turning what is currently considered a maintenance liability for the farming business into an economically sustainable and diversified income stream.

5.1.3 Whilst the site is in a rural location, it is an area increasingly associated with tourism and the site lies within a short distance of the North Norfolk Coast and tourist attractions such as Snettisham Park (3.3 miles), Ken Hill (5 miles), the Sandringham Estate (5 miles) and Norfolk Lavender (4 miles).

5.1.4 In this context, tourism development such as that proposed helps to form part of a network of rural tourism sites, with accommodation in one location (e.g. Fring) helping to support and sustain tourism focused business elsewhere (e.g. Snettisham Park Farm).

5.1.5 Beyond the specific tourism economy, it is well established that where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village can support services in a village nearby (paragraph 79 NPPF) and, in this instance, the proposal would help to support services and facilities in nearby villages such as Docking and Sedgeford, as well as providing jobs on site (cleaning, servicing and maintenance) and supporting local businesses (e.g. butchers and other food suppliers, taxi firms, florists etc).

5.1.6 Finally, with respect to meeting sustainable development objectives, the reuse of existing, good quality buildings represents is supported by local (CS06, CS109, DM3) and national (paragraph 85 NPPF) planning policy.

- 5.1.7 With regards to helping to sustain the agricultural enterprise, as stated above, at present the barn presents a maintenance liability for the farming business and offer little in the way of practical return. This proposal to invest in and restore the barn would turn a liability into an asset and provide a useful additional income to the agricultural enterprise.
- 5.1.8 Having regards to the above, it is considered that this criterion is satisfied.

The proposal is consistent in its scale with its rural location;

- 5.1.9 The proposal would see the barn repurposed as an arrivals and welcome point for guests staying in the various accommodation on the Fring Estate. The facility would be housed entirely within the footprint of the existing barn. Development at this scale is considered appropriate to the area and, in terms of visitor numbers, is substantially smaller than several other nearby tourism accommodation sites (for example the campsites at Bircham Windmill, Range Farm and Dreamy Hollow).
- 5.1.10 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal accords with this criterion.

The proposal is beneficial to local economic and social needs

- 5.1.11 The positive local economic impact is considered above at paras 5.1.4 – 5.1.5. In summary, the creation of new tourism accommodation would help to support the existing network of small-scale tourism sites located in the vicinity of the farm, as well as providing a market for tourism businesses located on the coast and within the North Norfolk AONB.
- 5.1.12 With regards social benefit, the principle public benefit beyond economics is securing the future of a high quality, historic rural building. This building, whilst not Listed, is a good example of traditional rural vernacular and, as such, there is merit in simply securing its future in a sensitive manner such as that proposed.
- 5.1.13 Finally, as discussed within the submitted Ecology Report, the proposal would (in conjunction with the development at Courtyard Barns) deliver protected species enhancements (not just mitigation).
- 5.1.14 Consequently, the proposal satisfies this criterion.

The proposal does not adversely affect the building and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity.

- 5.1.15 The issues of landscape and heritage impacts are considered in more detail below and in the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment. In summary, this is a sensitively designed scheme which would secure the future of a historic barn. As such it is considered to the preserve the existing building and have no adverse impact on the character of the surrounding landscape.
- 5.1.16 The proposed area of parking is within an existing farm yard which is already used for storage of various agricultural machinery and associated items. The site is well screened from public views, with the Welcome Barn, modern agricultural barn and historic eastern boundary wall largely screening views into the site.

- 5.1.17 With reference to amenity impacts, this is considered in section 5.7. below. In summary, however, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any unacceptable amenity impacts for existing occupiers.
- 5.1.18 Having regards to the above, it is considered that the principle of the development is established, with the proposal satisfying the relevant criteria of policy CS06 and according with the specific provisions of paras 83 and 84 NPPF.
- 5.1.19 Whilst the principle of the development is established under Policy CS06, it is relevant also to note the provisions of policy DM11, which is concerned with the location of new tourism sites.
- 5.1.19 This policy requires proposals for new tourism development to satisfy a number of defined criteria relating to economic viability, landscape, heritage, ecology and flood risk impacts. These matters are all considered within the assessment against policy CS06 above, and in further detail against specific Local Plan policies relevant to the proposal, below (e.g. DM15 relating to design, DM 21 relating to flood risk, DM17 parking provision etc).
- 5.1.20 Consequently, as demonstrated in the following assessment against these subject specific policies, it is considered that the proposal also satisfies the requirements of policy DM11 in respect of establishing the principle of the development.

5.2 Heritage Impacts

- 5.2.1 Heritage impacts are considered in detail within the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). The HIA concludes that the proposals (i.e. considering the impact of both the conversion of the Welcome Barn proposed in this application, and the Courtyard Barns in the accompanying application) would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade II* Listed Church, and less than substantial harm to the Fring Conservation Area.
- 5.2.2 These harms arise primarily from the introduction of a new, non-agricultural use to the site and some of the physical changes proposed to the buildings themselves.
- 5.2.3 With reference to the test at para 202 NPPF, the HIA concludes that this less than substantial harm is significantly outweighed by the public benefit derived from securing the future of the buildings in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Accordingly, it is considered 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

5.3 Flood Risk

- 5.3.1 The application is accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and accompanying Flood Modelling Assessment (FMA). These assessments concludes that the application site spans Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3, with the barn situated in FZ1 even in the modelled 1:100 event + climate change.
- 5.3.2 The Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification (annex 3 of the NPPF) indicates that the proposed use is no more vulnerable to the effects of flooding than the existing use

(agriculture). In addition, floor levels will be set no lower than existing levels, and flood resilient construction techniques will be incorporated wherever possible in the construction process.

- 5.3.3 Paragraph 168 NPPF confirms that applications for change of use should not be subject to the Sequential or Exceptions tests, nor are such tests applicable given the site's location in FZ1.
- 5.3.4 Nonetheless, as a site which lies in an area identified as being at some risk of flooding, the FRA includes a recommendation to register with the Environment Agency's Flood Warnings Direct service and prepare a Business Flood Plan. The applicant is happy to do these, and it is suggested that a suitable Business Flood Plan could be secured by condition, should this be considered appropriate.

5.4 Ecology Impacts

- 5.4.1 The application is accompanied by a detailed ecological surveys and associated report, informed by the appropriate species-specific surveys as required.
- 5.4.2 The survey confirms the building has potential to provide roosting habitat for bats, but there were no bats or evidence of bats using the building at time of the most recent survey.
- 5.4.3 In response, the report identifies necessary mitigation measures including:
 - restricting when certain works can occur (e.g. roof strip and relaying only in the period mid-September to October or April).
 - Requiring the presence of a licensed bat worker to supervise key works (e.g. roof strip) and provide toolbox talk to contractor prior to start
 - Provision of bird boxes (9no)
 - Management of the site in such a way so as to reduce potential conflict with reptiles
- 5.4.4 In addition, the report suggests protected species enhancements, to deliver biodiversity gain for the project. Accordingly, the following enhancement measures are proposed as part of this application:
 - Provision of a dedicated bat loft within the north end of the eastern wing of the Courtyard barns – this is a closed, insulated section of the roof space accessible via two raised ridge tiles. The space will provide an optimised roosting habitat for bats.
 - Installation of sparrow terraces and swift boxes within the Welcome Barn conversion.
- 5.4.5 Having regards to the above, it is considered the proposal would satisfy the provisions of DM15.

5.5 Landscape impacts

- 5.5.1 The proposal would see the change of use of a barn and would introduce no new built form into the landscape. In addition, the well screened nature of the barn and yard and nature of the proposed use (Welcome Barn and parking area) mean that external changes viewed from outside the site will be minimal, and there is limited potential for the type of domestic 'overspill' (the need for sheds, washing lines, demarcation of

gardens and driveways etc) which often gives rise to concerns regarding landscape impacts associated with proposed barn conversions.

- 5.5.2 It is relevant also to note that the position of the barn complex within a working farmyard presents opportunities to further minimise landscape impacts. So, for example, commercial waste and recycling bins will be stored out of sight within a neighbouring cart lodge and parking is provided on an existing area of hardstanding which has historically been used for the parking of farm vehicles and is largely screened from all external views by surrounding development.
- 5.5.3 Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would have no unacceptable landscape impacts and, as such, accords with the provisions of Local Plan policies CS06, CS10 and DM15

5.6 Highways impacts

- 5.6.1 In response to the previous application at the Courtyard Barns site, Norfolk County Council expressed concern regarding the proposed upgrading of an existing agricultural access on the western edge of the application site.
- 5.6.2 Discussions with NCC have failed to result in an acceptable manner of upgrading this access and, accordingly, this application does not include any works to the existing access, which will continue to be used for agricultural purposes but will not provide means of access to the proposed new holiday accommodation.
- 5.6.3 Instead of upgrading this access, the amended Courtyard Barns application and accompanying Welcome Barn application proposes to rationalise and clarify the use of existing access serving the Church Farm site, meaning no new accesses will be created and there will be a dedicated vehicle for guests, giving access to the Welcome Barn, whilst other residents and farm vehicles use the remaining two existing access points.
- 5.6.4 NCC's letter of objection states: *As currently presented I would find the formalisation of a field entrance to serve development to be unacceptable for the reasons set out above, I would request this response be considered a holding objection until such time that the site is served from the existing entrances.*
- 5.6.5 This access has now been removed from the proposal. Visibility from all existing access points is good, and adequate parking to serve the development is provided within the site and both accesses enable vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear.
- 5.6.6 Given the modest scale of the proposal and mindful of the existing traffic generated by the site and the test at paragraph 111 NPPF, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any unacceptable impact on highway safety, or that the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

5.7 Amenity

- 5.7.1 The barn subject of this application is set some 90m from the nearest residential property (to the south-west), with views between the two screened by the modern agricultural buildings. . Consequently, there is limited potential for overlooking or disturbance to neighbouring residential occupiers.
- 5.7.2 The addition of a Welcome Barn responds in part to concerns from local residents that there was a lack of information and direction for guests arriving to the site, and a feeling that this could lead to unnecessary vehicle movements on arrival and departure, as well as general noise and disturbance from guests who could not find how to access the building etc.
- 5.7.3 The arrivals barn (subject of the conjoined application) and dedicated vehicle access point and parking for guests seeks to address these concerns, providing a single point of arrival and reference for guests and thereby limiting impacts on neighbouring residential occupiers.
- 5.7.4 Consequently, the proposal is considered to satisfy the requirements of policy DM15 in respect of amenity impacts.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This application proposes the conversion of a historic barn to provide a Welcome Barn, providing a point of arrival and information for guests at the farm's various accommodation offers (existing and proposed) The development, considered alongside that proposed in the conjoined application for a conversion of the Courtyard Barns represent a comprehensive, sustainable and sensitively designed scheme of farm diversification which will secure the future of these buildings. .
- 6.2 Accordingly, the application is considered to satisfy the provisions of Local Plan policies CS06, CS10, DM1, DM15 and DM17 and guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework. As such, the Local Planning Authority are invited to approve the application without delay.