

Online Comment

Application H19-0757-18
Location The Oaks 251 Broadgate Road Sutton St Edmund PE12 0LT
Proposal Conversion of redundant agriculture building to one residential dwelling

Name Ian Marshman, Historic Environment Officer
Address Lincolnshire County Council Places Team Lancaster House 36 Orchard Street LN1 1XX

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For/Against Comments

This office has previously commented on earlier applications for the conversion of this historic barn (H19-0852-15), recommending that a scheme of works for building recording be required by condition prior to development. This work was begun and a written scheme approved and the condition discharged (condition 18), however we do not believe that the recording work was ever carried out.

Therefore given this, it is recommended that the developer should be required to again commission a Scheme of Archaeological Works (on the lines of 4.8.1 in the Lincolnshire Archaeological Handbook). This should be secured by South Holland District Council's standard conditions AR01, 02 and 03. If the work in question has already been carried out, it should be submitted and approved prior to determination so that the addition of new conditions can be avoided.

The present application also includes a number of amendments to the previously approved plans, which would lead to a less sensitive conversion that would harm the significance of this non-designated heritage asset. This consists of proposals to remove the three historic carriage arches and rebuild them at greatly reduced height and completely removing the rails on which their historic doors hang, presumably in order for the arches to light only the lower storey of the converted dwelling.

The pair of large doors facing each other on the East and West elevations had an important practical function, to allow a fully laden wagon to enter and unload the harvest, and then provide a through draft to ease with the laborious process of threshing and winnowing that separates the grain from the straw and chaff. The stature of this large and attractively detailed threshing barn attests the abundance of this fenland area after drainage, but the proposed alterations would disfigure this. In addition to the aesthetic harm to the building's significance, the inability in future to interpret the building's historic function would further harm the non-designated heritage asset's significance, which under the NPPF (revised 2018, section 16, paragraph 197) merits due consideration in any planning decision.

If the desire is not to have the inserted first floor cut across the double height openings created by the carriage arches, an appropriate and sensitive solution would be to block the upper part of the opening at first storey level using wooden boarding, as appeared to be proposed in the previously approved plans. This would also have the benefit of preserving the building's agricultural character by retaining the appearance of a barn door, particularly if the bi-fold doors on the ground floor are recessed in the reveal below.