

Committee Report

Item 7A

Reference: DC/19/02486

Case Officer: Daniel Cameron

Ward: Stonham.

Ward Member/s: Cllr Suzie Morley.

RECOMMENDATION – GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

Description of Development

Planning Application - Conversion of 4no. agricultural barns to form 4no. dwellings.

Location

Greenwood Farm, Wetheringsett Road, Mickfield, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 5LL

Expiry Date: 17/07/2019

Application Type: FUL - Full Planning Application

Development Type: Minor Dwellings

Applicant: Mr P Leonard

Agent: Hollins Architects Surveyors and Planning Consultants

Parish: Mickfield

Site Area: 0.47ha

Density of Development: 8.5 dwellings per hectare

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit: The application was previously considered during the meeting of Development Control Committee B on 2nd October 2019. It was determined that the application be deferred until such time that detail to ensure safe and suitable access for all users could be demonstrated. In particular members wanted to see detail of turning and parking areas such that they can be utilised by disabled persons, details of the passing places required along the access route and consideration of possible alternative access routes. These details have now been provided, and further details are provided in the relevant sections of the report.

Has a Committee Call In request been received from a Council Member (Appendix 1): Yes

Has the application been subject to Pre-Application Advice: Yes. Under reference DC/17/06122 which considered the residential conversion of all five barns on the site. It concluded that subject to detail and heritage impacts, the positive re-use and retention of the barns on site could be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of Local Plan policy H09.

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reasons:

The application has received a call-in from the Ward Councillor, which is detailed in the accompanying papers.

PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of Policies

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

CS01 - Settlement Hierarchy

CS02 - Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages

CS05 - Mid Suffolk's Environment

GP01 - Design and layout of development

HB01 - Protection of historic buildings

HB03 - Conversions and alterations to historic buildings

H07 – Restricting housing development unrelated to the needs of the countryside

H09 - Conversion of rural buildings to dwellings

H16 - Protecting existing residential amenity

H17 - Keeping residential development away from pollution

T09 - Parking Standards

T10 - Highway Considerations in Development

Neighbourhood Plan Status

This application site is not within a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Consultations and Representations

A: Summary of Consultations

Town/Parish Council (Appendix 3)

Mickfield Parish Clerk

Following a meeting of Mickfield Parish Council last evening at which this application was considered, I am writing to advise that Councillor voted unanimously to OBJECT to this application for the same reasons as it objected to DC/19/00980 as follows:

1. The proposed development will result in 4 new residential units following the conversion of agricultural buildings lying outside the settlement boundary of Mickfield, which agricultural buildings were in use until March 2016, and represents a significant increase in housing for

this heritage village which can offer no facilities such as a shop, public house or school. Councillors were concerned that if this application is approved a precedent for future development outside the settlement boundary would be set, something Councillors are keen to avoid;

2. The access road providing access to and egress from the application site and the nearest adopted highway is not suitable for a development of this size. Creating 4 new residential units will generate a significant increase in traffic movements along the access road particularly as there are no local facilities in Mickfield necessitating journeys out of the village for all requirements which access has no passing places and there is no visibility splay at the junction of the access road and adopted highway posing a serious risk to all road users;
3. The access could not accommodate construction traffic necessary for a development of this nature;
4. The access road is too narrow for emergency vehicles and the nearest water hydrant is at a distance of 1.8 km from the application site which Councillors consider is too great a distance for the number of residential units proposed;
5. The application site is within the curtilage of a Grade II listed farmhouse and Councillors consider that the scale and nature of the proposed development will have a significant negative impact on the farmhouse;
6. Applying the 'Hibbett threshold' to the barns, the subject of this application, two fail the test meaning that 50% of the site is substantial rebuild, contrary to Local Plan Policy H09; and
7. The site would have an adverse environmental impact on the nature reserve Mickfield Meadow, a designated SSI.

National Consultee (Appendix 4)

Natural England

NO OBJECTION

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.

County Council Responses (Appendix 5)

SCC - Fire & Rescue

Access and Fire Fighting Facilities

Access to buildings for fire appliances and firefighters must meet with the requirements specified in Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document B Volume 1, Part B5, Section 11, in the case of dwelling houses.

Buildings not fitted with fire mains

Houses not fitted with fire mains should allow access for a fire appliance to within 45 m of all points within the house, measured on a route suitable for laying hose.

NOTE: If the internal layout of partitions, fittings, etc. is not known when plans are deposited, direct distances may be used for assessment. The direct distance is taken as two thirds of the travel hose laying distance.

These requirements may be satisfied with other equivalent standards relating to access for firefighting, in which case those standards should be quoted in correspondence.

It is our understanding that the access road will be hard fenced on either side. If this is the case and there should be a suitable turning point for the appliance. The Fire and Rescue Service appliance should not have to reverse more than 20m in distance from the end of the access road.

The road, under ADB, should not be less than 3.1m in width through pinch points such as gates.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service also requires a minimum carrying capacity for hard standing for pumping appliances of 15 tonnes, not 12.5 tonnes as detailed in the Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document B, 2006 Edition is less than the sizes given in ADB.

Water Supplies for Firefighting

The nearest fire hydrant is approximately 1800m from the proposed development. In order for there to be sufficient water for firefighting purposes, any of the following options would be acceptable:

- Install a fire hydrant within 90m of the proposed, that will provide a sustained outlet discharge of 480 lpm and fitted to BS750 Type 2.
- Fit sprinklers, in accordance with BS 9251:2014 or BS EN 12845 (see 11.2, Table 2). Where sprinklers are fitted throughout a house or block of flats:
 - a) the distance between the fire appliance and any point within the house (in houses having no floor more than 4.5 m above ground level) may be up to 90 m;
 - b) the distance between the Fire and Rescue Service pumping appliance and any point within the house or flat may be up to 75 m (in houses or flats having one floor more than 4.5 m above ground level).
- Supply an Emergency Water Supply (EWS) by means of a pond or refurbish the moat, and maintain it all year round, especially during the summer months, so that it doesn't run dry. Any EWS should contain a minimum of 45m³ (45,000 litres) of water. The minimum depth required for any supply shall be 1200mm with 1000mm of clear working water (Large ponds, Rivers, lakes etc.).

SCC - Fire and Rescue

Additional comments were sought from the Fire and Rescue team regarding access widths following the submission of additional details by the applicant. They note that the planning application should meet with their access requirements and are unable to comment further on the dispute between the applicant and their neighbour.

SCC - Highways

Whilst SCC has no objections to the principle of development, mitigation methods should be implemented to improve the existing situation at this location.

A passing place, in accordance with DM06, would allow for two vehicles to safely pass one another on this narrow carriageway.

In addition to this, a turning area should be provided so that delivery and construction vehicles have the capabilities to enter and exit the highway in a forward-facing gear.

Furthermore, information such as: red line drawing denoting access to the highway and blue line site ownership boundary plan should also be submitted. A pragmatic solution may be to seek access to the highway via alternative means however, this option cannot be explored unless this information is submitted.

SCC - Archaeological Service

Thank you for consulting us on this proposal. In my opinion there would be no significant impact on known archaeological sites or areas with archaeological potential. I have no objection to the development and do not believe any archaeological mitigation is required.

Internal Consultee Responses (Appendix 6)

Environmental Health - Land Contamination

Many thanks for your request for comments in relation to the above application. Having reviewed the Plandescil Phase I report I can confirm that the risks on the site are sufficiently low as to us not to require any additional works by means of condition. The report concludes that it would be prudent to undertake some additional works but on balance of evidence this is something that we will not be requiring by means of condition.

Environmental Health - Noise/Odour/Light/Smoke

Thank you for consulting me on the above application to convert agricultural barns into four dwellings.

I can confirm with respect to noise and other environmental health issues that I do not have any adverse comments and no objection to the proposed development.

I would recommend, however, that construction activity is restricted to between 8am and 6pm weekday, 8am and 1pm Saturday and no working Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Ecology - Place Services

No objection subject to securing biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures.

We have reviewed the Ecological survey and Construction Management Environmental Plan: Biodiversity (JP Ecology Ltd, November 2018) and the Bat and Barn Owl Survey (Essex Mammal Surveys, June 2018), provided by the applicant, relating to the likely impacts of development on Protected & Priority species / habitats.

We are satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination.

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on Protected and Priority species/habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable. This will enable LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006.

However, due to the access restrictions to the ponds to conduct additional surveys for Great Crested Newts, we recommend that an ecologist should be present on site during the site clearance proposed to be conducted in the winter months. This additional mitigation is necessary

as Great Crested Newts hibernate in terrestrial habitat being cleared and therefore could be present and affected by the proposed works. It will also ensure that other potential impacts to Protected and Priority species will likely be avoided.

In addition, we also support the reasonable biodiversity enhancements, which have been recommended to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity, as highlighted within Paragraph 170d of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy to be secured prior to commencement.

This Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy should include the provision of a Barn Owl, due to historic evidence that barn has been used by the species. It should also include appropriate recommendations to enhance the adjacent ponds within the landowner's control, as well as, create the proposed new pond within the site, as this would likely have the greatest benefit for local aquatic wildlife.

Strategic Housing (Affordable/Major Dwel/G+T)

No objection

The total no. of dwelling space is under 1,000sqm.

Heritage Team

As this is a re-submission of a previous planning application, with only minor changes to the design of Barn 5, our comments on DC/19/00809 and DC/19/00810 still stand. We would recommend that the relevant conditions noted in our previous response are attached.

Recommended conditions:

- Manufacturers details of all external cladding and roofing materials for all barns should be submitted.
- Large scale elevations of proposed fenestration and doors in Barn 3 and 5 should be submitted.
- A landscaping condition to show any ground surface and boundary treatments.

For completeness, comments attached to DC/19/00810 are summarised below:

As it stands, the proposed conversion of Barn 1 and 2 would be acceptable, and the conversion of Barn 3 and 5 would not have a negative impact on the significance of the nearby listed buildings, although we have a concern about the staircase leading to the Lounge in Barn 1. Subject to clarification on this matter and subject to conditions the proposal for the residential conversion of the 4 barns would not cause harm to the significance of the listed and curtilage listed buildings.

The Heritage Team considers that the proposal would cause no harm to a designated heritage asset, subject to the issue of limited headroom above the staircase to the Lounge in Barn 1 being addressed, and subject to the conditions below.

MSDC - Planning Policy

No response.

B: Representations

At the time of writing the original report at least 13 letters/emails/online comments have been received from three individual addresses. It is the officer opinion that this represents 12 objections, and 1 general comment. A verbal update shall be provided as necessary.

Views are summarised below:

- Insufficient information provided by the applicant;
- Reduction in site area from previous applications;
- Limited width of access route to the site;
- Ecological impacts;
- Little material design changes between this application and previous applications on site;
- Barns fall outside of the criteria set out for conversion under permitted development;
- Lack of available water and other utilities on site;
- Development would create new dwellings in the countryside;
- Development on the site should include improvements to the listed farmhouse;
- Applicant has failed to submit the required land contamination evidence;
- Increase in the level of traffic utilising the existing access leading to conflict with road users;
- Impact on the setting of the nearby listed farmhouse;
- Works to barns 3 and 5 represent rebuilding work, not conversion; and
- Noise and nuisance issues associated with agricultural vehicles accessing the site particularly during harvest time.

At the time of writing this update, a number of additional comments were received from the nearest neighbouring property relating to the additional information regarding the access.

Views are summarised below:

- Width of access is limited and does not reflect widths the agent suggests;
- Inaccuracies within the submitted documents; and
- One of the passing places is shown on land outside of the ownership of the applicant.

(Note: All individual representations are counted and considered. Repeated and/or additional communication from a single individual will be counted as one representation.)

PLANNING HISTORY

REF: DC/18/03497	Planning Application. Change of use and conversion of 5no. agricultural buildings to 5no. dwellings.	DECISION: REF 30.11.2018
REF: DC/18/03498	Application for Listed Building Consent. Conversion of 5no. agricultural buildings to 5no. dwellings.	DECISION: REF 30.11.2018

REF: DC/19/00809	Planning Application - Conversion of 4no. agricultural buildings into 4no. dwellings	DECISION: REF 16.04.2019
REF: DC/19/00810	Application for Listed Building Consent - Works to facilitate conversion of 4no. agricultural buildings into 4no. dwellings	DECISION: GTD 16.04.2019
REF: 0086/93/LB	REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF SOME WINDOWS AND DOORS. REPLACE AND PAINT EXTERNAL RENDERING.	DECISION: GTD 30.07.1993

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1.0 The Site and Surroundings

- 1.1. Greenwood Farm comprises a farmhouse and five outbuildings set together within the landscape as a cluster. They are surrounded on all sides by large agricultural field patterns lined with hedgerows with areas of woodland notable to the immediate north and west of the buildings. The farm itself is located roughly north-east of Mickfield. Access to the site is made down a long, narrow access track wide enough for a single vehicle.
- 1.2. Greenwood Farmhouse is listed at Grade II while the barn identified as Long Barn (Barn 1) is also listed at Grade II. Their respective list descriptions are as follows:

Farmhouse, early C17 with mid C19 alterations. 2 storeys. Timber-framed and plastered. Plain tiled roof with original rear external chimneys of red brick: a large parlour chimney has moulded offsets and a moulded oblong shaft comprising two flues. A similar hall chimney has a single flue. Mid C19 sashes with large panes, also some small-pane casements. C19 entrance doorway at gable end with 4-panelled door and panelled architrave; associated with it is a mid C19 brick parlour block, added in double-pile fashion to the earlier parlour cell. Some good unmoulded framing of c.1600 exposed internally; close-studding and a fragment of wind-braced clasped-purlin roof (mainly rebuilt C20). A number of original moulded plank doors. An unusually elongated example of a C17 farmhouse, with an additional service cell at the right-hand end. Barn, early C17. Originally of 5 bays, extended northwards by 2 bays c.1800, and a gabled midstrey added to west side. Timber-framed and weatherboarded. Corrugated iron roof, formerly thatched. Arch-form windbraced close-studding, and windbraced clasped purlin roof. Braces to the open trusses were replaced by knees c.1800. The 2-bay extension has primary-braced studwork and knee-braced principal rafters with butt-purlins (the open trusses are designed without tie-beams). Sets of 4 boarded barn doors at both sides.

Stable and bullock-house, early C17. 5 bays; both sections have chaff-lofts above, and the bullock-house formerly had an attic above that. Timber-framed and weatherboarded. Corrugated iron roof, formerly thatched. Good arch-braced studwork and unchamfered floorjoists laid flat. Fragments of clasped purlin roof; almost entirely rebuilt in C20. Various boarded stable doors.

- 1.3. Barn 1 consists of the listed C17 threshing barn which has been previously extended in C18 and C19 and has the appearance of a traditional vernacular barn being timber framed and finished in black weatherboarding.
- 1.4. Barn 2 consists of a timber framed cow shed, stable and hay store. Again, this has the appearance of a traditional agricultural building and is considered to be an undesignated heritage asset, possibly curtilage listed.
- 1.5. Barn 3 is a large, modern, steel framed barn enclosed on all sides, while barn 4 (which does not form part of this application) is a large, modern, Dutch barn with open sides.
- 1.6. Barn 5 is another modern building, isolated from the main farmstead. It consists of a small, steel framed building, three grain silos and a steel Nissen hut.

2.0. The Proposal

- 2.1. The application proposes the residential conversion of four existing agricultural barns providing; one, one bedroomed dwelling; one, three bedroomed dwelling; one, four bedroomed dwelling and one, five bedroomed dwelling.
- 2.2. Taken together, the conversion works will result in 900m² of new habitable space.
- 2.3. Eight existing car parking spaces are situated within the site on existing hardstanding. As a result of the proposed works this is to increase to twelve. This accords with the adopted parking standards.
- 2.4. Based on the site area of 0.47ha, the conversion of the four barns would lead to a density of 8.5 dwellings per hectare.
- 2.5. The existing barns vary in size, with barn 3 being the largest, however, barns 1, 2 and 3 all providing residential accommodation at first floor level. Barn 5 is smaller and incorporates a mezzanine floor to provide additional space. None of the barns are proposed to increase in height as a result of the proposed conversion works. Although extensions to Barn 1 would increase its internal floorspace by a total of 62m², while extensions to Barn 2 would increase its internal floorspace by 55m².
- 2.6. Sufficient area exists within the site to accommodate the proposed dwellings with a good-sized amenity area for their private use for each property.
- 2.7. The barns are existing and therefore separation distances between them are unchanged. Barns 1 and 2 are the most proximate to each other, although the design has been used to avoid high level windows giving direct views into either property.

- 2.8. At present the barns on site are composed of a mix of red brick, timber weatherboarding, steel cladding, with steel panels, clay pantiles and asbestos sheeting forming the roofing materials. The proposed works to the barns and conversion would be constructed of brick, timber weatherboarding and steel cladding with steel panels and clay pantiles forming the roofing materials. Materials would be appropriate to the building concerned, with traditional materials directed towards the historic barns, while more modern materials are to be directed towards the modern barns.
- 2.9. The total site area is 0.47 ha or 4,700m². Given the number of residential dwellings to be created on site is five, this gives a density per hectare of 8.5.

3. The Principle of Development

- 3.1. The starting point for any planning decision is the development plan, as identified in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Determination of any application must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A key material consideration regarding the principle of development is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019.
- 3.2. Mid Suffolk District Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. As such the tilted balance towards the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF at paragraph 11 is not engaged.
- 3.3. The age of policies of the adopted Development Plan itself does not cause them to cease to be part of the development plan or become “out of date” as identified in paragraph 213 of the NPPF. Significant weight should be given to the general public interest in having plan-led decisions even if the particular policies in a development plan may be old.
- 3.4. Even if policies are considered to be out of date, that does not make them irrelevant; their weight is not fixed, and the weight to be attributed to them is within the remit of the decision taker. There will be many cases where restrictive policies are given sufficient weight to justify refusal despite their not being up to date. However, the degree of compliance with the NPPF needs to be given consideration, the greater the level of accordance with the NPPF the greater the level of weight which can be given.
- 3.5. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy identifies a settlement hierarchy as to sequentially direct development, forming part of a strategy to provide for a sustainable level of growth. The Policy identifies categories of settlement within the district, with Towns representing the most preferable location for development, followed by the Key Service Centres, Primary then Secondary Villages. The countryside is identified as the areas outside of those categories of settlement referred to above.
- 3.6. The NPPF does not normally apply blanket restrictions on development locations, preferring to assess each site on its merits against a set of sustainability criteria. That being said, the NPPF does contain a not dissimilar opposition to the creation of isolated homes in the countryside at paragraph 79 albeit with exceptions. Therefore, while policy CS1

- cannot be held to be total conformity with the provisions of the NPPF, it does share a common theme.
- 3.7. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy similarly restricts development in the countryside to defined categories. These include works leading to the preservation of listed buildings and the conversion of rural buildings to alternative purposes, such that the proposal is acceptable in principle under this policy. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF allows development within the countryside on similar terms. Local Plan policy H9 gives support to the conversion and change of use of rural buildings whose form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings.
- 3.8. The application site falls outside of the established settlement boundaries set out within the adopted Local Plan and therefore must be considered to form part of the countryside. However, the type of development proposed within the application is considered to be acceptable within the countryside as set out by Policy CS2 and H9, subject to detail.
- 3.9. Similarly, although the NPPF does seek to avoid the creation of isolated dwellings within the countryside, exceptions are allowed including when the development would represent the optimum viable use of a heritage asset, or where enabling development would secure the future of a heritage asset and where development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and would enhance its immediate setting.
- 3.10. With regards to the application at hand, the principle of development is considered to be established provided that it can be demonstrated that the proposed works would represent the optimum viable use of the listed barn and curtilage listed barn on site and where the proposed re-use of the other barns on site would enhance the immediate setting of the area. In assessing the application, it is clear that Local Plan policies H07, H09, HB01 and HB03 are of key importance.

4.0. Nearby Services and Connections Assessment of Proposal

- 4.1. The application site lies some 1.2 miles away from Mickfield, and connection to Mickfield is made along country lanes which may be intimidating to pedestrians seeking access. Mickfield does not possess any noted facilities, Core Strategy policy CS2 identifies it as a countryside village.
- 4.2. Stonham Aspal, a Secondary Village, as identified by CS2, is some 3.4 miles away and while it contains some facilities and services, these are limited within the village itself. Debenham, a Key Service Centre, is some 4.1 miles away and contains a small array of shops and other facilities.
- 4.3. Connection to Mickfield, Stonham Aspal and Debenham would be unlikely to be made via sustainable methods of transport, especially when it is considered that some of the roads that would need to be utilised in order to make those journeys would likely be intimidating to those on foot or bicycle in that they are unlit, narrow and contain no refuges. It is therefore considered that access to local services would be made by private motor car.
- 4.4. No bus service runs past the site, however, the 113, 114 and 115 services serve the area with bus stops noted in Mickfield, the Stonhams and Debenham. These provide connection

to Ipswich, Debenham, Eye and Diss and travel at two hourly intervals on weekdays. However, given the distances to the nearest bus stops from the application site and the lack of public car parking facilities at Mickfield, it is not considered to offer an alternative form of sustainable transport to future residents of the development.

- 4.5. While the NPPF makes allowances for a greater degree of car dependency within rural areas, the future residents of the application site would be reliant upon the private motor car. This is directly at odds with the need to transition towards a low carbon economy set out within the NPPF.
- 4.6. Representations made by the agent does note that in general barns are located within the countryside, and, due to their agricultural uses, are often located away from towns and villages. This is acknowledged within the provisions of Class Q the General Permitted Development Order 2015, as amended, which allows for the residential conversion of agricultural buildings. It specifically omits consideration as to the sustainability of location when considering these types of development, while Local Plan policy H09 makes similar allowances to accept such development in principle, such that the acceptability of the proposal does not turn on the sustainable access to services.

5.0. Site Access, Parking and Highway Safety Considerations

- 5.1. Access to the site is proposed via the existing single-track access to the farmhouse, currently used for both residential and agricultural access. Comments from the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service notes a minimum width to the track required for access by emergency vehicles to be 3.1m. This is achievable for much of the run of the access road as it falls within the ownership of the applicant, such that improvements could be made. Representations from the neighbouring properties note that part of the access is unable to accommodate this width due to it falling outside the ownership of the applicant and have indicated that they would be unwilling to allow the applicant to undertake this widening work.
- 5.2. The applicant has provided additional access details including plans demonstrating the location of passing places. They note that building regulations would allow for an access route for a fire tender to be reduced to 2.75m over short distances. Representations from the neighbouring properties note that a gate over the proposed access exists, the opening within it being some 2.75m wide. However, they also note their intention to erect fencing on either side of the access over their land with 2.8m between such that fire tenders would have to traverse approximately 8m of narrow track.
- 5.3. Representations made by the agent notes that at present the access allows for unrestricted use by agricultural vehicles and notes that particularly at harvest time, creates disturbance for the neighbouring properties. They note that the conversion of the barns to a residential use, while increasing the number of domestic vehicles accessing the site, would generally be making use of the access at more social hours as opposed to agricultural access which can, especially at harvest time, be accessing the site at all hours. It would also have the benefit of reducing the number of large agricultural vehicles accessing the site.

- 5.4. While the above dispute between the applicant and the neighbour is noted, representations from the Highway Authority indicate that alternative access arrangements are possible utilising land entirely within the control of the applicant and detail of this alternative arrangement could be secured via planning condition. No such alternative access details have been provided by the applicant.
- 5.5. The Highways Authority note no issue with the proposed increase in traffic caused by the application, such that it could be considered for refusal. They do recommend improvement of the access track with a passing place. Details regarding passing places have also been provided showing them entirely within land owned by the applicant. Although representations have been made regarding the fact one lies outside of the parcel of land which is the subject of this application, it nevertheless is under the control of the applicant such that it could be provided. Given the noted issues with vehicles meeting each other head on along the existing access, it is considered this would be advantageous to be secured within the applicant's land.
- 5.6. In the light of this available access and that this can be secured by condition, along with the reduction in heavy farm traffic is such that the proposal would not risk harm to highway safety and would not be unacceptable in this respect having regards to the requirements of local plan policies and the NPPF.
- 5.7. Additional block plans have also been submitted indicating that adequate space for the parking and turning of vehicles is available at each property. Given the amount space provided, it is considered that this could be utilised by disabled users of the site and further, the accesses could be further amended to ensure they meet with the requirements of the end user.

6.0. Design and Layout

- 6.1. The five barns on site are located to the immediate south of Greenwood Farmhouse, with the historic barns (barns 1 and 2) lying closest to it, denoting their historic relationship, while barns 3 and 4 lie to the south of them. Barn 5 is located a short distance to the west.
- 6.2. The layout of the barns would be unchanged as a result of the proposed works with boundary treatments creating a separate residential curtilage for each while parking for each property is also shown. The private amenity areas are of a good size, and to be divided by post and rail fencing. Parking is provided in accordance with adopted parking standards.
- 6.3. Barn 1 would see the main body of the ground floor converted to provide open plan living space while the first floor would provide bedrooms. The existing historic machinery within the building is to be retained in an open gallery space. Two extensions would provide parking, utility space and an additional bedroom and would alter the footprint of the building to better reflect how it appears in historic mapping. External works would introduce fenestration to the building while materials are proposed to be horizontal timber boarding, red clay pantiles for the main body of the barn and red brick and slate for the extensions.

- 6.4. Barn 2 would be similarly converted, with living accommodation at ground floor with bedrooms above and similar materials proposed. An open courtyard would provide a link to additional bedroom accommodation in the existing single storey wing, while a timber framed cart lodge is proposed to provide parking.
- 6.5. Barn 3 is a more modern barn and accordingly materials and design reflect this. The structural frame of the building is to be exposed and emphasised.
- 6.6. Barn 5 is again modern and would be dealt with accordingly. The existing Nissen hut is to be removed and replaced with a similar structure to provide an element of covered parking.
- 6.7. The proposals are considered to respect the existing built form of the barns, with limited extensions in keeping with their character and appearance, as required by Local Plan Policy H9.
- 6.8. Following comments from the committee, the applicants have provided a revised layout plan, amending the red line of the site to ensure that no external doors open onto land outside of the boundary of the site.

7.0. Landscape Impact, Trees, Ecology, Biodiversity and Protected Species

- 7.1. The application site does not form part of a designated landscape such that no additional specific consideration as to the impacts of development would be required. That being said, policy CS05 gives protection to the landscape of Mid Suffolk, protecting its most important components.
- 7.2. The predominant character of the surrounding area is strongly rural and in particular, agricultural. Part of this agricultural character is formed by the agricultural buildings that can be seen within the landscape. The barns and outbuildings that form part of the application site contribute towards this.
- 7.3. The conversion of the barns and outbuildings and in particular the proposed alterations would retain the essential rural character of the buildings and would allow this to be expressed and appreciated within the wider landscape.
- 7.4. Trees are noted within the site; however, none are scheduled for removal to facilitate the proposed works. These additionally contribute towards the wider character of the area though are generally notable for their contrast to the open agricultural field pattern.
- 7.5. Barn Owls and Bats are known to nest and roost within the barns and outbuildings while there is a likely impact on Great Crested Newts. All three are protected species. Local Plan policy CL08 seeks to protect wildlife habitat within development. Further, the Council is under a duty imposed by Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) to "have regard to the Habitats Directive in the exercise of its functions."
- 7.6. In this instance, the applicant has submitted an ecology report which has been assessed by Place Services – Ecology on the behalf of the Council. They conclude that the likely impacts of the development upon the protected species would be mitigated in line with the

wildlife legislation, while enhancement of the site, in order to support the existing wildlife population and to encourage its growth can be secured.

8.0. Land Contamination, Flood Risk, Drainage and Waste

- 8.1. Local Plan policy H17 seeks to avoid the creation of new residential dwellings where the health of the future residents may be affected by pollution. Analysis of the site has found no contamination in the soil that would adversely affect the health of future residents of the site which has been confirmed by the Council's Environmental Health Team.
- 8.2. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, such that specific consideration as to the impacts of river and surface water flooding are not required. That being said, Building Regulations does require the installation of surface water drainage measures in all development such that measures would be installed on site in order to control this.
- 8.3. However, the majority of the site is undeveloped, while the barns themselves are currently on site such that development on site is unlikely to adversely affect the ability of the site to absorb rainwater.
- 8.4. The submitted application forms show waste on site is to be dealt with by way of package sewage treatment plant. Given the likely difficulties with connecting the properties to the public sewer system, this is an acceptable solution and is subject to the system according with the general binding rules for septic tanks and package sewage treatments from the Environment Agency or a permit issued by the Environment Agency.

9.0. Heritage Issues

- 9.1. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special regard is given the desirability of preserving the building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 9.2. Similar protection is given by paragraph 193 of the NPPF which puts great weight on the conservation of heritage assets. While Local Plan policies HB01 and HB03 respectively require the protection of listed buildings and their settings and that works to alter or extend listed buildings be of the highest level of architectural quality and in keeping with the character of the affected building.
- 9.3. Consultation with the Council's Heritage Team has not identified any harm arising from the proposed works to either the historic fabric of the listed buildings, or to their settings subject to conditions to secure clarity over the detail of the development.
- 9.4. Further, it should be noted that application DC/19/00810 previously sought listed building consent for the conversion works to the listed and curtilage barns on the site. No harm was identified through consultation with the Council's Heritage team at that time either, such that consent was given. This scheme is largely unchanged from the one previously considered.

- 9.5. With regards to the conversion of the listed and curtilage listed barns, given that they are unlikely to be useful for modern agricultural uses, a conversion to a residential use is considered to represent the optimum viable use of the heritage assets. A residential use would ensure that the ongoing repair and maintenance of the buildings would be secured such that they would be secure for future generations.
- 9.6 In light of this the proposal is not considered to have an unacceptable impact on the heritage assets, their setting, or significance, and the proposal is considered acceptable in this respect, complying with the requirements of local plan policy and the NPPF.

10.0. Impact on Residential Amenity

- 10.1. As already stated, the barns are located a good distance away from the nearest neighbouring residential properties such that the conversion of the barns is not considered to create adverse impacts on the levels of privacy or natural light available to them.
- 10.2. The notable exception is the relationship between the barns and the listed farmhouse which is much closer but is reflective of the historic and modern agricultural relationship between the buildings. It is considered that the same is true for relationship between the historic barns and modern barns. That being said, clever placement of windows avoids issues with overlooking, while the light levels reaching each barn would unchanged from current levels.
- 10.3. Representations around disturbance to the properties at harvest time are noted, although given the surrounding agricultural character of the area this is not considered to be particularly unusual and would be issue for any development within the area and much of the District.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

12.0. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 12.1. In determining this application, it is noted that the site falls outside of any settlement boundary set out within the adopted Development Plan. Development is therefore considered to fall within the countryside, contrary to the provisions of Core Strategy policy CS01 as well as Local Plan policy H07. Analysis of the location in terms of its connectivity to its surrounding shows that future occupation of the site would be almost wholly reliant upon the private motor vehicle in order to meet the future needs of the residents.
- 12.2. However, exceptions to the above policy are made within Core Strategy policy CS02 allowing for development that would preserve listed buildings and that would convert agricultural outbuildings to other uses. Local Plan policies HB01, HB03 and H09 all give further guidance as to the detail of the application.

- 12.3. In light of the above, it is considered that the principle of development is established, subject to the application being capable of meeting the requirements of the other listed policies above. Having had regards to this in the assessment above it is considered that the proposal responds positively to the requirements set out therein.
- 12.4. Policies HB01 and HB03 require that listed buildings and their special interest are preserved by development while HB03 requires proposed work to be a high design standard. The conversion of the listed barn and curtilage listed barn are considered to represent the optimum viable use for the buildings given they are no longer useful for agricultural purposes. Residential occupation would secure their ongoing maintenance and repair, meaning they would remain parts of the surrounding landscape and would continue to inform public understanding of the listed farmhouse. The design of the proposed conversions is sympathetic to the barns and retains much of their historic character.
- 12.5. The conversion of the unlisted barns meets with the requirements of policy H09 with regards to their design, which is reflective of their modern provenance, introducing more modern features than with the historic barns. Impacts on residential amenity as reported from the representations made on the application are noted and will be dealt with specifically below, however, with regards the impact of the conversion of the barns, it is not considered that there would be adverse impact on the residential amenity within the site.
- 12.6. On balance, it is considered that the positive historic benefits of the conversion of the listed barns would weigh heavily in favour of the proposed development. It would serve to maintain the agricultural setting of the farmhouse and introduce the optimum viable use to the buildings. While the negative connotations associated with the location of the site are noted, the location of the buildings cannot be helped and is strongly connected to their historic use. It is considered that the positive weight attached to the retention of the buildings would counter the identified issues, the recommendation to members is therefore to grant planning permission.
- 12.7. With regards to the amended details, it is considered that the passing places shown within the access are acceptable, while parking details are similarly acceptable to give clarity to Committee.
- 12.8. With regards to the width of the access, the details from the applicant and agent clearly show an element of the access would be through a narrow pinch point, with the potential for the pinch point to be extended. This is not contrary to the specifications given by Building Regulations although should committee be minded, a condition to secure additional fire prevention within the properties could be imposed.

RECOMMENDATION

That authority be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to grant full planning permission:

That the Chief Planning Officer be authorised to grant Planning Permission subject to conditions as summarised below and those as may be deemed necessary by the Chief Planning Officer:

- Standard time limit
- Approved plans
- Confirm manufacturers details of the external facing and roofing materials to be used;
- Phasing to detail the build out of the barns in phases if required;
- Details of sustainability measures to be implemented within the development;
- Detail of fenestration and doors to barns 3 and 5;
- Landscaping to be agreed and implemented
- Details of the access to the site, prior to commencement of development including details of the indicated passing places, turning head, gradient, levels, surfacing materials and method to prevent surface water from draining onto the highway;
- To secure provision of parking spaces within the development prior to the occupation of any building;
- Construction method statement to outline working methods, hours of delivery, route by while large vehicles are to access the site, hours of work, working parking, etc;
- Protection of existing trees and hedgerows within the site from damage during development;
- Prevent the storage of hazardous materials or burning material on site where it may harm existing trees and hedgerows;
- Details of fire hydrants or other water sources for firefighting on site;
- Details of additional fire prevention measures to be incorporated within the buildings;
- Recycling and refuse bin storage and presentation areas;
- Ecology report recommendations to be implemented
- Relevant bat license obtained from Natural England;
- Biodiversity enhancement strategy for the site; and
- Lighting scheme for the site that is sensitive to biodiversity and
- The removal of permitted development rights to ensure that the buildings retain their agricultural appearance

Informatics

- Standard informative on proactive working with the Council;
- Informative on responsibilities regarding works affecting the public highway;
- Informative on responsibilities follow the discovery of unexpected land contamination; and
- Informative on listed status of some of the buildings on site.

