

AGENDA ITEM NO: 8/3(n)

Parish:	Thornham	
Proposal:	Demolition of two barns and development of 8 new residential dwellings	
Location:	Land S of Manor Farm And W of Ringstead Road Thornham Norfolk	
Applicant:	Fleur Development Ltd	
Case No:	16/00618/F (Full Application)	
Case Officer:	Mr C Fry	Date for Determination: 31 May 2016 Extension of Time Expiry Date: 28 February 2017

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Called in by Councillor Watson and the views of Thornham Parish Council is contrary to the Officer recommendation.

Case Summary

The application site lies within an area of “Countryside” and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site is adjacent to the development boundary of Thornham and Thornham Conservation Area.

The site lies on the western side of Ringstead Road and contains 2 portal framed buildings with associated hard standing.

The application seeks consent for the demolition of the 2 barns and the construction of 8 units, 3 of which will be affordable housing units.

Key Issues

Principle of Development
Form and Character
Impact upon the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Impact upon Designated Heritage Assets
Impact upon Neighbour Amenity
Highway Safety
Ecology
Affordable Housing Provision
Flood Risk and Drainage
Other Material Considerations

Recommendation

REFUSE

THE APPLICATION

The application site lies within an area designated as “Countryside” according to proposal maps for Thornham. The site is also contained within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and abuts the Conservation Area to the north. Opposite the entrance to the site is Thornham Hall Grade II* listed building. The site is approximately 660m north east of a Roman Signal station which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The application site is on the western side of Ringstead Road. The site is accessed via an unmade track that serves two portal framed barns on the site. One barn is adjacent to the access track with its ridge line at 90 degrees to the road and the other barn is set back on the site towards the north-west corner with its ridge line parallel to Ringstead Road.

The site slopes away in a northerly direction with hedging along the roadside and northern boundaries. The site is only partially enclosed on the western boundary with ranch style fencing. The fencing acts to enclose a communal area used by the residents of the Manor Farm holiday cottage complex. The complex is immediately to the north of the site.

Agricultural fields lie to the south of the site. Residential properties are to the north and east of the site.

The properties on Ringstead Road are primarily two storey in scale and are either terraced or detached in form. There is a distinct difference in character between the western and eastern sides of Ringstead Road. Beyond the first few cottages on the western side of Ringstead Road is the Manor farm complex which is set back from the road and only has low level hedging to the roadside frontage to enclose it. The western side heading south on Ringstead Road has a green and open feel to it at this point. On the eastern side of Ringstead Road the properties are contained behind established, dense roadside hedging and walling that screens them from being active in the street scene.

The proposal was originally a scheme for 7 dwellings with 1 affordable unit and a footpath linking the site with Thornham Deli and the Village Hall to the west, following the demolition of the barns on the site. The scheme now proposes 8 dwellings, 3 of which are to be affordable with a footpath provided from the site to the junction of High Street with Ringstead Road.

The layout, appearance and scale of the properties portrays a converted barn complex and tries to draw inference in its design from the adjacent Manor Farm complex and properties in the vicinity. The appearance and scale of the properties range from single storey through to full storey in height.

Parking is provided in the form of cart-sheds and a wildlife/biodiversity grassed area is provided along the majority of the southern boundary.

SUPPORTING CASE

The application has been furnished with the following suite of documents:-

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
- Heritage Statement
- Ecological Report
- Planning Statement

- Contamination Report
- Surface Water Drainage Report

The agent has provided a summary of their case

The Councils housing delivery requirements and 5 year land supply calculations detail that to meet with housing demand a large proportion of new dwellings will need to be provided for through windfall development.

As this proposal is not in a town, smaller village or hamlet the Councils adopted definition (p439 SADM) allows for development to take place subject to the outcome being sustainable.

The proposal has been fully informed by an analysis of the site and its landscape context; the resulting scheme will provide a high quality small-scale residential development that is a logical extension to the village and contributes positively to its character.

As set out in the consultation response by the Norfolk Coastal Partnership, the current “agricultural buildings are modern and functional design, and do not provide a positive landscape element” This is reinforced by comments from Historic England. The proposal provides an opportunity to replace these unattractive buildings with a development that respects the qualities of Thornham Conservation Area and its surrounding countryside.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted with the final scheme appraises the effects of the proposed development that respects the qualities of Thornham Conservation Area and its surrounding countryside.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted with the final scheme appraises the effects of the proposed development on townscape, landscape character and views, including the Thornham Conservation Area and Norfolk Coast AONB. The LVIA concludes that the residual local landscape and visual effects of the completed development are positive. In respect of the AONB the LVIA concludes that the proposals will not change the key characteristics that contribute to the quality of the area; and will provide local landscape and visual benefits.

Dwellings are designed to positively front on to the Manor Farm on Ringstead Road, with car parking and the domestic gardens visually contained in the centre of the site; the buildings will be enclosed by a multi-functional landscape buffer providing wildlife habitat with strategic planting to integrate the buildings into the landscape against the backdrop of the existing village.

The positive setting and views of the village from the south, of varied rooftops set amongst trees, will be maintained and enhanced through the removal of the functional modern agricultural buildings and the landscape planting.

The proposal also comes forward in lieu of a conversion into one or two large dwellings under Permitted Development Rights, which would not meet any identified need nor would it, deliver affordable housing.

The planning balance to be applied in this instance results the positive benefits of the development strongly outweighing any negative matters. These benefits include:-

- 5 Market Dwellings, in Thornham responding to the Core Strategy which saw Thornham as a settlement capable of accommodating 5 new homes.
- 3 affordable dwellings – one affordable home for rent and two shared equity units.

- Delivery within 3 years
- Removal of significant existing agricultural barns in close proximity to existing dwellings to the benefit of their residential amenity, the conservation area and AONB.
- Replacement dwellings of the highest quality design and materials that reinforce and enhance character of the Conservation Area.
- Landscape planting to benefit the AONB.
- Ecology/bio-diversity improvements
- Economic investment to make the viability of the village more robust
- Upgrade of a road access and provision of a footpath along Ringstead Road to Highway Authority standards.

Fleur have not sought to extract themselves from any community or public benefit and have delivered a scheme with no objections and the support of Thornham Parish Council and Historic England and will deliver both an affordable and market mix of new homes that the general public in the village entirely support.

This application should be viewed positively and proactively and offers a window of opportunity to provide an unrivalled number of affordable homes to meet an identified need in the village.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no recent relevant site history

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council: NO OBJECTION to the original scheme, the parish council would also like to be involved regarding affordable housing and the 106 funding of £24,000. Please can the Parish Council be involved in any decisions regarding ownership/who lives in it and in which way/s the £24,000 will be spent.

in regards to the 8 unit scheme: NO OBJECTION the Parish Council are not happy with the development being outside the village envelope as they do not wish to set precedent, but feel that the need for affordable housing is a priority to sustain the community. The Council would like to see a condition placed on the application regarding drainage, and making sure that it does not add to the continuing problem within the village with regards to the surface water.

NCC Highways: comments that whilst the proposed layout is acceptable, a pedestrian footpath linking the existing footpath, which ceases outside 7 Ringstead Road, with the application site would be both commensurate with the proposed development and necessary to accommodate the increased number of pedestrian movements from the dwellings. I would request that the applicant details a new footpath link measuring 1.5m along Ringstead Road into the proposal site.

In regards to the 8 unit scheme – the officer has confirmed that NCC has no objection to the 8 unit scheme subject to condition.

Environment Agency: NO OBJECTION to the 7 unit scheme, Anglian Water Services Ltd. should be consulted by the Local Planning Authority and be requested to demonstrate that the sewerage and sewage disposal systems system within the development have capacity.

Surface water from roads and impermeable vehicle parking areas shall be discharged into trapped gullies.

The site is located above a principal aquifer; however we do not consider this proposal to be high risk.

We consider any infiltration (SuDS) greater than 2m below ground level to be a deep system that are generally not acceptable. All Suds will require a minimum of 1.2m clearance between the base of infiltration SuDs and peak seasonal ground water levels.

In regards to the 8 units scheme no further comments to add.

Environmental Health & Housing – Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION subject to contamination and asbestos conditions being imposed

Housing Enabling Officer: comments in regards to the 8 unit scheme that a 20% provision is required on sites capable for accommodating 5 or more dwellings and/or 0.165ha in Thornham. This is split into 70% being made available for rent and 30% for shared ownership or any other intermediate definition within NPPF, meets an identified need in the Borough and is agreed by the Council. In this instance 1.6 units would be required. This would be a dwelling for rent and financial contribution of £36,000. Alternatively the owner could provide 2 dwellings and no financial contribution. This would be one rent dwelling and 1 shared equity dwelling should be provided.

I note the application has proposed 3 affordable dwellings, 1 for rent and 2 for shared equity. Whilst this is overprovision and welcomed, this would be voluntary and the s106 agreement would only secure the policy requirement as set out above.

The applicant has stated that all of the affordable housing will be 2 bed houses and I confirm that this would meet an identified need.

Historic Environment service: NO OBJECTION subject to conditions

Minerals and Waste Policy: the application site is not on mineral safeguarding area nor does it fall within the consultation area of any existing mineral site

NCC Lead Local Flood Authority: this relates to minor development accordingly there is no requirement to consult.

Norfolk Coastal Partnership manager: comments in relation to the 7 unit scheme although affordable housing is needed along the North Norfolk Coast and public response has included several letters of support with no objections, I have a number of concerns regarding it.

Primarily the site is outside of the development boundary and there would be a case of an application as an exception site that provided exclusively “affordable housing” to meet proven needs, which could be retained, but this is not what is being proposed. Whilst there is a requirement for 5 dwellings in Thornham, and the proposed development being not much larger in the nominal allocation, the development of seven dwellings on this single proposed site is also not acceptable in principle because it is outside the village development envelope.... One social rented dwelling is not sufficient public benefit to justify the scheme or precedent to develop outside the village envelope.

Also although the agricultural buildings are modern and functional in design, and do not provide a positive landscape element, they could be replaced in a position near the proposed development, so this minor benefit could be negated.

In regards to the 8 unit scheme recognition that the replacement of a previously proposed 4-bedroom dwelling with 2 x 2 bedroom shared equity properties is likely to provide more local benefit as long as locally “affordable” dwellings can be retained as such in the long term.

However I still have concerns about this proposed development and do not consider that the concerns expressed in my response in August 2016 to previous proposals have been fully overcome, and refer you to these comments. A number of valid reasons for constraint on development in Thornham are stated in the Local Plan allocations document.

However, I am happy for the Borough Council to assess the potential local benefits of the proposed development against potential impacts and consequences, including on the special qualities of the Norfolk Coast AONB and nearby North Norfolk Heritage Coast, as well as its various nature conservation designations.

Historic England comments in regards to 7 unit scheme the revised layout including the repositioning of buildings along the street frontage of Ringstead Road which now have a better relationship with the character of the conservation area. Although a gable would be visible on the approach to the village, this would not be uncharacteristic and there would be some screening from planting on the boundary.

Rooflines have been revised to create more varied ridge height which has improved the relationship with existing buildings.

A limited pallet of materials should be used including brick and possibly some flint and that all roofs should be red clay pantiles to relation the existing roofscape.

In regards to the 8 unit scheme our previous comments still stand.

Conservation Area Advisory Panel: comments in regards to the 8 unit scheme although the Conservation Area Advisory Panel consider the removal of the existing agricultural building would be a positive move in that it would enhance the setting of the Conservation Area etc. They felt that if the developed the revised layout and perspective were looking acceptable.

In regards to the 8 unit scheme – the panel were generally supportive but would wish to see revisions to the fenestration around the doors to Plot 1.

Conservation Officer: comments in regards to the 8 unit scheme are in line with those of the Conservation Area Advisory Panel.

Police Architectural Liaison Officer: comments in regards to the 7 unit scheme that the cul-de-sac design overlooking the public area gives a sense of ownership and encourages a feeling of community and discourages anyone intent on criminal behaviour.

Good surveillance onto the public areas from all the plots. The cartsheds do not protect vehicles or items within them and the footpath (towards the village hall) should not be included in the design

Comments in regards to the 8 unit scheme will be reported in late correspondence if received.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service comments that they would require a fire hydrant installed.

REPRESENTATIONS

13 letters received in support of the original submitted application on the following grounds:-

- Well considered and designed and limited impact on the surrounding countryside.
- Improvement on the existing barns which blight the view and this part of the village
- Design and materials proposed look in keeping
- No more larger homes built for second ownership
- Supports facilities in the village
- The current metal barns are an eyesore
- As you are aware Thornham and the surrounding areas rely heavily tourism and are in an AONB.
- Thornham is capable of seeing a development of around 5 new homes.
- Volume and size of building is much less than the existing and would provide a better entrance to the village
- Better neighbour than the existing barns
- The properties would enjoy a wonderful view

7 letters received in support of the amended 8 unit scheme

- Great improvement on what is presently there
- Sustains the village hall and Thornham Deli
- Brings younger people into the village

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework – sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance - Provides National Planning Practice Guidance, in support of and in addition to the NPPF

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS09 - Housing Distribution

CS11 - Transport

CS12 - Environmental Assets

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES PLAN 2016

DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM2 – Development Boundaries

DM15 – Environment, Design and Amenity

DM17 - Parking Provision in New Development

DM22 - Protection of Local Open Space

OTHER GUIDANCE

Conservation Area Character Statement.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Main Planning Considerations in regards to this application are:-

- Principle of Development and Planning History
- Form and Character
- Impact upon the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Impact upon the Conservation Area.
- Impact upon Neighbour Amenity
- Highway Safety
- Ecology
- Affordable Housing Provision
- Other Material Considerations

Principle of Development and Planning History

The proposal was originally for 7 dwellings (1 of which would be affordable) which has since been revised to 8 dwellings, 3 of which are to be affordable. The site is contained in an area defined as “Countryside” according to the Site Allocation and Development Management Plan Document.

Justification for the proposal, according to the Applicant’s planning agent is based on the site being a “windfall” site. The agent refers to the Council relying on windfall development as part of the Council’s requirement to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites.

The agent refers to documentation provided by the Planning Policy team at the Public Inquiry for an appeal at Heacham, where Thornham was said to be able to accommodate 5 dwellings over the plan period, albeit no suitable site was identified in the site allocation process. The agent therefore considers this site to satisfy Thornham’s requirement for housing over the 5 year period and is a suitable windfall site. However windfall sites will be those coming forward within the villages, not generally justified unallocated sites outside of the settlement boundaries.

Policy CS01 – Spatial Strategy – Sustainable development locations states “that approximately 90% of new residential development will take place in areas identified within the settlement hierarchy to ensure reasonable access to services satisfying basic day to day

needs. Policy CS02 - identifies Thornham as being a Rural Village. Rural villages can accommodate limited minor development which meets the needs of settlements and helps to sustain existing services in accordance with Policy CS06 – development in rural areas.

The strategy for Rural Villages as outlined in Policy CS06 is to consider more modest levels of development as detailed in Policy CS09 to meet local needs and maintain the vitality of these communities where this can be achieved in a sustainable manner, particularly with regard to accessibility to housing, employment, services and markets and without detriment to the character of the surrounding area or landscape. Sites may be allocated for affordable or exception housing in accordance with criteria to support the housing strategy. Policy CS06 goes on to state “Beyond the villages and in the countryside the strategy will be to protect the countryside for intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, and its natural resources to be enjoyed by all. The development of Greenfield sites will be resisted unless essential for agricultural or forestry needs.”

Policies DM2 of the Development Management Plan Document provide further guidance in regards to the principle of development. Policy DM 2 – Development Boundaries states “the areas outside of development boundaries (except for specific allocations for development) will be treated as countryside where new development will be more restricted and will be limited to that identified as being suitable in rural areas by other policies of the local plan, including, farm diversification, small scale employment, tourism facilities community facilities, renewable energy generation, rural workers housing and affordable housing.”

In policy CS09 and DM2 (above) it states “it is appropriate to consider the exceptional provision of affordable housing within the Rural Village Classification”.

Accordingly unless other material considerations in respect to the proposal outweighs the development plan policies in regards to the principle of the development in accordance with S38 (6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the proposal would fail on principle grounds.

In terms of the planning history of the site, the site has been submitted for allocation in the Site Specific Allocation and Development Management Plan Document, but it is important note that it was not considered for allocation due to the impact of the development upon the AONB.

The site has been re-submitted for allocation in the call for sites process.

Form and Character

The site is on the western side of Ringstead Road, Thornham, contained behind hedging. The site slopes away in a northerly direction and contains 2 farm buildings that are served from Ringstead Road. The farm buildings on the site are portal framed pitched roof buildings. One portal framed building has its ridge line parallel with the northern boundary of the site and the other farm building is set further back on the site and has its ridge line at 90 degrees to the northern boundary.

The form and character of development of Ringstead Road comprises of two storey cottages and detached properties. The two storey cottages, that form the Manor Farm complex, immediately to the north of the site, are constructed from flint and pantile with red brick quoin, header and cill detailing. These properties have evolved over time with some having wedge style dormers. Small amenity spaces are provided to these holiday cottages, but these are not private and are enclosed areas by virtue of being enclosed with low level hedging or low height walling. Parking is laid out informally on a large gravel area around the complex. This complex is set back from the roadside frontage.

The opposite side of Ringstead Road has larger detached properties contained behind dense hedging. These properties are two storey in scale, and are only partially seen in the street scene through driveways or above the height of the hedging. The dense hedging and trees on the eastern side of the road offers a sense of enclosure which is contrary to the character of the western side of Ringstead Road which is more open with views of the wider landscape beyond.

Beyond Ringstead Road, High Street, with the exception of odd infill development, has two storey cottages constructed in red brick, pantile and flint. There is also evidence of 1/1/2 storey forms of development but this form of development is in the minority. The properties on High Street are generally hard onto the street with parallel ridge lines with the odd property being gable end on to the road.

The original layout proposed 7 dwellings and a footpath that linked the site to Thornham Deli and the Village Hall.

The revised layout proposes 8 dwellings served from the existing access that serves the farm buildings, albeit upgraded. Plots 2-4 are on the northern side of the access and are 2 storey in scale. Plot 2 has a gable end onto the Ringstead Road. On the southern side of the access plot 1, is a large 1/1/2 storey dwelling. This property has ridge lines both at 90 degrees and parallel to Ringstead Road.

Continuing into the site, towards the western boundary are plots 5-8. Plot 5 is single storey detached, Plot 6 is two storey link detached to Plot 7 and plots 7-8 are semi-detached two storey cottages.

Other features to note in the layout of the site include the provision of a wildlife flower grassed area adjacent to the southern boundary of the site and the planting of trees across the site. A footpath is also proposed to link the site to High Street.

The properties all demonstrate the use of multi-brick, flint and boarding.

The proposal provides a continuation of the Manor Farm complex development in terms of its scale, appearance and the layout. The use of parallel and gable end on features of the properties on the Ringstead Road frontage draws on the character of development in the wider locality.

The use of cart-sheds to provide covered parking is a common approach to designing covered parking in farm complex schemes.

The designs of the dwellings and the layout of the development conform to the form and character of development in the locality,

Impact upon the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The site is fully contained within the Norfolk Coast AONB. The site was submitted for site allocation but was ruled out on the impact development would have on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In considering the impact of development on the AONB, Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that "great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

In terms of development plan policies, Policy CS 12 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy – requires the Local Planning Authority to protect and enhance the landscape character.

In order to assess the impact upon the AONB of developing the site, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has accompanied the application by James Blake Associates; this is based on the original 7 unit scheme. The report refers to the massing of the existing buildings being broken down by their removal and redistributed across a slightly larger area, concentrating two storey elements of the new dwellings in the same locations as the current buildings/hard standing. The proposal is said to integrate into both the existing settlement and landscape context. The framework of planting, including the landscape buffer will provide further enhancement over time, contributing to the structure of vegetation into which the village sits. On completion of the development, the report states that there will subsequently be a moderate to minor beneficial visual effect within the immediate area. The residual permanent effects are subsequently classed Major Moderate to Moderate Beneficial.

No updated LVIA has been submitted in regards to the 8 unit scheme,

The Coastal Partnership manager commented in regards to the original unit scheme is referenced in the consultation response section of the report.

In regards to the 8 unit scheme, the coastal partnership manager comments that, in recognition of an additional smaller dwelling, following the removal of a 4 bedroom property, his concerns raised in his previous comments have not been fully overcome and states "there are a number of valid reasons for constraint on development in Thornham as stated in the Local Plan Document". The Manager's concluding paragraph refers the decision on whether the public benefit of the scheme outweighs the impact upon the special qualities of the Norfolk Coast AONB and nearby North Norfolk Heritage Coast, as well its various nature conservation designations, back to the Local Authority.

The Local Authority's Landscape Character Assessment would suggest that that the site lies on the very edge of the I3 classification of- Ringstead. The key characteristics of the I3 classification are the strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area. Landscape planning guidelines, according to the Assessment are to; - seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, seek to ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape and to seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.

Heading into Thornham from the north, views of the built form of the village are partly screened by green landscape features. What views are afforded of the built form are of limited massing and only when directly stood in front of the site is it appreciated that it the site is adjacent to the built form of the village.

Heading south out of the village on Ringstead Road, the built form soon recedes into the background either being screened by soft landscaping boundary treatments or the built form being set back a considerable distance from Ringstead Road. The relationship between the two portal framed barns provides a glimpse of the wider rolling landscape beyond.

Whilst the landscaping scheme details the use of hedgerows and soft landscaping features to break up the massing of the built form of the scheme, the hedgerows also acts to isolate and segregate the development from the existing built form.

The layout, therefore results in some harm to the character of the AONB which would need to be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme.

The main benefit to the scheme is providing over and above the policy requirements for affordable housing by providing 2 extra units on the site. This will be discussed later in the report.

Another benefit that the scheme is said to bring is the loss of agricultural barns on the site. These barns are standard agricultural barns seen across the rural area, and they are not in a state of disrepair and appear to be of sound structure. It would be expected that there are portal framed barns and as the Coastal Partnership manager states in his correspondence the barns could be replicated adjacent to the residential properties, subject to relevant consents.

The Agent's comment that the barns could be converted into three residential dwellings under Class Q of the Permitted Development Rights is not correct, by virtue of the barns being within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Impact upon the Designated Heritage Assets

The site abuts Thornham Conservation Area and is opposite the grounds of Thornham Hall which is Grade II* listed. Approximately 660m to the south west of the site is a Roman Signal Station which is a scheduled ancient monument.

The Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) places statutory duties upon Local Planning Authorities in determining applications that affect a Listed Buildings or its setting. Section 66(1) states that the Local Planning Authority 'shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting'. Section 72 requires the LPA to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area when determining applications affecting buildings or land within the Conservation Area or its setting.

The Thornham Conservation Area Character Statement refers to Ringstead Road in the following statement.

"On the west side Manor Farm buildings have been sympathetically converted to holiday cottages. Wedge Style dormer and occasional sky lights have been used to light roof spaces. On the east side the former vicarage, now Park House is an attractive early 20th Century Queen Anne style house". In respect of materials, the Conservation Area Character Statement refers to the use of Clunch chalk, rubble or squared with small pieces of carstone, flint and carstone."

No mention has been made within the Conservation Area Character statement of the character of development on Ringstead Road with the setting back of the Manor Farm complex and the green landscaping treatments of the properties on the eastern side.

In respect to Thornham Hall, the Conservation Area Character Statement states "it's a Neo-classical building in Adam style. Five bays of three storeys within one bay wings of two storeys. Diocletian windows top floor centre bay and first floor of wings".

The application has been accompanied by a Heritage Appraisal. The Heritage Statement provides an analysis of the Conservation Area, Thornham Hall and the Roman Fort and the impact the proposal will have on their significance as designated heritage assets.

The Heritage Statement identifies that the buildings in the Conservation Area are hard up against the pavement or only slightly set back. Some of the buildings on High Street have their gable ends fronting the road. In respect of Ringstead Road, the Heritage Statement states "when heading into the village, the properties are characterised by red pantiles and the high hedgerows on this road filters views to the application site"

In terms of Thornham Hall, Grade II* listed, the entrance driveway to which is on opposite the side of Ringstead Road, is said to be a later C20th addition according to the Heritage Statement and is of no historic significance. There is no known association between Thornham Hall and the application site.

The Heritage Statement refers to the Scheduled Ancient Monument as a Roman Fort (which may have served as a signal station) said to be of archaeological significance and this forms its primary heritage interest. There are no standing structures on the site only a defensive ditch with ramparts.

Historic England has no objection to proposal and its impact upon the setting of Thornham Hall, the Conservation Area and the Roman Fort.

The Conservation Area Advisory panel has made comments that whilst in general support of the scheme; they would prefer to see an alteration to the detailing of the fenestration above the door to Plot 1. The Conservation Officer's comments are in line with the Conservation Advisory comments.

As referred to within the Heritage Statement, not negating the paragraphs of 126 and 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take in account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character, the statutory test in the legislation is to preserve or enhance the setting of heritage assets.

Whilst the proposed dwellings do not use clunch, the dwellings are of similar proportions, portray barn/farmstead features akin to the neighbouring properties they do reinforce the significance of the Conservation Area, what current exists.

The current agricultural buildings are not considered to be a detractor to the Conservation Area, setting of the Thornham Hall or the setting of the Roman Fort. It must be noted that Historic England do not refer to these barns as a being detractors to the setting of these heritage assets, only referring to the barns as "not making a positive contribution" to the setting of these assets. Accordingly, the benefit of removing these barns to the significance of the setting of these heritage assets is not as great as that which is trying to be portrayed.

Impact upon Neighbour Amenity

There are no residential neighbours immediately to the west and south of the site and the neighbour directly opposite the site, Thornham Hall, is set well back in its extensive grounds.

The nearest residential neighbours are those at the Manor Farm barn complex.

Plots 2-4 overlook a communal access/parking area to the complex and are set inside the northern boundary of the site. The separation distance between plots 2-4 from those directly opposite is some 20m. This separation distance is considered to be adequate to overcome principle neighbour amenity issues.

Plot 5's outlook from first floor will look primarily over agricultural fields.

Plots 6-8 back onto a communal area that is used by the residents of the Manor Farm barn development; the very rear of the communal area will be overlooked from bedrooms at first floor from plots 6-8. However this communal area is for holiday occupants enjoyment and it is considered that this relationship is acceptable.

Plot 8 is adjacent to a pair of semi-detached dwellings on the Manor Farm complex. The nearest window in Plot 8 to these neighbours serves an en-suite. Provided this is obscurely glazed, which can be controlled by way of condition, this neighbour will not be detrimentally overlooked. The existing portal framed agricultural building is sited directly adjacent to this particular neighbour at Manor Farm and accordingly with plot 8 being sited further away from this neighbour than the existing portal framed building it would be an improvement in terms of this neighbour's experience of being overshadowed. The siting of the dwelling is not considered to cause overbearing issues upon this neighbour.

Emphasis has been placed on the removal of the agricultural barns being an improvement in terms of neighbour amenity, by their physical presence and use. The occupiers of the adjacent Manor Farm holiday complex would have been aware of the agricultural use of the adjacent land when purchasing the properties and would also be aware of the barns presence. Accordingly little weight is attached to this benefit.

Highway Safety

The proposal utilises the existing access between the portal framed barns.

A footpath that linked the site with Thornham Deli and the village hall was removed during the application as this footpath would not have been appropriately observed from rooms that are commonly used throughout the day/evening period and would potentially have been susceptible to crime.

The proposal has now included a footpath that runs from the site to join up with High Street and Ringstead Road at the recommendation of the Highways Officer.

The parking arrangements are in line with NCC standards and being carports, in a cartshed style, the internal dimensions do not need to be in line with the 7m x 3m dimensions as outlined in Policy DM 17 of the Development Plan Document.

The Highways Officer has commented that the proposal is satisfactory subject to conditions.

Ecology

The site contains a hedgerow along the Ringstead Road boundary and a low privet hedge. Hedgerows can contain nesting birds and can be foraging roosts for bats.

The nearest wooded area is some 420 metres south-east of the site within grounds of Thornham Hall. The nearest water course is the tidal creeks at Thornham and two potential ponds, the nearest being 282m to the north east. The ponds are marked on the OS map but not visited to confirm their continued existence or suitability.

The portal framed buildings on the site are enclosed and offer little potential habitats for bats and barn owls.

Nevertheless a phase 1 protected species report has accompanied the application.

The report states the following in relation to protected species

-Birds: - the hedgerows and barns presented are almost certain to support nesting songbirds; the improved grassland area has potential for ground nesting birds. However given the area is close to the village it is considered to be of relatively low significance for nesting birds.

The proximity to the village also makes adjacent arable field largely unsuitable for wintering waders and geese. The barns and a section of poor hedgerow will be removed, which will have a minor negative impact upon breeding birds. Breeding and wintering birds near to the site might be affected by disturbance and displacement.

-Mammals - there is no habitat on site for water vole and otter. There is no badger activity on site and no potential for bats to roost on the site. The habitat on site is not to be significant for foraging bats.

-The nearest pond is over 250m from the site and separated from it by houses and roads. The potential for transient individual such as a grass snake cannot be ruled out.

The report states in relation to species of principal importance such as brown hare and hedgehog may also occur close to the site; however given the small site footprint a disturbance is extremely unlikely and not significant.

Mitigation in the form of a replacement hedgerow with details of 5 native plant species and the £50 per house towards mitigation and monitoring of European sites will be required. Best practice measures can also be incorporated.

The scale of development and the characteristics of the site would rule out the need of a Habitats regulations assessment.

Affordable Housing provision

The site is in excess of 0.165ha and is a site in theory capable of accommodating 5 units. At a rate of 20% of the dwellings, 1.6 affordable housing units would be required. The 0.6 financial contributions equates to £36,000. The affordable housing unit would be a dwelling made available for rent. Alternatively the developer could choose to provide 2 dwellings and no financial contribution according to the Housing Enabling Officer. In that particular scenario 1 rented dwelling and 1 shared equity dwelling.

It is noted that the proposal is offering 3 affordable houses, which is in excess of the policy requirements, as a means of providing a benefit against the principle that this site is outside of the development boundary.

Flood risk and Drainage

The Environmental Agency have commented that the site is located above a principal aquifer, however they do not consider that the proposal is to be of high risk in terms of contaminating the principal aquifer.

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 of the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment maps which is the least restrictive flood zone.

In respect to drainage, a Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been submitted with the application. The development of the site will occupy 0.201 of hardstanding, including 0.105ha of porous construction techniques.

In order to mitigate against the increased hardstanding, the surface water drainage strategy refers to the use of rainwater butts to be provided, plot infiltration techniques, permeable drives and private access roads could be utilised. There will be no discharging of surface water to any watercourses.

Soakaways and permeable access drives have been designed to accommodate the 1 in 100 year event including the effects of climate change.

Future maintenance of the surface water drainage system will be the owner's responsibility. Where the surface water drainage is outside of the responsibility of the owner's individual plot, a Management Company will be formed. The maintenance company details could be secured by way of condition.

Foul water connection is available on Ringstead Road, The EA have commented that Anglian Water be contacted to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the network to accommodate the additional flows. Anglian Water does not ordinarily comment on sites of less than 9 dwellings. With Anglian Water asset maps identifying a foul water drainage connection in Ringstead Road it is not considered necessary to impose a foul water condition.

Other Material Considerations

The proposal offers an area of open space as a wildlife/grass area in the south west corner of the site. The area is not required for open space purposes and is not required for any protected species form of mitigation. Its provision is therefore a benefit in terms of bio-diversity, but it does not offset the loss of agricultural land in terms of its size. Accordingly little weight can be attached to this consideration.

The Police Architectural Liaison Officer has been consulted on the 8 unit scheme and comments will be reported in late correspondence if received.

Notwithstanding the contamination report conducted by Plandescil, the Environmental Health – Environmental Quality team require full contamination and asbestos conditions imposed.

The Historic Environment Service requires full archaeological conditions as the site is located in an area where artefacts of prehistoric to medieval date have been found.

Any benefits in terms of employment and facilitation of jobs during the construction of the development would be a short term benefit and not significant to outweigh principle issues. The number of dwellings proposed aid in the sustainability of existing services, but this would not outweigh the principle issue.

CONCLUSION

This site is outside of the development boundary, where as an established principle it should be refused. It is also within the AONB, where national guidance is clear that preservation of the AONBs character should have great weight.

Members will need to consider whether the proposal of 8 dwellings and the proposal of 3 affordable dwellings outweighs the in principle consideration that this site is within the countryside, and the restrictions that are applied to this restriction on residential development.

The benefits of the scheme are said to be the overprovision of affordable housing, the removal of the existing barns, an enhancement to the conservation area, ecology/bio-diversity improvements and economic investment in the village.

It is your officer's opinion that little weight should be attached to the benefits of the scheme, when weighing them against the principle issue of developing in the Countryside and the AONB.

The proposal would in fact only provide 1 additional affordable dwelling over and above what can be provided in policy terms.

The removal of the barns to be replaced by the development is acknowledged that to be enhancement beyond what currently exists, but the barns are not in a state of disrepair and not referred to any documentation as being a specific detractor to the AONB and the setting of designated heritage assets. Thus the removal of what are considered to be neutral structures in the rural landscape would be of small benefit that would not outweigh the principle of developing in the countryside and AONB.

The ecological/bio-diversity enhancements would be limited, especially considering the protected species report stating that the site being close to the built area of village is somewhat limiting in attracting wildlife.

Economic investment would be short term in the creation of jobs associated with the development and will have a limited effect in sustaining services within the village.

Given the above the in principle objection to developing the site should be upheld, and the application should be refused.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason(s):

- 1 The site lies outside the settlement boundary for Thornham as identified in the Site Specific Allocations and Development Management Policies Document 2016. The site is a greenfield site contained within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and it is considered that the merits of the scheme do not outweigh the general harm caused to the intrinsic character of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Countryside and the general conflict with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the policies of the development plan. The proposed development is therefore contrary to the provisions of Paragraphs 17, 55, 115 of the NPPF, Policy CS06, CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011 and Policy DM 2 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Document 2016.