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Design Statement and Heritage Impact Statement

Site: Potash Farm, Holbrook, Ipswich, IP9 2PJ

Proposal: Conversion of barns to 3no. dwellings and associated landscaping

Date: October 2023



1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Design Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment has been written and prepared by JBell Design and Conservation Ltd, to accompany a planning application for the conversion of barns to 3no. dwellings at Potash Farm, Holbrook, Ipswich, IP9 2PJ.

1.2 The agricultural barns subject to the application are located within the curtilage of the grade 2 listed cottages to the East of the site, listed as 'Potash Farmhouse'.

1.3 The heritage study covers the following headings;

- Understand the history and setting of the application site and listed building
- Identify the significance of the buildings and the listed building
- Describe the proposals
- Assess the impact of the proposals on the character and significance of the barns and listed building
- Justify the proposals

1.4 This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in conjunction with Section 16 of the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023)

194. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

(P56, NPPF, 2023)

1.5 The design statement has been prepared to explain the decisions behind the design and how the proposals relate to the context and setting of the site.

1.6 A pre-application enquiry was submitted and meeting held regarding the proposals to convert the barns. This is further discussed in section 7.0.

2.0 Description, history and significance of the buildings

2.1 Potash farm is a small farmstead to the North of Holbrook. The farm consists of the grade 2 listed Potash Farmhouse cottages and the agricultural barns to the West, which are included in the curtilage of the listed building. To the South of the site is a detached concrete framed agricultural barn and two smaller buildings, all located outside of the curtilage of the listed building.

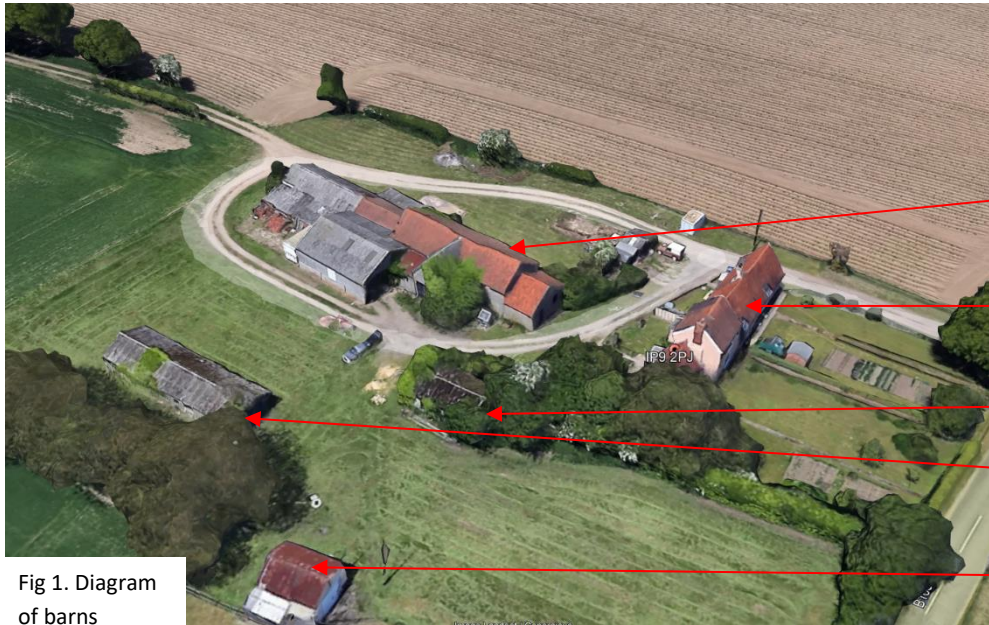


Fig 1. Diagram of barns

- Barns to West subject to application
- Grade 2 Potash farm cottages
- WW2 Building
- WW2 Building
- Building to South

2.2 The barns subject to the application consist of a large timber framed threshing barn (1), a modern steel framed barn (2), a single story timber frame and blockwork barn with lean-to to the North (3) and a timber framed single storey barn with brick lean-to to the South (4). Refer to fig 2. for plan reference.

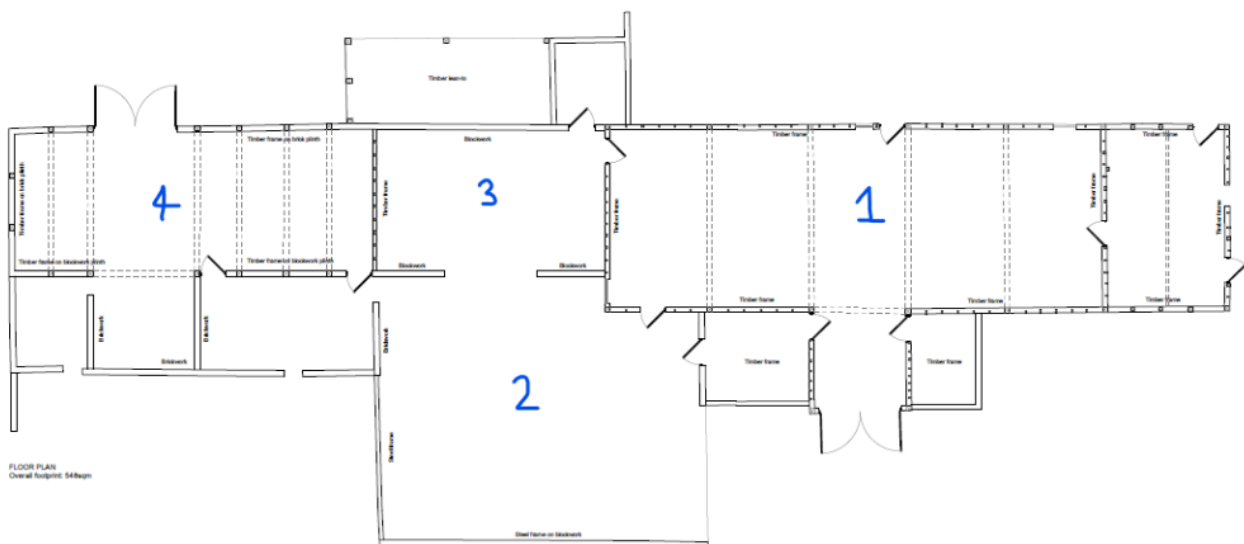


Fig 2. Diagram of barns

2.3 The threshing barn (1) is the most significant barn as it represents a good example of the large threshing barns constructed in the early 19th century for the threshing and storage of grain, which increased in popularity in the late 18th and early 19th century due to the demand and increased in export of grain. Due to the age, significance, and contribution to the history of the farm and agricultural history, the threshing barn is a heritage asset that is protected by being curtilage listed.

2.4 Although the threshing barn is the most significant of the agricultural buildings, it is also in the worse condition. The roof has collapsed and the walls are not supported. The timber framed walls have had cement render applied, resulting in the rotting of the timbers and fabric. Many of the timbers in the main range have been replaced with softwood timbers. There is a large amount of ivy growing over the building and some of the roof has been replaced with fibre cement sheet roofing. The only remaining historic fabric that is not beyond repair is some of the stud and framework to the midstrey and the plinth brickwork.



Fig 3. South elevation of threshing barn 1.



Fig 4. South elevation of threshing barn 1.



Fig 5. Single storey section to East end of threshing barn 1



Fig 6. North elevation of threshing barn 1



Fig 7. Threshing Barn 1. South Gable



Fig 8. Threshing Barn 1. West bays with existing mezzanine level



Fig 9. Threshing Barn 1. East bays, roof collapsed and softwood studs visible.

2.5 Barn (2) is a modern steel frame barn with blockwork and fibre cement walls and fibre cement roof. The barn was constructed in the mid-20th century (first indicated on a map in 1969). The barn is of no historical significance and detracts from the character and appearance of the historic barns and therefore is proposed to be demolished as part of the scheme.



Fig 10. Modern steel framed barn 2, east elevation.



Fig 11. Modern steel framed barn 2, South elevation.



Fig 12. Modern steel framed barn 2, South elevation.



Fig 13. Modern steel framed barn 2, Internal view.



Fig 14. Modern steel framed barn 2, and view of back wall of infill barn 3.

2.6 Barn (3) is between the threshing barn and single storey barn. It appears to be a timber framed barn that has been altered over time. The front and rear wall has been replaced with blockwork. The pantiles remain on the roof and there is a timber open structure on the North elevation. The barn appears to be an 'infill' constructed building between the two earlier buildings and is indicated on maps from the 19th century. Due to the age and condition of the barn, it is of little significance.



Fig 15. View of timber structure to the front of Barn 3

2.7 Barn (4) is a single storey timber framed barn on a brick plinth with fibre cement roofing sheets to the roof. To the South of the building is a soft red brickwork lean-to also with fibre cement roofing sheets. As suggested in the heritage statement, the building is an adaptation of an earlier timber frame barn. In recent history the barn has had concrete shuttering between and over the timber framed walls and a new roof constructed. The barn has a brick floor which indicates the early construction barn may have dated from the early 19th century. The barn therefore has some historical significance and has overall a positive contribution to the farm setting, although the walls are in a poor condition due to the concrete shuttering.



Fig 16. North-West view of Barn 4.



Fig 17. South view of Barn 4 and brick lean-to section



Fig 18. Internal view of Barn 4. Note modern studwork.



Fig 19. Internal view of Barn 4 looking into lean-to.

2.8 There are some other barns scattered around the site such as the concrete framed buildings to the South of the site which were WW2 buildings that were moved to the farm in the mid-20th century. These buildings do not form part of the application site and are not within the curtilage of the listed building as they are separated by a track and constructed after 1948.



Fig 19. Former WW2 building to the South of the site



Fig 20. Former WW2 building to the East of the site. (well camouflaged)

2.9 Potash farmhouse cottages to the East of the site is a 17th century timber framed and rendered building with 19th and 20th century additions (refer to appendix A for list description). The building is the original farmhouse, is the most significant building on the site and is grade 2 listed. The barns to the rear are within the curtilage, which is defined by the farm track around the barns, and within the setting of the grade 2 listed cottages. The historic barns contribute to the setting of the listed building and the group setting as a whole.



Fig 21. Rear elevation of Potash Farm Cottages



Fig 22. Front elevation of Potash Farm Cottages

2.10 To the North of the site is a scheduled ancient monument (list number 1005982). The ancient monument is a historic causeway ditch that dates back some 6000 years. There have been some recent archaeological excavations on the site revealing the ditch system which may have included part of the farm track to the North of the site. Due to the application involving conversion and demolition of buildings that are not within or over the ditch system, the proposals will have no impact on the scheduled monument, although it maybe appropriate that an archaeological condition is imposed on any decision notice. Below are some links for further information on the Freston causeway enclosure;

<https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/freston-archaeological-research-mission-farm>

<https://shotleypeninsula.nub.news/news/local-features/freston-dig-131331>



Fig 23. Map of ditch enclosure. Potash farm is to the South.

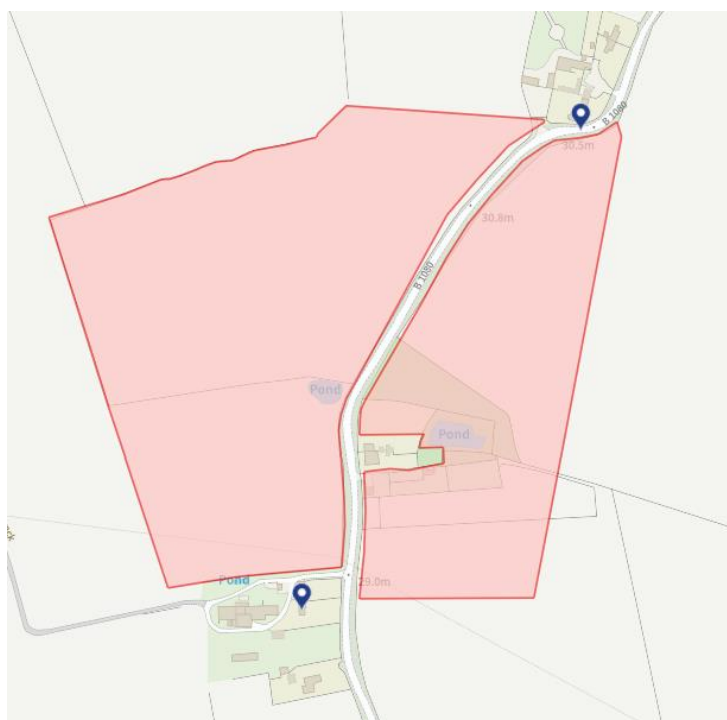


Fig 24. Historic England Map indicating extent of schedule monument

3.0 Historic Maps analysis

3.1 Analysis of historic maps reveals the evolution of buildings on the site. As indicated on the first map, the layout of the original barns and farmyard is visible. There was once more buildings and the main farmyard enclosure to the North of the site. These appear to have been demolished at some point around the late 20th century. The 1969 map also indicates the range of concrete framed buildings to the South was a lot more extensive in the late 20th century.

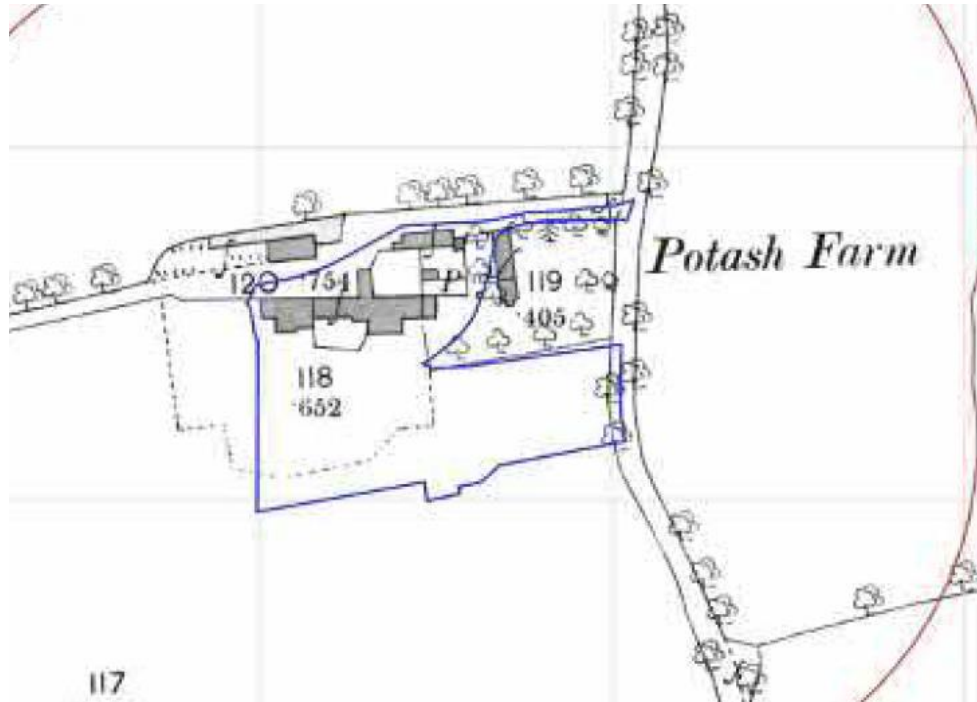


Fig 25. 1881 OS Map

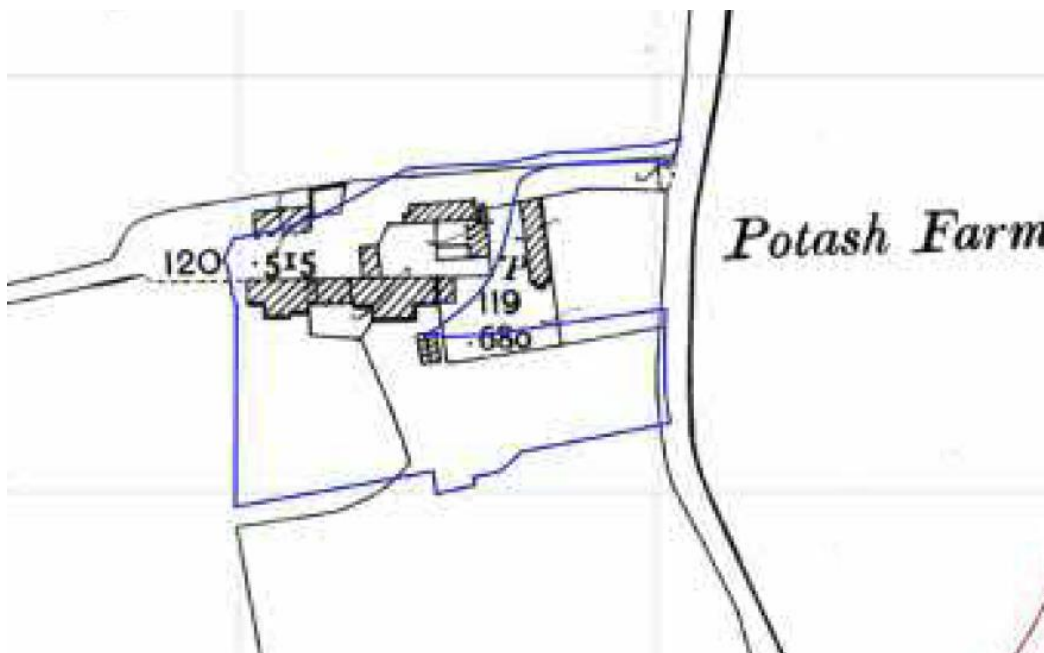


Fig 26. 1902 OS Map indicating the location of the site

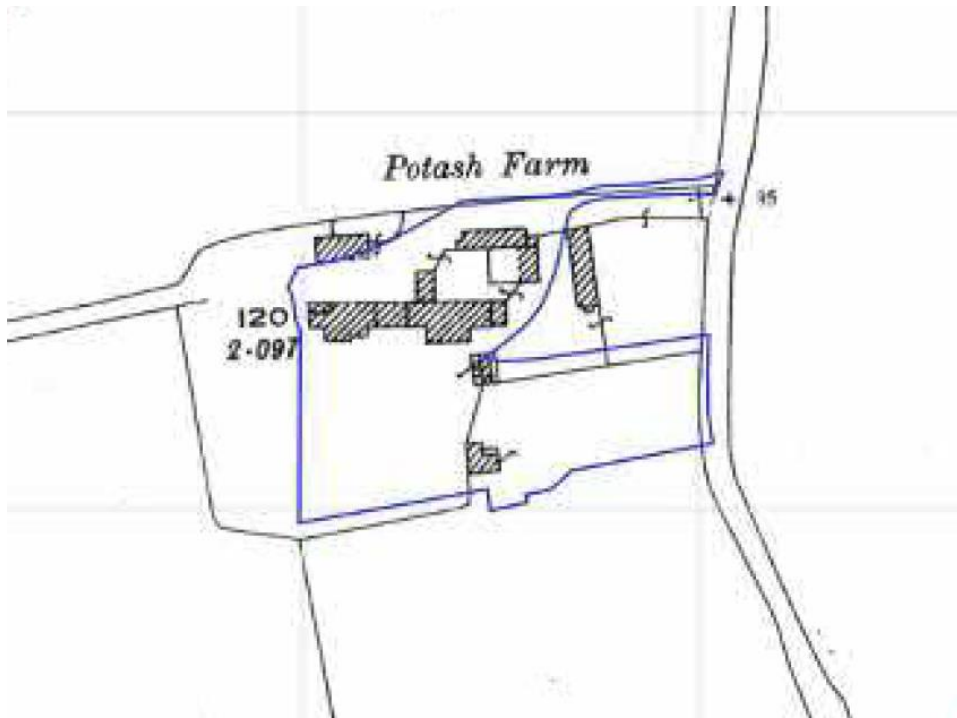


Fig 27. 1926 OS Map



Fig 28. 1969 OS Map

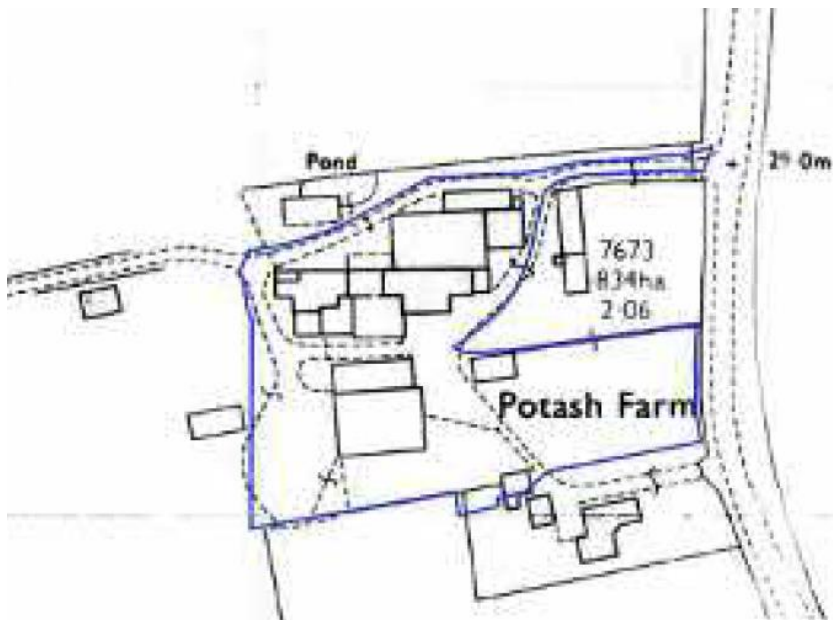


Fig 29. 1970 OS Map



Fig 30. 1989-1994 OS Map

4.0 Proposals

- 4.1 The proposal is to convert the 3no. timber frame and brick barns to a total of 3no. dwellings. In order to convert the buildings, some of existing built form will require demolition. The demolition will include the attached modern steel framed barn to the South of the group of buildings (2) and the open timber framed structure to the front of the middle barn (3).
- 4.2 The steel framed barn is of no historical significance, and due to being attached to the more historic barns, is resulting in harm to the curtilage listed barns. Therefore, demolition of the steel framed barn will result in no harm to the significance of the building whilst offering an improvement to the appearance of the buildings. This is considered to be a heritage benefit provided by the scheme.
- 4.3 The open timber framed structure to the North of Barn 3 is apparent on early maps, however, from visual inspection, the structure has been replaced in recent history and is in a very poor condition. Due to the structure being constructed from modern materials and in a poor condition, the removal is justified. The benefit of the removal is the access and viability of the conversion of barn 3 which will ultimately result in the long-term conservation of the buildings.
- 4.4 The proposal is to convert the timber frame threshing barn 1 into a 5-bedroom dwelling. The conversion will involve the repair of the timber frame structure with Oak studs and framework and a new timber cut roof, which will better reflect the correct original pitch, with a clay pantile roof finish. The cement render will be removed, walls insulated and the black timber weatherboarding re-instated. The brick plinth walls will be re-constructed using the existing bricks.
- 4.5 The conversion will include the insertion of a new staircase and mezzanine floor to the single East bay of the barn for a bedroom. There is an existing mezzanine floor to the 2 bays to the West end of the barn, of which a replacement staircase will be constructed and the existing mezzanine level used for bedrooms. The remainder of the barn will remain open plan and vaulted so the original proportions of the barn can be experienced. The single storey projection to the East will be retained and used for a bedroom, also with a vaulted ceiling.
- 4.6 The majority of the existing openings will be utilized as part of the conversion, whilst some new window and door openings will be made in panels where the original timber frame has been replaced with softwood studs. Window and door openings have been kept to a minimum in number and size to ensure the barn continues to reflect an agricultural appearance and not a domestic appearance.

- 4.7 Barn (3) will be converted to a 2-bedroom dwelling. The conversion will involve the re-construction of the front wall due to it currently being poor blockwork. The rear of the building will be extended with a brick lean-to to match the existing brick lean-to adjacent. The roof will continue to be vaulted with exposed timber framed structure.
- 4.8 The main living area will be within the footprint of the original barn. This part of the building will remain mostly open with exception for the utility and bathroom in the corner, so the full height and dimensions of the barn can be experienced. Some new window and door openings will be made, however, they will be kept to a minimum and in-keeping with character and proportions of the building. No historic fabric will need to be cut or removed to form the external openings. Externally the barn will have new black feather edge timber weatherboarding installed.
- 4.9 Barn 4 is to be converted to a 3-bedroom dwelling. The conversion will involve the removal of the concrete infill to the walls and repair of the timber frame, repair of the roof structure and re-cladding with horizontal black timber weatherboarding (currently vertical boards). The brick plinth will need repair and underpinning as per the structural report. The main roof will be tiled with clay pantiles and rear shallow pitch with slate tiles.
- 4.10 Internally the layout of the main timber framed part of the building will be mostly open so the original roof structure can be experienced with false ceilings over the bedrooms. The rear brick section of the barn will have more subdivisions, however, this is a lower ceiling and of lesser significance.
- 4.11 Overall, the conversion of the buildings has been designed around the historic subdivision of the 3 barns so the original forms and layouts remain legible. Where possible, the internal volumes of the barns have been retained so the experience of the building reflects the open agricultural character. Externally, openings have been proportioned to reflect the agricultural character, whilst new fenestration has been kept to a minimum. All the materials used are traditional materials to reflect the original appearance of the buildings.

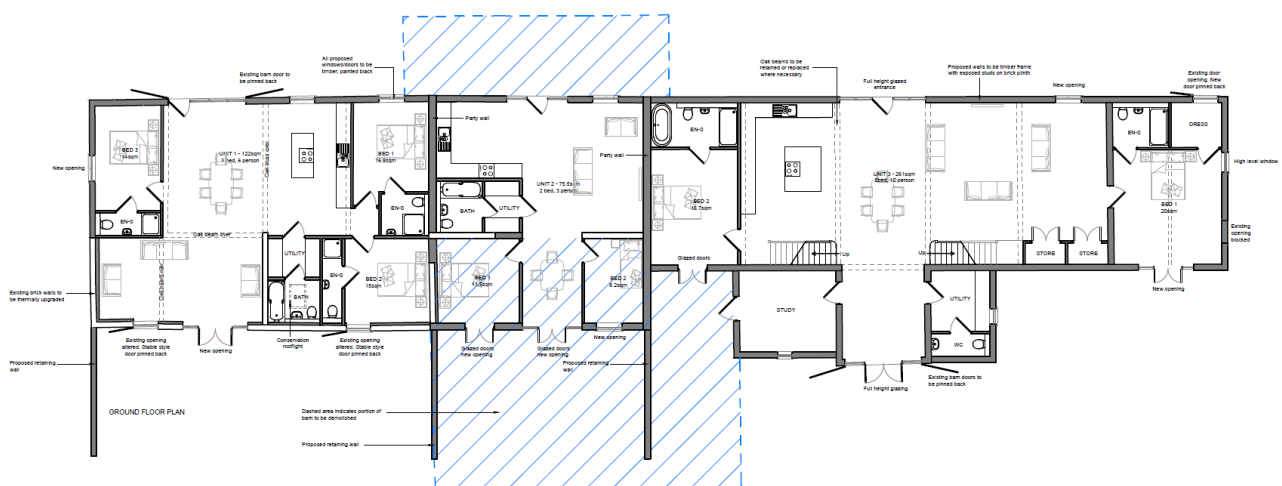


Fig 31. Proposed floorplan

- 4.12 The conversion of the barns will involve some external works. These will include the upgrade of the track to a shingle track and inclusion of a 5 bar timber gate to the access (the footpath access will remain open adjacent to the gate). The site layout has been designed so the front (North) of the barns will remain open with soft subdivisions between the dwellings. To the front of the barns there will be shingle parking areas for cars, whilst plot 1 will have parking to the side so cars can be hidden from view.
- 4.13 The garden areas to the barns will be to the rear so can make the most of the orientation and the sun path. The layout has been purposely designed to have the gardens to the South to ensure the area to the North of the barn remains open and therefore less impact on the location and setting of the ancient monument. The area to the North was the original open farmyard and therefore this area has been used for parking. The rear gardens to units 1 and 2 will be slightly sunken into the ground due to the low eaves height on the building.

5.0 Design and access statement

5.1 Use and Amount

The current use of the site is agricultural. The proposal will convert the buildings on the site to residential. The proposals will provide a mixture of sizes of dwellings to respond to the need for housing. The mix of dwellings will be as follows;

Unit 1 – 3 Bedroom – 122sqm dwelling

Unit 2 – 2 Bedroom – 75sqm dwelling

Unit 3 – 5 Bedroom – 261sqm dwelling

5.2 Layout

The layout of the site has been designed to reflect the form and layout of the original farmyard by utilizing the North area for parking (where formerly would have been hardstanding), and re-using the existing track to keep any additional shingle and paths to a minimum.

5.3 Access and Parking

The existing access will be used and it is considered there will no intensification due to the current agricultural use of the buildings. Each dwelling will be provided with a minimum of 2 parking spaces and turning area to leave the access in forward gear.

5.4 Scale

The scale of the buildings will be retained, whilst the roof pitch of the threshing barn will be increased to reflect the original pitch of the roof. There will be a small extension to the rear of unit 2, however, 2 other buildings are being demolished in substitution.

5.5 Appearance

The conversion of the barns has been designed to retain the agricultural character of the buildings by re-using the traditional materials and a vertical emphasis to the proportion of window and door openings to reflect the appearance of converted barns.

5.6 Landscape

There are many opportunities for landscaping throughout the scheme including, the area front of the barns (North) which will include small trees and native hedgerows between plots. To the rear each garden will have a post and rail fence divisions with native hedgerows to soften the appearance and improve the biodiversity of the site.

6.0 Heritage Impact Assessment & Justification

- 6.1 The design for the conversion of the barns at Potash farm need to consider multiple heritage assets. This includes; The setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument to the North, The setting of the grade 2 listed Potash Farm Cottages and barns in isolation being heritage assets in their own right.
- 6.2 The Scheduled Ancient Monument is archaeological remains of a Neolithic ditch system located to the field to the North of the site. There are no visual or physical features of the monument above ground, except from a small ditch to the North boundary of the site, which does not seem to relate to the supposed location of the neolithic ditch system.
- 6.3 It is therefore considered that due to the scheme involving conversion of the barns in a sympathetic way, the proposals results in no impact on the setting of the scheduled monument.
- 6.4 The grade 2 listed Potash Cottages are located to the East of the site. The barns subject to the application are within the curtilage of the listed cottages and therefore protected under the designation of being curtilage listed.
- 6.5 The setting of the grade 2 listed cottages is formed by the surrounding agrarian landscape and the barns behind the cottages. The proposals to convert the barns will alter the setting of the grade 2 listed cottages, however, some of the alterations will result in improvement of the setting. The demolition of the modern steel framed barn will improve the setting of the listed buildings. The removal of the cement render, out of keeping pitch of roof and modern sheet materials will also all improve the setting of the listed cottages.
- 6.6 The benefits of the scheme will offset any harm of the very slight domestication as a result of the conversion. The improved appearance of the buildings and restoration of the barns will have a positive impact on the setting of the grade 2 listed cottages, overall resulting in 'no harm' to the significance of the building.
- 6.7 The barns subject to conversion date from the early 19th century and therefore are of historic significance. The barns are in a very poor condition, as indicated in the structural report, and require extensive repair with some aspects requiring rebuilding. Furthermore, as indicated in the heritage statement by Jim Parker, most of the barns have had walls and roofs re-built later and therefore the fabric is not historic or original.
- 6.8 Due to the combination of the poor condition of the barns and amount of modern fabric used to repair the barns in recent history, the proposals to convert, restore and repair the barns using traditional materials and building methods will improve the structure and appearance of the barns. Ultimately the result of the conversion of the buildings will result in the conservation of the buildings where they are currently falling into disrepair. It is therefore considered the proposals will lead to retention and long term conservation of the buildings.

7.0 Heritage Pre application advice

- 7.1 A pre-application meeting was held on site on the 13th June 2023. The scheme presented was conversion of the historic barns and an 'L' shape of stable style structures to replace the steel framed barn and former WW2 structures to the South.
- 7.2 The scheme could not be supported due to the extent of the proposed building compared to the existing buildings to be demolished and the resultant impact on the setting of the listed buildings and group setting of the farmyard.
- 7.3 One point that was established at the pre-application meeting, was that the positioning of the formers WW2 buildings to the South were outside of the curtilage of the listed building, which was agreed with the conservation officer. This is further reinforced by the analysis of historic maps within this statement.
- 7.4 Due to the WW2 buildings being deemed outside of the curtilage of the listed buildings, this area of the scheme has been removed from the application and a separate class Q application has been submitted for the conversion of these buildings.
- 7.5 The conclusion of the pre-application enquiry was that the barns could be converted to residential use subject to the detailed design retaining historic elements of the scheme, a frame survey, historic buildings report, contamination report and ecology report.
- 7.6 As requested by the heritage team, the conversion of the buildings has been designed to ensure any elements of historic value have been retained. The structural survey and report by BRD has identified the condition of the buildings and areas of the structure that have deteriorated beyond repair. A historic buildings record report by Jim Parker has been produced, which identifies the areas of the buildings that are original or historic to ensure these elements are retained.
- 7.7 The reports have informed the design of the scheme and as a result the design of the scheme restores the original character and appearance of the buildings whilst retaining any fabric of historic value that has not deteriorated beyond repair.
- 7.8 The proposed scheme has been designed to respond positively to the pre-application enquiry advice. The proposed scheme will conserve and restore the group of historic barns. The barns have a great contribution to the setting and significance of the listed buildings, both directly and as a group setting. The design of the scheme will both improve the group setting of the building and ensure the setting of the buildings is conserved. Within the decision-making process, great weight should be placed on the restoration of the barns and the improvement of the setting and significance of the listed building, especially when balanced against any conflicting policies.

8.0 National Heritage planning policy

National Planning Policy 2023

Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states;

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

Response: The restoration and conversion of the barns will conserve the buildings (heritage assets) and sustain and enhance the setting of the listed building.

199. 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). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Response: The proposals will result in the restoration of the barns and listed building group setting, thus great weight should be given to the conservation of the buildings when balanced against any levels of harm.

206. 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.

Response: The restoration and conversion of the barns will enhance the setting of the listed building. The demolition of the modern structures will preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset and therefore should be treated favourably.

202. 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.

Response: If the local authority conclude 'less than substantial harm' then the other benefits of the scheme need to be balanced, such as securing the optimum viable use for the building which will lead to the restoration and conservation of the buildings and setting of the listed building.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The buildings subject to the application are within the curtilage of the Grade 2 listed Potash Farm cottages and some of the buildings can be considered as designated heritage assets. This heritage and design statement has been produced to assess the level of impact of the conversion of the barns on the appearance, character and significance of the barns and the setting of the listed building, Potash Farm.
- 9.2 Potash Farm is located to the North of Holbrook. The farm buildings date from around the 18th to 19th century and the historic barns are legible as 3 structures within a linear form consisting of a Threshing Barn to the East, a smaller single storey barn with brick lean-to to the West and an 'infill' barn in the middle adjoining the buildings. There are some modern structures attached to the historic buildings such as a large steel framed building to the South and a timber structure to the North side. The group of farm buildings are within the curtilage of the Grade 2 listed Potash Farm cottages, located to the East of the site. Additionally, there are also some detached former WW2 buildings to the South of the site that are outside of the curtilage and application site boundary.
- 9.3 The farm buildings and grade 2 listed potash farm cottages form a group setting. The farm cottages are grade 2 listed and of high significance. The farm buildings are curtilage listed and the historic barns are of high significance as they represent a good example of the buildings constructed during the agricultural revolution and increased production and export of grain. A historic buildings report by Jim Parker has been produced detailing the history of the buildings.
- 9.4 Over time the farm buildings have fallen into disrepair. The large threshing barn has had many of the Oak studs replaced with softwood studs, concrete render over weatherboarding, the brick plinth has deteriorated and the roof has been replaced with softwood studs and collapsed. The smaller barns have had some poor concrete infill repairs and replacement blockwork walls and sheet roofing. Overall, the condition of the buildings is poor and much of the historic fabric has been replaced or deteriorated. A structural report has been produced by BRD detailing this.
- 9.5 The proposal is to convert the buildings of historical value to 3no. dwellings and remove any buildings or elements that detract from the significance of the buildings. The conversion of the buildings has been designed to reflect the original dimensions of the buildings whilst restoring the original character and appearance of the buildings and retaining any fabric of historic value that has not deteriorated beyond repair.
- 9.6 There are many positives to the scheme of which great weight needs to be applied during the decision-making progress, some of these being; The scheme will remove any buildings or elements that detract from the significance of the listed building. The proposed scheme will conserve and restore the group of historic barns that have a great contribution to the setting and significance of the listed buildings. The scheme presents the optimum viable use of the buildings that will result in the long-term conservation of the buildings.

- 9.7 The proposals will result in some change to the setting of the listed buildings, by virtue of the buildings being used for residential purposes and the slight domestication of the appearance of the barns, however, when the changes are balanced against the removal of detracting elements, long-term conservation of the buildings and setting of the listed building, the proposals will result in 'no harm' to the significance of the listed building.
- 9.8 Within the decision-making process, great weight should be placed on the restoration of the barns and the improvement of the setting and significance of the listed building, especially when balanced against any conflicting policies.
- 9.9 The proposals will result in 'no harm' to the scheduled monument historic causeway ditch system to the North of the site, however, an archaeological condition is recommended to the access track where archaeological evidence maybe present.

APPENDIX A – LIST DESCRIPTION

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1351630

Date first listed: 29-Jul-1987

List Entry Name: POTASH FARMHOUSE

Statutory Address 1: POTASH FARMHOUSE, B1080

Location

Statutory Address: POTASH FARMHOUSE, B1080

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: Suffolk

District: Babergh (District Authority)

Parish: Holbrook

National Grid Reference: TM 16773 37764

Details

TM 13 NE FRESTON B1080 (West side) 4/2 Potash Farmhouse II Farmhouse. Two main builds, C17 and C19 with later alterations and small C20 addition. Timber-framed with brick additions, rendered. Pantile roof to earlier range, pantiles to later range. Single-storey and attic lobby-entry range with later 2-storey range to left. Single-storey and attic range: off-centre C20 door. 2 casements and one fixed light window. To far left a further 6-panel door in C20 porch. Flat dormers with casements. Swept roof. 2 -storey range: segment-arched 16-pane sash and tiny fixed light to right. Above a 16-pane sash and small C20 fixed light. Gable end stack. Low C20 addition to left. Interior: no exposed framing. Chamfered spine beam with ogee stop.

Listing NGR: TM1677337764

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: 277281

Legacy System: LBS