

DECISION DELEGATED TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Application No: H18-0886-18 **Applicant:** Mr & Mrs Hoyles

Proposal: Convert existing disused barn to provide four-bed two-storey dwelling with extension for daily management, operation and security of established agricultural facility

Location: Barn Adj: Westmere Farm Off New Road Sutton Bridge

Terminal Date: 14th November 2018

Planning Policies

Local Plan July 2016:

SG1	General Sustainable Development
SG2	Distribution of Development
SG3	Settlement Hierarchy
SG4	Development in the Countryside
HS17	Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside
SG12	Sewerage and Development
SG13	Pollution and Contamination
SG14	Design and Layout of New Development
SG15	New Development: Facilities for Road Users, Pedestrians and Cyclists
SG16	Parking Standards in New Development
SG17	Protection of Residential Amenity
SG18	Landscaping of New Development

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2018

Sections 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14, 15 and 16.

Representations:

	Object	Support	No Obj.	Comments
PARISH COUNCIL	0	1	0	0
WARD MEMBER	0	0	0	0
PLANNING LIAISON OFFICER - FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT	0	0	0	1

HIGHWAYS & SUDS SUPPORT	0	0	0	1
IAN MARSHMAN, HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OFFICER	0	0	0	1
SOUTH HOLLAND INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD	0	0	0	1
SHDC INTERNAL	0	0	0	1
OTHER STATUTORY BODIES	0	0	0	1
RESIDENTS	0	0	0	1

CASE OFFICER ASSESSMENT

Reason for Referral to Chairman's Panel

Sutton Bridge Parish Council has requested the imposition of an agricultural occupancy condition. However, this is not considered to be necessary if the proposal is satisfactory under the barn conversions policy or advice within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Proposal

Full planning permission is sought to convert an existing disused barn to provide a four bed two storey dwelling with extensions required for the daily management, operation and security requirements of the established agricultural facility. The dwelling would be occupied by the applicants and their family and the office, quality control room, etc would mainly be used by the applicants. The proposal would essentially re-establish the original barn footprint with flank extensions to the south section of the site both offering security and the benefit of southern sunlight.

A new access road would need to be constructed to link the building to the farm complex to the north, which is accessed off New Road.

The application is accompanied by a flood risk assessment and also an ecological survey.

Constraints

Within Flood Zone 3 of the Environment Agency's Flood Maps. Within an area designed as "Danger for All" within the SHDC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Representations

Sutton Bridge Parish Council - Supported subject to a condition of agricultural occupancy.

LCC Highways/SUDs - Does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

SHIDB - I note that the applicant indicates that they intend to dispose of surface water via infiltration; however, I cannot see that a drainage strategy or plan has been provided for the site.

This proposed strategy should be supported by ground investigation to determine the infiltration potential of the site and the depth to groundwater. If on-site material is considered favourable then infiltration testing in line with BRE 365 should be undertaken to determine its efficiency. If (following testing) a strategy wholly reliant on infiltration is not viable and a surface water discharge is proposed to a watercourse, then the proposed development will require land drainage consent in line with the Board's byelaws (specifically byelaw 3).

Environment Agency - Finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 4.13m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), 930mm above lowest land level on site. Demountable defences shall be incorporated to 600mm above finished floor level. Safe refuge for occupants shall be provided via a first floor.

Environmental Protection - Request contaminated land condition.

LCC Archaeology - The proposed development involves the conversion of the last surviving building of a large 19th century farmstead erected following the reclamation of this area, including drainage of the West Mere during this period.

Traditional farm buildings such as this are increasingly becoming redundant in a rapidly changing industry. Yet they play an integral part in giving the landscape of South Holland its sense of place and character. With the increasing threat from decay or demolition they are a diminishing resource in our countryside. New uses frequently alter the original fabric and character of such building, and it is therefore beneficial to create a record of the structure before alteration or demolition.

With this in mind it is recommended that, prior to works commencing, the developer should be required to undertake historic building recording according to a specification to be agreed with, submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

Public - Concerns received from local residents (summarised):

Noise and disturbance from farm vehicles and staff, especially during anti-social hours; Noise and disturbance during construction period; Overlooking/lack of privacy/overshadowing; Boundary fencing required; Light pollution; Owls and bats within the building; How will asbestos roof be removed; Structural damage from HGVs.

Information from Applicant (summarised):

Hoyles Farming Limited, wholly owned by the applicants Mr & Mrs Hoyles, has been farming at West Mere Farm since 2003. The business is an agricultural business mainly growing cereals but predominantly the main crop grown is potatoes. The potatoes are stored on site, graded and traded to retail / bulk client for various further processing. The applicant farms 96.4 hectares of owned land and a further 60 -80 hectares on a lease basis depending on crop demand.

Business accounts, which are available on request, indicate that the business is sustainable and thus there is a genuine need for the location of the dwelling adjacent to the farmyard.

The current residential dwelling next to the farm is not within the ownership of the applicant and thus does not provide any security or surveillance over the farmyard. This property is not for sale and thus is not an option for providing the applicant with on site facilities.

The current farm yard facility does not, for example, provide for an office area to undertake the enterprise's associated administrative processes or reception area for deliveries, visitors or agricultural representatives (i.e. fertiliser, diesel etc), nor is it located in an easily identifiable position or one that naturally surveys the forecourt/yard area and agricultural buildings. This situation is far from ideal given the scale of the enterprise and does not alleviate the issue of security at the farmyard. At present the administration / finance and associated functions are undertaken at the applicants current dwelling at Bramley House, Hospital Drove, Lutton, some 5km from the farm.

One of the main issues with not having on site presence is with regards to thefts and damage to the farm.

Material Considerations

The main issues in this case are:

- Policy/Sustainability;
- Character/appearance;

- The likely impact upon the amenity of nearby residents;
- Highway safety;
- Other material considerations such as flood risk and ecology.

Policy HS16 of the South Holland Local, 2006 makes provision for the re-use of redundant rural buildings for a residential use. This is subject to the Council being satisfied that the building is unsuitable for employment use or that there is no demand for suitable employment use in the locality. Policy HS16 also indicates that the building should be of historic/architectural merit and be suitable for sympathetic conversion without the need for significant extension or alteration.

The above is in accordance with paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2018. It promotes the re-use of redundant or dis-used buildings where the development would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting.

Assessing the proposal against Policy HS16, an industrial use is not considered to be the most appropriate use in this particular location, partially because the site has a restricted access. The building is of historic interest and the proposal is a means of retaining it and bringing it back into active use. It is structurally capable of retention and re-use. The proposal includes significant extensions; however, in this case they reflect the original building form and would restore the historic three sided open courtyard plan of the original farmstead. The proposal would not materially harm the character of the countryside. Whilst it does not wholly comply with policy HS16 it is consistent with advice within the Framework.

It is noted that an agricultural case has been put forward arguing that the proposed dwelling is required for managerial, operational and security reasons. However, an occupational restriction is not necessary in this case because the proposal is satisfactory as a barn conversion without an agricultural justification.

The nearest residential dwelling is Westmere Farm House to the west, which is accessed via a long private roadway off Bridge Road. The proposal does not have any major windows on its western elevation and is not close to the common boundary with Westmere Farm House. Moreover, the common boundary with the latter is delineated with a high Leylandii hedge. It is considered that the amenity of neighbouring residents would not be materially harmed in terms of overlooking, lack of privacy, overshadowing, light pollution, etc.

The applicant's agent has indicated that the office and quality control room would be used mainly by the occupants, Mr & Mrs Hoyles, and that the employees would mostly be located at the main operational/storage buildings. The office itself is located on the eastern side of the building. It is considered that the proposal would not materially harm the amenity of nearby residents in terms of noise/disturbance, etc. Although it is appreciated that there may be some disturbance during the construction phase it would be temporary.

A new access road would need to be constructed to link the development to the farm complex to the north, which is accessed off New Road. It is considered that this element should be constructed first because the existing private access road off Bridge Road is unsuitable for construction traffic.

In terms of flood risk, the site is located within Flood Zone 3 of the Environment Agency's Flood Maps. However, they do not take into account any flood defences. Also, large parts of the South Holland District lie within Flood Zone 3. It is therefore necessary to use the refined flood risk information (Hazard and Depth maps) within the South Holland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2017) as a basis to apply the sequential test

The SFRA indicates that the site is within an area designed as "Danger for All". However, it is not possible, consistent with wider sustainability objectives, for the development to be located in a zone with a lower probability of flooding because it relates to an existing historic building. The exceptions test should therefore be applied. It is a method to demonstrate and help ensure that flood risk to people and property will be managed satisfactorily, while allowing necessary development to go ahead in situations where suitable sites at lower risk of flooding are not available.

In terms of the first element, the proposal would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk; namely the retention and re-use of a non-designated heritage asset, as promoted within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Concerning the second element, the Environment Agency has recommended that finished floor

levels of all habitable rooms (living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms, etc) be set no lower than 4.13m aOD and that demountable defences be incorporated to 600mm above finished floor level. Safe refuge shall also be provided on the first floor and future occupants are advised to sign up to the Environment Agency's free Floodline Warnings Direct Service.

An ecological survey accompanying the application indicates the presence of a day roost of a single common pipistrelle bat above a window in the external wall of the building- a roost of minor nature conservation significance. The future re-development of the barn could result in the loss and/or damage of this roost and would be unlawful under UK and EU wildlife legislation unless the work was implemented under the auspices of a Natural England licence.

Evidence that the barn is used by a roosting and hunting barn owl has also been recorded. Breeding use of the building by barn owl is unknown but is a possibility. Disturbance to barn owl during the nesting period would be unlawful under UK wildlife law. Mitigation measures will therefore need to be carried out as recommended within the report.

Environmental Protection has requested a contaminated land condition. Removal of asbestos is a matter that falls within the remit of the Health and Safety Executive.

LCC Archaeology has indicated that traditional farm buildings such as this are increasingly becoming redundant in a rapidly changing industry. Yet they play an integral part in giving the landscape of South Holland its sense of place and character. With the increasing threat from decay or demolition they are a diminishing resource in our countryside. New uses frequently alter the original fabric and character of such building, and it is therefore beneficial to create a record of the structure before alteration or demolition. They have therefore recommended that the developer should be required to undertake historic building recording according to a specification to be agreed with, submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.