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Client: Mr & Mrs D Palmer
Job no: 21-227
Revision: A (19-10-22)

Revision Table:

Revision:	Date:	By:	Description
A	19-10-22	JJB	Updated for new application

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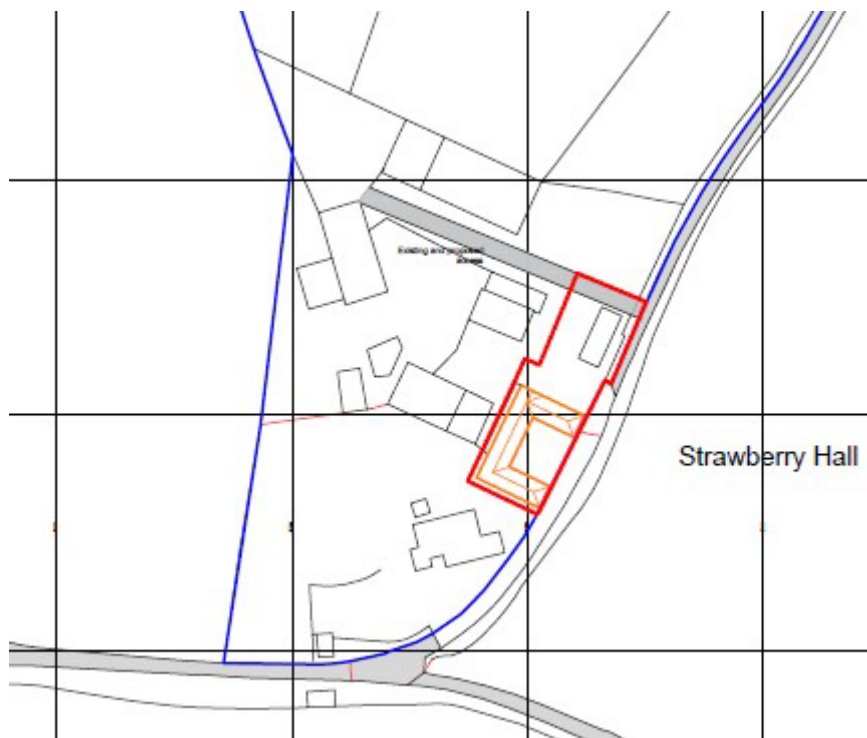
1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.1 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement is to support the re-submission of application (Ref.: DC/21/06849) to convert the Cottages from 3no. holiday-lets to a single dwelling, which was previously refused.

We received no communication during the determination of the previous application, resulting in incorrect grounds for refusal, which this document explains and clarifies.

Although the intention was made clear in the previous application that prior approval was being applied for, this was ignored in the refusal. As prior approval has subsequently been granted, this can also now be taken into account for the consideration of this re-submitted application.



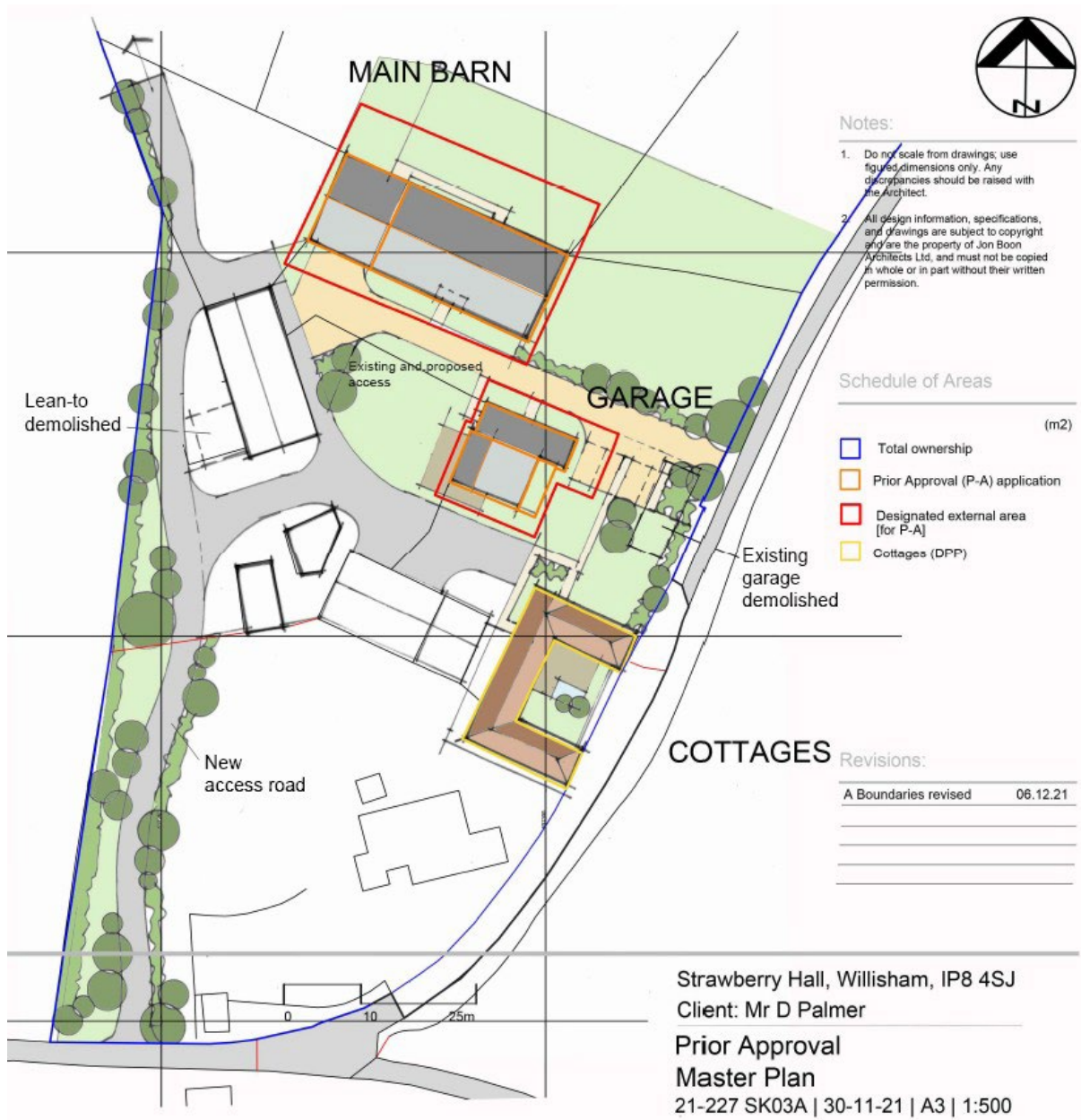
1. OS map extract

1.2 Project description

The site is in a rural setting to the south-east of the village of Willisham, accessed via a minor road from Barking Road. It was previously used for agriculture with a number of large barns and storage sheds. To the south-east of the site is the main house, and the Cottages, the subject of this application, which were converted for use as holiday lets.

The owners are retiring due to age and ill-health, and are therefore closing their businesses and diversifying the site by converting some of the existing buildings on the site to dwellings; the main Barn 1 and the smaller Barn 2 have now received Part Q prior approval (see 2.1).

For the same reasons, the owners closed the holiday let business for The Cottages in October 2021, and wish to convert the 3 units into a single dwelling. The overall masterplan is included below.



2. Masterplan of the whole site.



3. *Photos of the existing site*



4. *Photos of The Cottages*

2.0 Planning Status

2.1 Planning History

Application Number	Site Address	Development Description	Status
DC/22/04163	Strawberry Hall Strawberries Lane Willisham	Application for Prior Approval Class Q - Conversion of agricultural building to 1No dwelling.	Granted 13 Oct 2022
DC/22/04073		Application for prior approval Class Q - Change of use and conversion of one agricultural building to form 1No dwelling.	Granted 13 Oct 2022
DC/21/06849		Full Planning Application - Conversion of 3No holiday cottages to form 1No single dwelling (including demolition of garage).	Refused 28 Feb 2022
0609/12		Erection of an orangery.	Granted
0691/04		Conversion of existing farm outbuilding; alterations and part re-building for serviced 'holiday let' accommodation (including disabled facilities)	Granted
0524/99		Erection of two storey extension to side (east) elevation.	Granted

2.2 Relevant Planning Policies

Mid-Suffolk Local Plan

Originally an agricultural outbuilding, the Cottages received detail planning permission (DPP) from Mid-Suffolk Council (MSC) as listed above in July 2004. Unfortunately the supporting documents are no longer on the website therefore the details or any conditions of the consent cannot be checked.

Under the Local Plan, the site is defined as being located in the countryside. Our understanding is that the consent was for residential use with imposed occupancy restrictions on length of stay etc. If so it would not be classified as new housing, or conversion from another use, but as a replacement dwelling, even though it is a conversion. In this case policy H8 'Replacement Dwellings In The Countryside' would apply, to which we believe the proposals are compliant:

'In the countryside an application for the replacement of an existing dwelling by a new dwelling will be considered on its merits. Favourable consideration will be given provided that the proposal, by virtue of its size and scale, does not detract from the character and appearance of its surroundings, its landscape setting, or continue a traffic hazard.'

Otherwise policy H9 'Conversion Of Rural Buildings To Dwellings' applies, which is also favourable:

'In the countryside, the conversion and change of use of agricultural and other rural buildings whose form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings, will be favourably

considered, subject to the following criteria:

- the proposed conversion must respect the structure, form and character of the original building and retain any important architectural features. Existing openings should be utilised wherever practicable and new openings kept to a minimum;
- The creation of a residential curtilage around a newly converted building should not impose adversely on the character of the surrounding countryside;
- the extent to which any residential conversion detracts from the original character of the building or its rural surroundings will be treated as a material consideration.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

We consider that the following paragraphs of the NPPF apply directly to this scheme:

Rural housing

80. Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- (c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting

Making effective use of land

119. Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land

120. Planning policies and decisions should:

- (c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs...

The above paragraphs demonstrate that re-use of buildings should be encouraged and prioritised for housing to avoid pressures on building in the open countryside.

2.3 Previous application

The previous application was refused by Mid Suffolk District Council on the following grounds, and our comments are added in blue after each point:

1. REASON(S) FOR REFUSAL - PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT UNACCEPTABLE

There is no justified planning reason to close the holiday let business. Personal retirement choice is not a valid planning reason. The proposal would erode and fragment the wider agricultural and holiday let rural business. There is no need, urgency, or encouragement for permanent independent market dwellings in this location that would provide no significant sustainable benefits in this rural, remote, and detached location. The proposal for one market dwelling would harm the existing economic business, without providing any significant benefits that outweigh the harm. The proposed market dwelling in this location is contrary to policy as the site is outside the settlement boundary away from any settlement. Mid Suffolk district can demonstrate a significant surplus in housing land supply. In particular, 9.54 years, which is a surplus of +2,446 units (Feb 2022). This means there is no urgency or need for new market housing, especially housing that would be contrary to policy (I.e. outside any settlement boundary, local policy H7). The proposal is contrary to local policies RT16, CL17, H7 and Section 6 of the NPPF (July 2021).

This argument is no longer valid following the Prior Approvals for conversion of two of the adjoining barns into residential use.

We understand that personal retirement is not a planning reason, but the following mitigating factors should be taken into account:

1. the applicant has reached retirement age and is unwell
2. The isolated units are not viable as a going holiday-let concern on their own
3. The reason for refusal is written as if it was for new-build housing; this is a conversion of an existing building therefore should be evaluated under policies H8 and H9 with which it complies, and not H7

2. REASON(S) FOR REFUSAL - DESIGN, LAYOUT AND AMENITY

The proposed internal layout of the building would be contrived and non-conventional for a residential dwelling due to the square shape where you walk around a courtyard garden to access one side of the dwelling to the other.

The layout does not represent good design, layout, or location for a separate independent market dwelling. The proposed private amenity space would be compromised as the proposed garden would be situated between the main access/drive to the site and wider agricultural business to the rear, where there would be frequent comings and goings in separate association to the proposal. The proposed independent dwelling would not function well or add to the overall quality of the area in the short term or over the lifetime of the development. The proposal would be contrary to Section 12 of the NPPF (July 2021) and local plan policies H13 and GP1.

Likewise the concerns regarding agricultural traffic are now removed by the Prior Approvals.

In terms of design there seems to be a complete misunderstanding of the drawings. There is a perfectly obvious corridor shown on the plans so you do not have to walk around the courtyard for access. There is nothing contrived about the plan; the concept of courtyard housing is long established, as for example the image below taken from the internet, which has a similar layout to the application. The layout is described in more detail in section 3.4.



We would also highlight the following comment on the decision notice:

'In this case the proposal is considered unacceptable in principle and no amount of negotiation or amendment to the current proposal would be considered sufficient to overcome the in-principle issues forming the reasons given for refusal.'

There was indeed absolutely no contact from the LPA during the determination of the application, not even advice that they were minded to issue a refusal.

This certainly does not apply to reason 2, where a simple clarification would have removed the design objection. There could also have been further discussion about the masterplan and the future agricultural use of the site, as the intention to submit the Prior Approval application was made very clear in this document, and should therefore have been taken into account.

3.0 DESIGN

3.1 Use

The majority of the buildings on the site are agricultural, however two barns have now received prior approval under Class Q for conversion to residential. The main house and The Cottages have an existing residential use. There are quite large areas of hardstanding, and some cultivated area around the buildings.

3.2 Amount

The other buildings which are being converted to residential under Part Q are also listed below to give context and extent of change for the whole masterplan:

Gross External Areas	Area (m²)	Total	
Proposed (Prior Approval):			
Barn 1	376		
Barn 2	125	501	
To be demolished:			
Garage	(55)		
Part of Barn 2	(14)		
Lean-to	(70)	(139)	
The Cottages:			
Application area	816		
The Cottages	212		
GIA	182		

3.3 Scale

The Cottages are unchanged in scale and external appearance.

3.4 Layout

There is a separation between the bedroom wings, which are accessed by turning right from the Hall via an internal corridor, and the living areas which are straight ahead from the Hall in the north wing. These include an open-plan kitchen, dining and living area, with WC, Utility and Boots lobby.

The south wing contains the en-suite master bedroom and family bathroom, with 2 further bedrooms in the west wing, one of which is en-suite, and a Study/Bed 4.

The Courtyard will be enclosed with a new wall to the east side. Bi-fold doors will lead out from the living area onto a new patio; the area will be generally re-designed with soft landscaping and potentially a natural pool.

3.5 Landscaping

Landscaping is currently limited to incidental shrubs and planting. A new garden area will be defined to the north of the building, where the hardstanding will be removed and replaced by grass, shrubs and trees.

3.6 Appearance

The external appearance of the building will be unchanged, comprising brick, areas of dark-stained horizontal cladding and clay pantile roof. Existing dark grey timber windows and black uPVC rainwater goods will be retained.



Proposed floor plan



East elevation



North elevation

5. Proposal drawings of The Cottages

4.0 Access

4.1 Vehicular access and parking

The site is accessed from the existing road to the north, where 3 parking spaces are provided. A footpath leads to the new entrance on the north-west elevation.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 Ecology

The external area to the north will become the property's garden. It is currently hardstanding, which will be removed and replaced with grass, shrubs and trees. There will therefore be a net improvement to the site's ecological value.

Mitigation and enhancement measures will be incorporated into the works to improve the ecological value of the site for wildlife, resulting in a net gain for biodiversity, as encouraged by the National Planning Policy Framework:

- Native species-rich grass/wild flower seed mixes in the new grassed area
- Soft landscaping scheme including the planting of new native trees, shrubs and hedging
- Low external light levels to comply with Bat Conservation Trust and CIE 150:2003 guidance
- Installation of one bat box and two bird nesting boxes
- Porous hedgehog friendly fencing within and around the site

5.2 Services

Foul drainage will be to a new sewage treatment plant. Surface Water will run to new soakaways within the garden.

Power and water are already available on site.