



PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

on behalf of Tharros Ltd.

Change of use of farm buildings to business use

Park Farm, Wormegay, Kings Lynn, Norfolk.

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For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

Brown & Co is a leading provider of agency, professional and consultancy services across the whole range of rural, commercial, residential, and agricultural markets.

Date: February 2024

Reference: PP23/049833

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Brown & Co to support the planning application submitted on behalf of Tharros Ltd for the change of use of former farm buildings to industrial and storage uses at Park Farm, Wormegay. The application seeks permission retrospectively as the application buildings are already in use for commercial purposes, with some uses being well established.

1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the background to the applicant's proposals and the key planning issues raised by them. The statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 1:** introduction
- **Section 2:** describes the site and its surroundings;
- **Section 3:** describes the proposed development;
- **Section 4:** outlines the planning history of the site;
- **Section 5:** summarises national and local planning policies;
- **Section 6:** provides a planning assessment of the key considerations raised by the proposal; and
- **Section 7:** sets out our conclusions.

1.3 This statement should be read in conjunction with the following application documents submitted as part of the outline application:

- Planning application form;
- Site location plan
- Proposed Site Layout Plan
- Noise Report (Adrian James Acoustics)
- Transport Statement (Create Consulting)

1.4 Tharros Ltd is an established arable farming business based on land to the north, east and south of the village of Wormegay. The farm extends to some 1,490 hectares of owned land. Park Farm is the main operating centre of the farming business.

APPLICATION SITE

2.1 Park Farm is located in an area of open countryside approximately 1.2km to the north-east of the village of Wormegay - see Figure 1 below. The farm complex comprises a range of farm buildings of varying sizes and ages, together with a farmhouse and former farm workers dwellings. There are two access from the farm, the original farm entrance onto Castle Road and a new farm access located to the north on New Road. The arrangement of uses is outlined in Figure 3 overleaf.

2.2 Five former farm buildings are the subject of this application, which are subdivided into 14 units ranging in size from around 60m² to 575m² gross floor area. The buildings include traditional brick and tile barns and modern steel framed buildings with corrugated cladding. Apart from one, the application buildings are subdivided into smaller units.

Figure 1 - Site Location [Google Maps]



Figure 2 - Site Location Plan

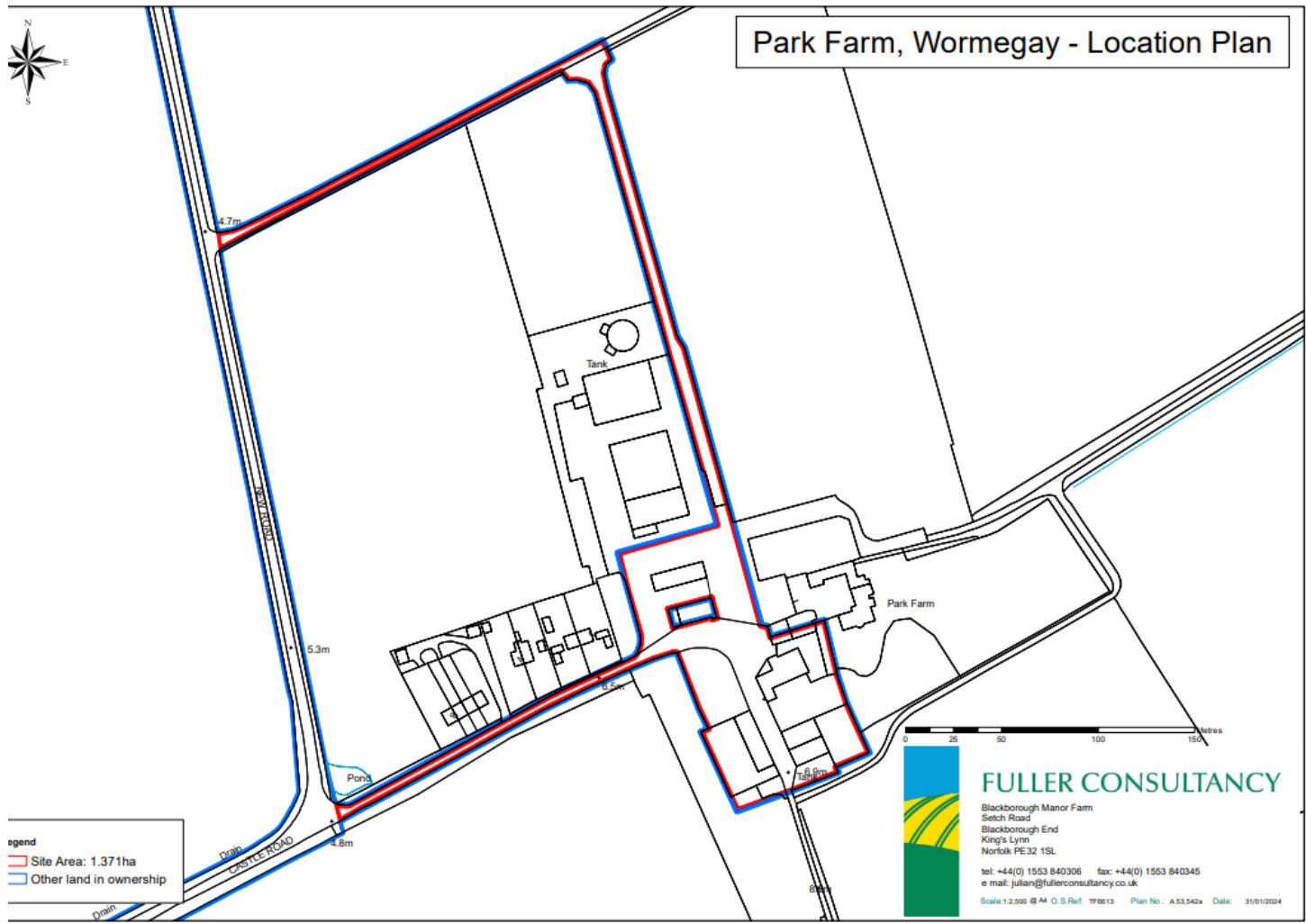


Figure 3 - Arrangement of uses



3.1 Planning permission is sought retrospectively for the change of use of farm buildings to commercial use, including light industrial (Use Class E(g)), general industrial (Use Class B2) and storage uses (Use Class B8). Five buildings are subject to this application, which are subdivided into fourteen units in total, as shown on the accompanying site layout plan - see Figure 4.

3.2 The building which comprises Unit 20 is constructed in blockwork with a timber cladding and a corrugated sheet roof. The main door openings face northwards and there are concrete yards to the front and rear. Unit 20 is used for Use Class B2 purposes as a vehicle repair and restoration workshop. This use commenced in October 2022. Prior to that, from March 2008 onwards, the building was used in connection with the distribution of garage doors (Eastern Garage Doors).

3.3 Units 5 is accommodated in a L-shaped range of traditional single storey farm buildings, originally used as piggeries, which face south and west onto an enclosed yard. The buildings are constructed in brick with pantiled roofs. The building is used as joinery workshop and showroom/store falling within Use Class B2. These uses commenced in December 2019 and July 2021. Before that the building had been used as a workshop/store by other occupiers from May 2015.

3.4 Units 6 and 7 comprise a traditional two storey

barn, with principal openings facing north and west. The main barn forms Unit 7 which since July 2014 has been used for the manufacture of timber framed buildings (Use Class B2). Unit 6 comprises in a lean-to the north of the main barn, which has been used as a plaster's store falling with Use Class B8 since January 2019.

3.5 Units 8 and 9 are located within a large modern agricultural building, with a steel portal frame and corrugated cladding to the walls and roofs. Unit 8 has been used for a plant hire business since June 2017, whilst Unit 9 has been occupied as a builder's store since June 2022. Prior to that the units had been used as workshops/stores from January 2011.

3.6 Units 12-19 are located in a large modern farm with corrugated cladding to the walls and roofs. A single storey lean-to runs along the eastern elevation. Since September 2022, most of the main building (Unit 19) has been used for the storage of a collection of vintage buses and coaches (Use Class B8). Since May 2019, the southern bay of the main building (Unit 12) has used for the storage and distribution of flooring materials (Use Class B8). Before that, the main building had been used by Eastern Garage Doors from February 2017.

3.7 The lean-to building is subdivided into six small lock-up units (Units 13-18). These units are

used for various storage purposes (Use Class B8), including in connection with a cider making business, antique business, a building firm and distribution company.

3.8 Existing concrete hardstandings and yards adjacent to the buildings provide space for parking, turning and servicing activities. Access is via the two existing entrances to the farm, with all commercial traffic using the northern access onto New Road and only private cars using the older access to the west onto Castle Road.

3.9 Unit 4 is used in connection with the manufacture and supply of dog transit boxes. This building benefits from planning permission for use under Use Classes E(g) and B8) - see section 4. It is considered that consent covers the current business which includes light industrial and office uses, and so no further permission is sought for this unit.

3.10 No changes are proposed to the existing farm buildings at the northern end of the yard, which are used variously for the storage of grain, machinery and farm chemicals. These buildings would continue in agricultural use.

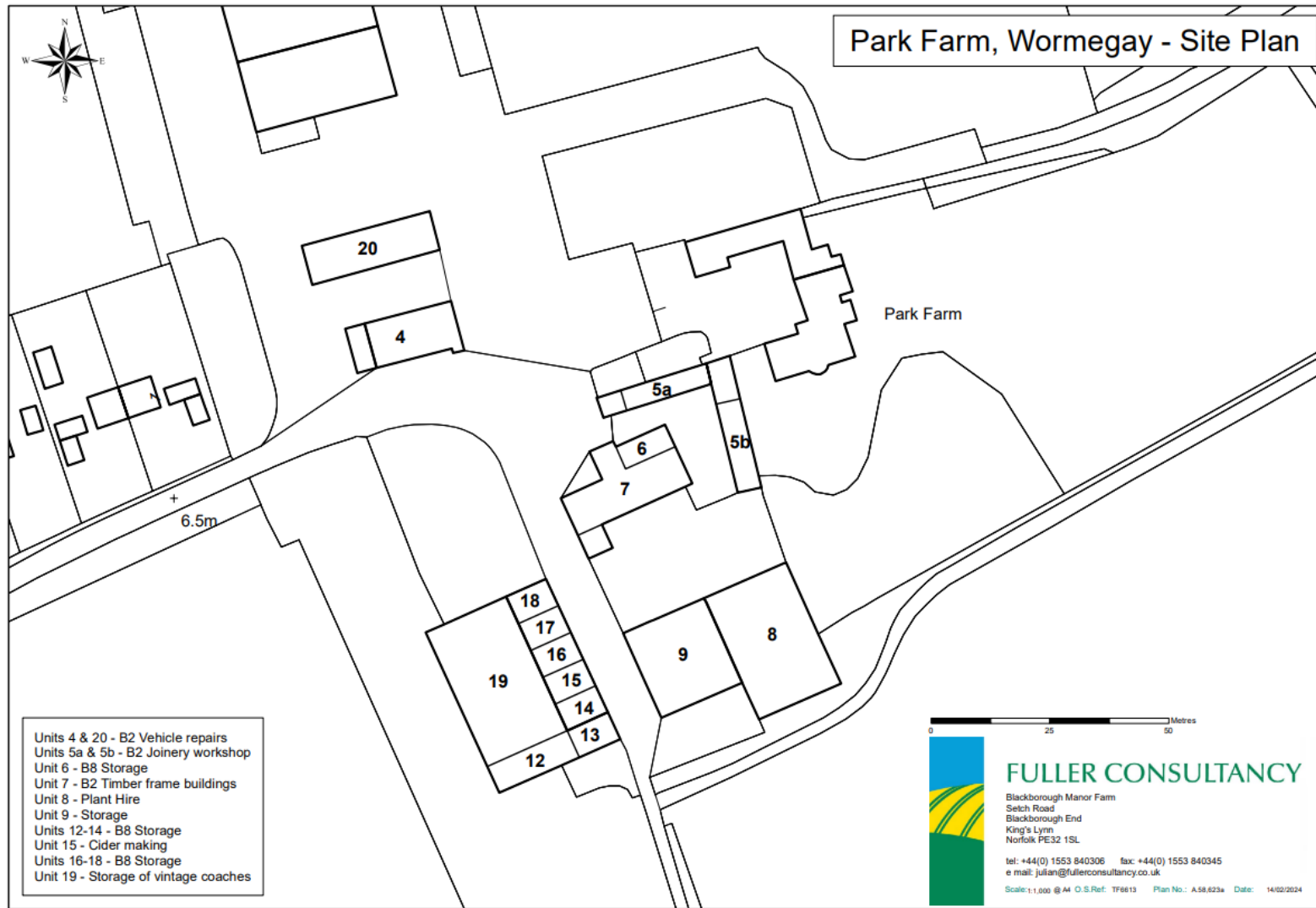


Figure 4- Proposed Site Layout

PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 As noted above, former farm buildings at Park Farm have been used for a variety of commercial purposes over the last 15 years or so.

4.2 Planning permissions granted for commercial uses include the following:

- **Unit 4** - Planning permission for change of use to offices and storage granted in February 2008 (LPA ref. 07/02288/CU).
- **Units 6/7** - Planning permission for change of use storage, manufacture and distribution of corrugated packaging granted in August 2010. (LPA ref. 10/01093/CU).
- **Units 8/9** - Planning permission for change of use to manufacture of timber framed buildings granted in July 2010. (LPA ref. 10/00658/CU).

PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan is, therefore, the starting point for the assessment of all planning proposals.

5.2 The Government's planning policies, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance

Development plan

5.3 In the Borough of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, the development plan comprises the:

- Local Development Framework – Core Strategy (adopted 2011) (the Core Strategy); and the
- Site Allocations & Development Management Policies Plan (adopted 2016) (the SADMP Plan).

5.4 Development Plan policies of particular relevance include:

- Core Strategy Policy CS06 'Rural Areas'
- Core Strategy Policy CS08 'Sustainable Development'
- Core Strategy Policy CS10 'The Economy'
- Core Strategy Policy CS12 'Environmental Assets'
- SADMP Policy DM2 'Development Boundaries'
- SADMP Policy DM15 'Design, Environment and Amenity'

National policy

5.5 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies, and advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Three objectives of sustainable development are identified: economic, social and environmental.

5.6 Economic considerations include ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. Social considerations include supporting healthy communities by creating high quality environments with accessible local services. Environmental considerations include protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environments.

5.7 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, the presumption in favour means approving developments that accord with the development plan without delay, and where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific NPPF policies indicate that development should be restricted.

5.8 In relation to the rural economy, the NPPF indicates that the planning decisions should support the sustainable growth of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing

buildings and well-designed new buildings. The diversification of agricultural businesses is also supported.

5.9 On sustainable transport, whilst the NPPF supports development that helps to promote walking, cycling and public transport, it recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport options will vary from urban to rural areas.

Emerging policy

5.10 The Council has prepared a new Local Plan to cover the period between 2016 and 2036. The draft plan was submitted to Government for examination in March 2022.

6.1 The site proposed for development falls within an area of predominantly open countryside where local planning policies generally seek to limit new development. However, in situations like this, the Local Plan is supportive of farm diversification projects and of the re-use of existing buildings for business use. National policy also supports the sustainable growth of all businesses in rural areas.

6.2 It is noted, in particular, that Core Strategy Policy CS10 ‘Economic Development’ states that the Borough Council will support rural employment and diversification through a rural exception approach to new development in the countryside.

6.3 Core Strategy Policy CS06 ‘Development in Rural Areas’ elaborates further, indicating that farm diversification schemes and the conversion of existing buildings for business purposes will be supported, provided that a number of criteria are met. These are that proposals should:

- meet sustainable development objectives and help to sustain the agricultural enterprise;
- be consistent in scale with the rural location;
- be beneficial to local economic and social needs; and
- not detract from local character or amenity.

6.4 In terms of support for the existing farm business, the purpose of the proposed development is to diversify existing agricultural

operations, which are focussed on mixed arable farming. Tharros Ltd is a well-established farming business comprising some 1,290 hectares, which crops annually around 340ha of wheat, 140ha of barley, 55ha of grass and 65ha oilseed rape. Up to around 300ha is let to specialist growers producing potatoes, red beet, leeks carrots and maize.

6.6 Farm incomes are under pressure generally due to the withdrawal of government support and as a result of spiralling input costs. By generating additional non-agricultural rental income, the proposal would provide on-going support for the existing farm business. Diversifying farming operations in this way is important to the future success of the farm business, providing additional stable income and helping to guard against fluctuations in commodity prices and a rather turbulent agricultural market.

6.7 As far as scale is concerned, the units vary in size but are generally modest in size and provide accommodation for small businesses. The largest unit is used for long-term storage where activity levels are relatively low. The scale of the development is considered to be in keeping with the rural location therefore.

6.8 Economic benefits are derived from the provision of a range of relatively low cost business accommodation to the meet the needs of the surrounding area. The businesses occupying the

units also provide employment opportunities for local people. In so doing, the proposal would also contribute positively to the economic objective of sustainable development as defined in the NPPF.

6.9 It is noted also that the principle of the re-use of a number of the farm buildings for economic use has been accepted previously through the grant of planning permission, albeit limited to the specific uses proposed at the time - see Section 4.

6.10 For the reasons outlined below, it is considered that the proposed re-use of buildings at Park Farm for business purposes would not harm the character of the area or local amenity.

6.11 Accordingly, it is concluded that the proposed development would comply in full with relevant local and national planning policies, and would be acceptable in principle, subject to further consideration of local impacts.

Traffic

6.12 Access to the development would be gained via the existing entrances to Park Farm off Castle Road and New Road. The accesses are constructed to a good standard with a hard-surfaced roadways and wide entrances allowing for two-way traffic movements. Visibility for emerging vehicles is good in both directions. Ample space is also available within the site for vehicle parking and turning.

6.13 The surrounding road network comprises

country roads of varying widths and alignments. Access to the primary road network can be gained via Castle Road, which links to the A134 some 3km to the west. The A134 joins the A10 trunk road a further 1.2km to the north-west.

6.14 A Transport statement has been carried out by Create Consulting Engineers. The report concludes that no highway safety issues on the existing local highway network in the vicinity of the Site that would cause detrimental harm to the surrounding road network. Indeed the site is already operating and, as such the traffic surveys are accurate for the present time and the current, rather than predicted level of traffic can be clearly demonstrated.

6.15 Due the rural nature of the site's location, opportunities to utilise sustainable transport would be limited, though traffic flows are not expected to be high and travel distances to surrounding villages are short. Park Farm is also within easy cycling distance of Wormegay. In any event, national planning policy recognises that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport (NPPF paragraph 85).

6.16 On this basis, it is considered that safe and

suitable access could be provided and the proposal would not increase the need to travel, in line with Core Strategy Policy CS11 and the guidance in NPPF paragraphs 103 and 108.

Residential amenity

6.17 Although the location of the site is relatively isolated, nine residential properties, including the farmhouse and a line of former farm cottages, form part of the Park Farm complex. Careful consideration has therefore been given to potential impacts on the amenities of nearby residents.

6.18 A Noise Impact Assessment has been undertaken to determine likely impacts on residents and recommend any mitigation measures necessary. Noise surveys have been undertaken and measurements made to establish the current noise environment and gauge the impact of existing industrial and commercial activities.

6.19 The survey work undertaken found that whilst background noise levels were low due to the rural location, existing agricultural activities related to the operation of farm machinery and deliveries generated some noise. In this context, it was found that noise generated by commercial uses on the application site, which involved regular daily activity, including the joinery workshop and vehicle restoration business, would be likely to have a low

1. Noise Report, Adrian James Acoustics, October 2023.

impact on the nearest residential properties, including Park Farmhouse and 1 Park Farm Cottages.

6.20 With the exception of VMS Logistics, other businesses, whose operations are generally more infrequent or quieter were considered unlikely to cause any significant noise impacts. Noise levels generated by goods handling for VMS Logistics, including forklift movements, were found to be high enough to cause disturbance to nearby residents. However, whilst mitigation was proposed, VMS Logistics will cease its operations at Park Farm from December 2023.

6.21 Park Farmhouse is occupied by the farm manager, whose responsibilities include overseeing existing commercial activities, whilst Park Farm Cottages are occupied by tenants of the farm (though not employed by it). It is understood that no noise complaints have received by the Borough Council about current business uses at Park Farm.

6.22 The application scheme is already in operation and, as such, the operation of the site in terms of noise is already evident and, given that there have been no complaints, the uses are considered to be acceptable in terms of noise arising from traffic.

6.23 Given the nature of existing business uses, it is not considered likely that any adverse on local amenity would be caused due to dust or odour emissions.

6.24 Taking all of these factors into account, it is considered that, subject to suitable noise limits at the nearest dwellings, the proposed use of existing building for industrial and storage uses would not result in significant adverse effects on the amenities of nearby residents.

Local character

6.25 No changes are proposed to the exterior of the buildings proposed for change of use to commercial use. External activities, including parking and outside storage, would be contained within existing yards and would be small in scale, and so would have no material effect on the wider landscape.

6.26 Whilst the proposal would change the use of the site from agricultural to commercial, the site is already developed with buildings and hardstandings, and there would not be a significant increase in activity levels over and above might be expected with previous farm uses. There would be little change to landscape character therefore.

6.27 Consequently, there would therefore be no conflict with Core Strategy Policies CS6 and CS12, which seek to conserve the character and appearance of rural areas and landscapes

Other matters

Drainage

6.28 The application site falls with Flood Zone 1 and is therefore considered to be a low risk from fluvial flooding. The Environment Agency's Flood Risk maps indicate that small parts of the existing hardstandings may be at low risk from surface water flooding.

Heritage

6.29 There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate vicinity of the site. The nearest listed buildings is St Michael's Church (Grade II*) some 360 metres to the south. Given this separation distance and that the proposal is a change of use of existing buildings, no material impact on the setting of the church is expected.

Ecology

6.30 The site is considered to be of limited ecological value comprising a series of buildings surrounding by hardstandings that are actively in use for business purposes.

6.31 There are no statutorily-designated nature conservation sites close to the application site, the nearest being the River Nar SSSI, which is around 800 metres to the north-east. Given the nature of the proposed development, no adverse effects on the SSSI are anticipated.