



**Barns at Hospital Cottages, Leadenhall Farm,
Holbeach St Marks, Holbeach, PE12 8HB**

Supporting Planning Statement

for

Conversion of Agricultural Barns to 2 x Holiday Lets

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This planning statement is in support of an application to convert two detached agricultural barns at Hospital Cottages, Leadenhall Farm, Holbeach to 2 x 3 bedroom holiday lets. Each of the holiday lets are to be served by two vehicle parking spaces.
- 1.2 The barns that are subject to the proposal are located to the north-east of the main Leadenhall Farm Yard, located in open countryside. A pair of cottages (known as 'Hospital Cottages') are situated directly to the north-west of the barns. The site is approx. 2km north of the village of Holbeach St Marks and 7.5km north of the town of Holbeach.
- 1.3 Barn 1 is a traditional, solid brick built agricultural building. A photograph of the existing Barn 1 is located below. The proposal seeks limited alterations to the elevations; with amended fenestration identified to make the internal space useable.



Image 1: Existing View of Barn 1

- 1.4 Barn 2 is again a traditional, solid brick built agricultural building. A photograph of the existing Barn 2 is located below. The proposal seeks limited alterations to the elevations; with amended fenestration identified to make the internal space useable.



Image 2: Existing View of Barn 2

- 1.5 The retention and re-use of the traditional buildings in a sympathetic way has been a priority in the development of the proposal. No extensions are proposed to the buildings and no alterations to the height of the small scale rural buildings are proposed. This is important to limit any impact on the character and appearance of the buildings as well as the countryside location in which they are sited.

2.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the principles of sustainable development that local plans must be prepared in line with. The NPPF is also a material consideration in the decision-making process. The NPPF sets out the principles for development in rural areas, and supports sustainable development in countryside location subject to certain criteria.
- 2.2 The NPPF identifies that in order to support a prosperous rural economy ' planning policies and decisions should enable:
- a) The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
 - b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
 - c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
 - d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses

and places of worship'¹.

- 2.3 The NPPF recognises that 'sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport'².
- 2.4 These particular policies set out in the NPPF support the proposal for the conversion of the existing barns which will provide farm diversification as well as enhancing the opportunities in the local area for tourists to visit and stay in the local area, boosting the visitor economy. Traditional rural buildings will be re-used and enhanced leading to a sustainable form of development without impacting on the character and appearance of the countryside.
- 2.5 The broad policies set out in the NPPF are echoed in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 policies, with particular regard to Policies 1 and 9.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019, Paragraph 83

² National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019, Paragraph 84

3.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan was adopted in March 2019 and covers the period 2011-2036. The Local Plan guides development across Boston Borough and South Holland moving forward. The Local Plan sets out an overall vision for the South East Lincolnshire area and shapes how the settlements should develop, based on strategic objectives that address the key spatial challenges in the area. The policies set out in the Local Plan have been prepared having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and have followed guidance contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The vision for the Local Plan includes the protection, conservation and enhancement, where appropriate, to ensure that their inherent social, economic and environmental qualities are retained and that opportunities for sustainable tourism can be realised³. The vision also points to the support of development in the countryside, where the proposal is considered appropriate.
- 3.2 Strategic priority number 4 in the Local Plan looks at the local economy and recognises the need 'to provide the right conditions and sufficient land in appropriate locations to help diversify and strengthen the economic base of South East Lincolnshire to meet the needs of existing businesses, to attract new businesses and sources of employment, and to maximise the potential historic and environmental assets can have for sustainable tourism'⁴. The policies set out in the Local Plan look to guide the development of the area, including the development of sustainable tourism opportunities.

Policy 1: Spatial Strategy

- 3.3 The application site is within a countryside location, as identified in Policy 1 of the Local Plan which sets out the spatial strategy for the area. The policy states 'in the countryside development will be permitted that is necessary to such a location and/or where it can be demonstrated that it meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits'. The proposal involves the conversion of two existing detached redundant agricultural barns that are set in a countryside location for visitor accommodation, which will boost the opportunities for sustainable tourism. Due to the proposal being the re-use of an existing building the location of the development cannot be directed elsewhere.

³ South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 – Our Vision, p16-17

⁴ South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 – Strategic Priorities, p17

Policy 2: Development Management

- 3.4 All proposals will be assessed against the development management principles set out in Policy 2 of the Local Plan. The size, scale, layout and density of the proposal is guided by the extent of the existing buildings, due to the proposal being a conversion. The proposal has been designed to make the most of the existing buildings, whilst making quality usable space for tourist accommodation. The re-use of the buildings provides a significant benefit in terms of sustainable development, limiting the amount of new materials required to complete the development. Flood risk is considered later in this section of the supporting statement and a Flood Risk Assessment accompanies this planning application.

Policy 3: Design of New Development

- 3.5 Policy 3 looks at creating 'distinctive places through the use of high quality and inclusive design and layout and, where appropriate, make innovative use of local traditional styles and materials'. The re-use of the existing barns provides the opportunity to retain and make more efficient use of buildings of traditional construction and design. Residential amenity has been considered through the layout of the converted barns to ensure that visitors utilising the accommodation enjoy a comfortable space to stay and use as a base to visit the local area.

Policy 4: Approach to Flood Risk

- 3.6 The barns are located within Flood Risk Zone 3a with a high probability of flood risk (>1.0%). A flood risk assessment has been prepared and accompanies this planning application. The site is classed as non-major development. The proposal is for two holiday let units and they will not be used for permanent residential purposes. Looking at the guidance provided in the NPPG, the proposed holiday use for the site is classified as more vulnerable, however uses such as that proposed is permitted subject to a specific warning and evacuation plan⁵.
- 3.7 A Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan will be prepared and the units will not be occupied when a Serve Flood Warning has been issued by the Environment Agency.

⁵ NPPG, Table 2: Flood risk vulnerability classification – Paragraph: 066 Reference ID: 7-066-20140306, Revision date 06/06/2014

Policy 9: Promoting a Stronger Visitor Economy

- 3.8 Policy 9 looks at promoting a stronger visitor economy. Outside of settlement boundaries, 'small scale development to support the visitor economy, including farm diversification, equine development and fishing lakes, will be supported provided that proposals:
1. Do not conflict with neighbouring land uses;
 2. Are in keeping with the character of the locality; and
 3. Demonstrate a functional link with an existing rural attraction or farm enterprise⁶.
- 3.9 Tourism makes an important contribution to the rural economy across Lincolnshire. In 2017 Gross Value Added (GVA) from tourism in Predominantly Rural areas across England was worth an estimated £13.3 billion, contributing 5 per cent of total GVA in Predominantly Rural areas⁷. In Lincolnshire, 'in the 5 years between 2012 and 2017 the tourism sector has increased in value by nearly one third in Lincolnshire with the number of visitors increasing by almost 3%, with 34.3m people visiting Lincolnshire during 2017⁸. The provision of self-catering visitor accommodation will help to expand the opportunities for people visiting the area to stay and utilise the tourist facilities.
- 3.10 The justification text to Policy 9 identifies the importance of tourism to the economy of South East Lincolnshire. It also accepts that small scale tourist facilities such as 'small scale rural development may be more appropriately located outside a settlement boundary provided that there is a clear link to an established rural enterprise and the quality of the design ensures no adverse impacts upon landscape, heritage or biodiversity⁹. Existing buildings are used for the development, utilising the most sustainable option available.
- 3.11 The proposed use as visitor accommodation meets the demand for holiday accommodation on working farms which allows visitors to gain the experience of living in a countryside location. It is not considered that there will be a conflict with neighbouring uses and the surrounding countryside and agricultural nature of the site provide a significant selling point for the visitor accommodation. The demand for this type of accommodation in rural locations is evidenced by the not for profit organisation, Farm Stay UK, which has 700 farm accommodation businesses¹⁰ listed on its websites where people can book holidays.

⁶ South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 – Policy 9: Promoting a Stronger Visitor Economy, p54

⁷ Official Statistics, Rural Tourism Statistics 2017 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rural-tourism-feature-report-december-2011>

⁸ <https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/sectors/visitor-economy/>

⁹ South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 – Paragraph 4.4.3, p55

¹⁰ <https://www.farmstay.co.uk/About>

- 3.12 The proposal involves the reuse of existing agricultural barns that are no longer required for agricultural purposes. The buildings are therefore already present on the site and represent traditional buildings of local agricultural character which are in keeping with the locality. The retention and re-use of these buildings provides an enhancement to the setting and also means that they will be retained for future generations.
- 3.13 The proposal is for the conversion of barns on a farm holding to visitor accommodation. It provides a diversification opportunity for the existing agricultural holding which will boost the local visitor economy, providing more opportunities for people to stay in the area. There is a direct link between the farm unit and the proposed barn conversion development, therefore criteria 3 of Policy 9 is met.

Policy 23: The Reuse of Buildings in the Countryside for Residential Use

- 3.14 Whilst the proposal is for the conversion of barns to visitor accommodation rather than a permanent residential use, Policy 23 relates to design principles in relation to the reuse of buildings in the countryside for residential use and is therefore a consideration in designing an appropriate conversion scheme.
- 3.15 Traditional barns and agricultural buildings make an important contribution to the landscape across Lincolnshire. The re-use of redundant buildings is supported not only by Policy 23 in the Local Plan but also through the NPPF. Policy 23 identifies that buildings that are to be converted should be suitable and structurally sound without the need for significant extension, alteration or rebuilding. The proposal sees the conversion of the existing buildings without any extensions to the existing footprint. The proposed design is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building and the reuse of the building will lead to an enhancement of the setting of the building. Further information on the design of the conversion is identified in section 1 of this report and is detailed on the submitted proposed plans.

Policy 28: The Natural Environment

- 3.16 The Local Plan states at paragraph 2.4.18 that the 'South East Lincolnshire's nationally and locally designated wildlife sites provide different levels of protection for a growing range of protected and priority habitats and species. The Wash is a natural habitat of international importance and has Ramsar, Special Protection Area (SPA), and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designation as well as also being protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR)'.

- 3.17 Policy 28 relates to the natural environment and making sure development does not have a detrimental impact on internationally, nationally or locally designated wildlife sites. The proposal is small scale and will not have a detrimental impact on any designated wildlife sites due to its size and due to the fact it involves the re-use of existing buildings.
- 3.18 The site is located (as the crow flies) approximately 1.6km from the River Welland and approximately 4km from the edge of The Wash. The designations for wildlife within the local proximity of the site, mainly The Wash are a key draw to the area, particularly for bird and wildlife enthusiasts. The Wash is 'the UK's most important inter-tidal wetland site nationally. At peak times, The Wash can hold between 400-450,000 waders and wildfowl'.¹¹ It is expected that the proposal will expand opportunities for those interested in the natural environment, to visit and stay in the area.

Policy 36: Vehicle and Cycle Parking and Appendix 6: Parking Standards

- 3.19 Policy 36 requires that all development including change of use are required to provide vehicle and cycle parking in accordance with the minimum parking standards set out in Appendix 6 of the Local Plan. Whilst self-catering accommodation is not identified as a separate type of development, it is considered that houses and flats (C3a use) is the most closely aligned use. 2 spaces are therefore required for each holiday let unit. This is met by the proposal with two parking spaces being provided per holiday unit.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The proposal involves the conversion of existing agricultural buildings of traditional character and appearance to two holiday lets. The proposal has been designed to limit the impact on the character of the buildings whilst making them comfortable and useable as visitor accommodation. By utilising a sympathetic approach to the conversion, the impact on the open countryside location is limited significantly.
- 4.2 A Flood Warning and Evacuation Plan will be prepared and the units will not be occupied when a Serve Flood Warning has been issued by the Environment Agency in accordance with the conclusion of the Flood Risk Assessment prepared in support of this planning application.
- 4.3 The development of holiday let accommodation will provide farm diversification as well as providing a beneficial asset to the local visitor economy, enhancing the opportunities for tourists to stay in the local area, enjoying a rural countryside location with access to the significant natural environment assets within close proximity.

¹¹ Scott J, 2017, <https://community.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/b/east/posts/wildlife-of-the-wash>

- 4.4 The proposal therefore meets the requirements of paragraph 83 and 84 of the NPPF and policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 23, 28, 36 and Appendix 6 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019.