

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE B - 16th March 2016

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<b>AGENDA ITEM NO</b>	5
<b>APPLICATION NO</b>	4373/15
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Demolition of 4no. modern agricultural buildings. Partial demolition of cattle shed and elements of castle farm barns. Conversion of barns to 3no. dwellings comprising rebuilding and repair of existing structures, new cartlodge to barn 3, landscaping to provide surfaced access, parking and amenity spaces. Installation of 3no. sewage package treatment plants & air source units to serve new dwellings at Castle Farm, Vicarage Road, Wingfield, Suffolk.
<b>SITE LOCATION</b>	Castle Farm, Vicarage Road, Wingfield IP21 5RB
<b>SITE AREA (Ha)</b>	0.7614
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Warren Hill Farms
<b>RECEIVED</b>	December 14, 2015
<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>	February 9, 2016

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**REASONS FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE**

The application is referred to committee for the following reason :

(1) a Member of the Council has requested that the application is determined by the appropriate Committee and the request has been made in accordance with the Planning Code of Practice or such other protocol / procedure adopted by the Council. The Members reasoning is included in the agenda bundle.

**PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE**

1. In 2006 the Planning Authority refused the planning application to convert the barns into four dwellings. The application was refused on the grounds that the conversion to residential use would harm the setting of the adjacent Grade 1 Listed Castle.

Whilst the application was dismissed at appeal this was not for the same reasons for refusal by the Local Planning Authority. The Inspector ruled that the conversion and demolition would enhance the setting of the Listed Building and would not be harmful to the setting of adjoining Listed Buildings. The Inspector however considered that due to the substantial sub-division of the barns in 2006, the conversion would not respect the structure, form, and character of the Listed Building. The conversion itself would adversely affect the character of the Listed barns. This decision itself is considered to have significant weight.

Since this decision the long barn was placed on the buildings at risk register in 2009. Pre-application advice has been sought on a number of occasions. Most recently the advice provided general support reduction in horizontal and vertical subdivision of the building and the proposal to create three dwellings overall.

**SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

2. Castle Farm is a historic complex of agricultural buildings located to the north of Vicarage Road. To the west of these building is the Grade 1 listed building known as Wingfield Castle. Castle Farm was the 'home farm' to Wingfield Castle but was sold separately in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and has been sub-divided ever since.

The farm buildings comprise the 'Long barn', which is a substantial brick and timber frame barn of 11 bays, 3 fold yards and shelter sheds to the south and a cattle or stock house at the east end. South of the fold yards stands a cartshed/granary dating from late 16<sup>th</sup> Century with 19<sup>th</sup> Century alterations. There are a number of 20<sup>th</sup> Century additions and outbuildings. The main farm buildings are Listed as Grade II as well as having group value with Wingfield Castle.

The barns are in a state of disrepair. The main barn building is classified as being in poor condition and risk priority C under the risk register as slow decay and no solution agreed. Repairs have been carried out to the main roof, but it has proved difficult to prevent deterioration of the single storey elements resulting from theft of roof tiles. Therefore it has fallen into a worst state of repair since the 2006 refusal.

**HISTORY**

3. The planning history relevant to the application site is:

4372/15	Planning Permission for conversion of farm To be considered by this buildings to form 3 dwellings and demolition Committee. of modern farm buildings.
2471/15	Conversion of farm buildings to form 3 Withdrawn dwellings, demolition of modern farm buildings.
2472/15	Listed Building Consent for conversion of Withdrawn farm buildings, demolition of modern farm buildings.
1296/06	Conversion of farm buildings to form 4 Refused 02/10/2006 dwellings, demolition of modern farm buildings. Dismissed at appeal
1379/06	Conversion of farm buildings to form 4 Treated as withdrawn following dwellings and demolition of modern farm the appeal dismissal of buildings. 1296/06.

**PROPOSAL**

4. The proposal seeks to convert the two buildings to form three dwellings; two within the main barn and one within the granary. Proposed Barn 1 is situated within the main barn (Long Barn). It will have five bedrooms utilising the existing internal division and first floor. A front south facing courtyard will form the garden area. Parking spaces will be located in the front single storey wing.

Proposed Barn 2 is located within the western end of the main barn. It will have four bedrooms with a walled kitchen garden to the side elevation and garden area to the west. Car parking will be provided in the single storey front wing. A new first floor element will be installed to provide a bedroom.

Proposed Barn 3 is located in the former granary. This will provide open plan living area and utilise the existing first floor. A modern element will be demolished and a new rear wing erected. The garden will be located to the south area of the granary building. A new garage will be erected including garden store to the west.

Modern farm units will be removed to facilitate the conversion.

## POLICY

5. **Planning Policy Guidance**

See Appendix below.

## CONSULTATIONS

6. **Wingfield Parish Council-** No response from the Parish Council has been received.

**Historic England** - Historic England object to the proposal.

Historic England is concerned by the proposal to convert the farmstead to residential units and harm to the significance of the barns and Wingfield Castle in terms of the NPPF paragraphs 132 and 134. Historic England do not consider the justification required by the NPPF has been made for the proposed use. The impact on the most significant areas of the farm buildings and the changes to their exterior which would have a harmful impact on the Castle. Historic England resolve to leave it to the Council to consider any public benefit resulting from the development and if the reuse of the buildings could be achieved without harm to the heritage assets but if the justification for the harm required by the NPPF is not made we recommend the application is refused.

**MSDC Heritage Team** - The Heritage officer supports the application. The Heritage Team is satisfied that harm to the significance of the application building and to the setting of the Castle has been minimised, and is outweighed by the benefit to the public of securing a viable ongoing use for an important heritage asset.

**National Amenity Societies-** No response has been received from any of the National Amenity Societies.

## LOCAL AND THIRD PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

7. This is a summary of the representations received.
- Concern regarding the significant impact posed by a development to the farm buildings and to the historic setting of Wingfield Castle.
  - Should remain in current use.

## ASSESSMENT

8. Material to the consideration is the Inspectors decision on an appeal for a similar proposal to that sought under this application. Application 1296/06 sought planning permission to convert the barns into four dwellings. A copy of the Inspector's decision is included within the agenda bundle for Members reference.

The application was dismissed at appeal due to the amount of sub-division to the listed barns which would adversely affect would not respect the structure, form, and character of the listed buildings. The conversion would adversely affect the character of the listed barns. The Inspector did not dismiss the appeal on the harm to the setting of the listed barns or the adjacent listed castle.

Two applications seeking planning permission and listed building consent were submitted in 2471/15 and 2472/15 2015 to overcome the reason for dismissal. The scheme proposed to convert the long barn into two dwellings and the granary into one dwelling. Internal horizontal and vertical sub-division were reduced. These applications were withdrawn following concerns raised by the Historic England and the case officer regarding the amount of sub-division and openings. Further surveys regarding Great Crested Newts and Bats were also required.

This application therefore differs from the previously withdrawn applications:

- An improved access to highways standards is shown to Vicarage Road. This is within the 30mph limit.
- The number of openings on the North elevation has been reduced.
- The internal arrangement of the North barns has been revised to allow full-length views in barn 2 and a full length void.
- No new first floor area is proposed in barn 1. The void stays the same size as in the existing barn.
- In barn 1 all support function rooms (utility, wc, plant, en suite etc) have been moved to the centre of the barn so that no subdivision of external walls takes place at ground floor. Thus you can see the full length of these walls internally.
- Internal glazing is used extensively so structure can be seen and views along the barns exploited.

- Extensive further Protected Species Surveys have taken place

### **Principle of Development**

Paragraph 131 states that in determining planning applications local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

The Council is under duties in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings. Accordingly harm to a building or its setting is to be given great weight in decision making, and in NPPF terms requires clear and convincing justification such as by way of public benefits, and by demonstration that harm has been minimised

The design and access statement submitted with the applications states that the *'group of former agricultural buildings at Castle Farm have been redundant for a number of years as they no longer offer viable use for modern farming practice. The buildings require significant investment in order to maintain upkeep and carry-out essential repairs despite having little economic value as they stand. The conversion of the buildings is therefore proposed in order to provide a sustainable way of preserving the fabric and ensuring the longevity of the structures'*. This is agreed as the case for at least ten years.

The applicant submitted additional information on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016 advising that the use of the barns for agricultural purposes is unviable for modern farming and machinery. Produce needs to be stored in vermin proof and environmentally controlled buildings, with good accessibility for mechanical handling. Livestock buildings also need a controlled environment, mechanical equipment for cleaning and drainage for pollution control. All of which would damage the fabric of the building. The conversion to a commercial property would impose similar design issues and high cost for conversion. There is no requirement for such a facility in this location and the access route is not acceptable for such uses in terms of highway standards. Wingfield already has function facilities at Wingfield college and Wingfield Barns.

It is agreed that the barns are located in a relatively isolated part of the district with access along minor roads. There is little demand for commercial floor space in Wingfield as there are business centres nearby in Stradbroke and Scole plus the large industrial area at Eye Airfield. Any commercial activity in these barns would need to have restrictions on the amount and type of traffic generated, their hours of operation and noise levels to reflect those in place at Wingfield Barns venue nearby. The only possible commercial use for these buildings would be for offices, but the cost of conversion and lack of demand would make this unviable. At the same time given the scale of office it would need to become the commercial traffic and activity generated would be more than 3 households.

The applicant also states that the adjacent neighbour (occupier of Wingfield Castle) has been offered the barns to purchase on a number of occasions but there has been no commitment to date. Although the neighbour has commented on the application to confirm he still wishes to obtain these buildings to preserve them as they are. Given ten years has passed since the previous application and no resolution has been secured.

Subsequently, Officers also consider that clear and convincing justification for the conversion has been provided. The conversion would secure the long-term preservation and retention of these Listed Buildings especially given that the long barn is listed on the Buildings at Risk Register. It would also retain the group value of the Castle and Castle Farm.

### **Impact on Listed Building**

Paragraphs 132-134 of the NPPF details that great weight should be given to the conservation of the heritage asset. If development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. If less than substantial harm this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

The Inspector found the degree of subdivision of these barns to four dwellings (three within the long barn) in 2006 harmful to the character of the Listed barns and the appeal was dismissed on these grounds. This application has limited the conversion of the long barn to two units and the existing divisions are retained unaltered apart from a floor inserted in one bay. Internal glazing is also included to allow full internal views of the roof space to be maintained. The granary has also been re-designed to retain long sight lines and includes minimal sub-divisions. Given the extent of building this level of void retention is significant. The scheme proposed is considered therefore to reduce the harm identified by the Inspector.

Existing openings have been sensitively utilised and new openings have been kept to a minimum. Unlike to the 2006 application there are first floor windows to the north elevation of the long barn. However these are covered with louvres as to minimise the impact of the proposed domestic use.

The proposed conversion is therefore considered sensitive to the character and significance of the Listed barns. The removal of modern elements will lead to an enhancement and improvement to the setting of these barns.

MSDC's Heritage Team determine that the development causes less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset because of compromise to the buildings historic character arising from the change of use. However, this harm is limited.

The proposal will lead to the optimal viable use of these heritage assets ensuring their future conservation and retention but also maintaining the group value of the Castle and Farms. Consequently the public benefit of the conserving these important buildings outweighs the harm created by loss the agriculture function.

The scheme is therefore deemed to accord not only with Policy HB1, HB3, HB4 and HB5 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan but paragraph 132 and 134 of the NPPF where the conversion respects the character of the heritage asset and the public benefit outweighs the less than substantial harm.

### **Impact on the Listed Castle**

Unlike other cases within Mid Suffolk the barns are adjacent to Wingfield Castle (private residents) a significant building Listed as Grade I. Wingfield Castle was Listed in 1955 at which time the barns were under separate ownership. The barns therefore do not form part of the curtilage of Wingfield Castle and were listed in their own right in 2003. However, the Listing Description of the Barns does refer to the relationship of the barns with Wingfield Castle and argues that they form a "significant group both visually and historically". The physical and historic relationship between the Castle and Barns is clear, for example taking a map of the area for 1904 this shows tracks, accesses and the functional relationship between the Castle and the barns and today the entrance points along the Castle boundary while brooked are identifiable.

Policies SB2, HB1, HB3 and HB5 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan state, inter alia, that when considering proposals for development in the vicinity of a listed building, special attention will be given to the need to protect its setting, and any new developments affecting the setting must be in harmony with its surroundings.

The scheme submitted in 2006 was refused due to the impact of the conversion on the setting of the Castle. It was considered that the change of use will bring with it domestic trappings, washing lines and lighting that given the prominent position and location in respect of the Castle will adversely affect the currently quiet, unlit agricultural rural setting the castle currently enjoys. Furthermore the historic relationship and character of the farmstead will be changed by the modern fabric, windows and domestic use that will be visible from a number of viewpoints from the Castle. Furthermore the group of buildings have a visual hierarchy from Castle to farm dwelling to ancillary barns which has remained untouched.

The Inspector however was unconvinced by this argument that the residential use would harm the setting of the Castle. This did not form a reason for the appeal dismissal.

Within Annex 2 of the NPPF the setting of a historic asset is defined as '*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral*'.

The Castle is an impressive and imposing building. The barns will not change in form and the new and existing openings have been designed to indicate the functional use. The hierarchy and relationship between these building will remain distinguishable and decipherable. The external materials also signify the hierarchy and relationship between the former ancillary farm buildings and castle.

The proposed development has been designed so that first floor windows on the north elevation (facing the castle) have louvres to reduce the visual intrusion of domestic trappings (curtains) and retain the agricultural appearance. Additionally the openings on ground floor of the north elevation are minimal with only one door.

The Heritage appraisal draws new attention to the position and orientation of the

barn, concluding that it forms part of a designed, formal approach to the main barn, a point which has not been explicitly addressed before. The Inspector's view was that any use, including continued agricultural use, would result in some level of disturbance and intrusion, but removal of 1900s additions and buildings would enhance the setting of the barn, and the wider setting of the Castle. The integrity of the physical layout of the barn and Castle, as now understood, is compromised by the 1800s additions and alterations which partly screen the farm buildings from the Castle grounds. This new understanding of the significance of the layout is not considered to amplify the level harm beyond what the Inspector found acceptable.

The area between the castle and barns is north facing and within the shadow of the large long barn and boundary trees. It is thus unlikely this area will be used for washing lines or as the main garden area. This rear area is to be seeded with wild meadow flower with fruit trees along the boundary edge. Any new domestic structures such as sheds or fencing would be controlled by the limited permitted development rights for listed buildings. It is noted that an existing outbuilding associated with the domestic use of the Castle abutting the boundary trees and visible within the site. There is already an element of domestic use in this area.

Whilst the domestic use may be visible, due to the sensitive design of the conversion and the reduction of units from four to three; the ability to appreciate the significance of the castle and the way we experience the building will not be harmed. Especially the intervisibility between the two. The Heritage Team support the proposal stating the scheme will cause less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets but the harm is limited and has been minimised. Then public benefits outweigh of preserving these buildings outweigh the harm.

### **Conclusion**

Residential use is deemed the optimal viable use and will secure the long term conversion and preservation of these buildings. The change of use of these listed barns has been sensitively designed to respect the character and appearance of the historic assets. The change of use is not deemed to harm the setting of the Grade I Listed Building adjacent to the site. The ability to appreciate and understand the significance of the Castle will remain intact.

The development will result in less than substantial harm and the public benefit of securing the long term conservation of these buildings outweigh the minimal harm caused by the change of use.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That, the Corporate Manager- Development Management, the Corporate Manager be authorised to grant Listed Building Consent subject to the following conditions:-**

- **Time Limit**
- **Accord with Approved Plans**
- **Agree all external materials and finishes**
- **Submit timber survey and repair schedule to be agreed**
- **Agree fenestration details**

- Implementation of landscaping
- Notwithstanding details submitted, means of Insulation shall be agreed
- Schedule of repairs to single storey wings

Philip Isbell  
Corporate Manager - Development Management

Rebecca Biggs  
Planning Officer

## **APPENDIX A - PLANNING POLICIES**

### **1. Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Development Plan Document and the Core Strategy Focused Review**

**Cor5** - CS5 Mid Suffolks Environment

**Cor1** - CS1 Settlement Hierarchy

**CSFR-FC1** - PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**CSFR-FC1.1** - MID SUFFOLK APPROACH TO DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### **2. Mid Suffolk Local Plan**

**HB13** - PROTECTING ANCIENT MONUMENTS

**HB1** - PROTECTION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

**HB2** - DEMOLITION OF LISTED BUILDINGS

**HB3** - CONVERSIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

**HB5** - PRESERVING HISTORIC BUILDINGS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE USES

**HB4** - EXTENSIONS TO LISTED BUILDINGS

**SB2** - DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATE TO ITS SETTING

## **APPENDIX B - NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS**

Letters of representation have been received from a total of 2 interested parties.

The following people **objected** to the application

[REDACTED]

The following people **supported** the application:

The following people **commented** on the application: