

Parish:	West Acre	
Proposal:	The Stag Inn- Alterations and extension to pub, change of use to bedrooms for short-term letting. Enlarge the car park. Ford Cottage- Change of use from dwelling house to short-term let bedrooms including extension and alterations, car park and associated landscape work.	
Location:	Ford Cottage Low Road West Acre KINGS LYNN PE32 1TR	
Applicant:	Alec Birkbeck	
Case No:	22/01857/F (Full Application)	
Case Officer:	Connor Smalls	Date for Determination: 26 December 2022 Extension of Time Expiry Date: 12 January 2024

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Called in by Councillor Moriarty.

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

The application site relates to the combined plots of The Stag, an existing pub, and Ford Cottage, an existing and currently vacant dwelling, as well its associated plot and currently empty workshop building located on Low Road within the rural village of West Acre. The character of the area is rural in nature and lies within a sensitive locality.

The application seeks full planning permission for the refurbishment and extension of The Stag, on Low Road, West Acre which would see the provision of short term let rooms at first floor alongside works including to extend the car park and provision of cycle parking.

To Ford Cottage, immediately opposite The Stag, the application proposes the refurbishment and extension of the property to provide short term holiday let uses at first floor alongside a breakfast room, kitchen and 'snug' alongside further toilets at ground floor. Extensive landscaping is proposed to the Ford Cottage garden including a new car parking and cycle parking provision, areas of planting and paving.

The application site is adjacent to the River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the locality as well as the Scheduled Ancient Monument (the precinct of the medieval West Acre Priory) to the south.

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Key Issues

- Principle of development
- Form and character
- Impact on neighbour amenity
- Highway safety and parking
- Flood risk
- Ecology
- Impact on Trees
- Any other matters requiring consideration prior to determination of the application

Recommendation APPROVE

THE APPLICATION

The application site relates to the combined plots of The Stag, an existing pub, and Ford Cottage, an existing and currently vacant dwelling, located opposite each other on the corner of Low Road within the rural village of West Acre. West Acre is defined as a Smaller Village and Hamlet where only very limited development is acceptable. The character of the area is very rural in nature with limited built form. Neighbouring dwellings are located to the north and west of The Stag and to the North of Ford Cottage. The application site lies within a sensitive area with the River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the locality as well as the Scheduled Ancient Monument (the precinct of the medieval West Acre Priory) to the south.

The application seeks consent for the refurbishment and extension of The Stag which would see the provision of five short term let rooms at first floor. The extension would consist of a twin gable extension at first floor with single storey elements at ground floor. Alongside this, works to extend the car park and introduce cycle parking as well as disabled spaces, powered two wheeler parking (such as motorbikes and scooters etc), a storage shed and landscaping.

To Ford Cottage, the application proposes the refurbishment and extension of the property to provide four short term holiday let uses at first floor alongside a breakfast room, kitchen and 'snug' alongside further toilets at ground floor. The proposed extension/remodelling would be to the north and would consist of twin gables with an inset element between. Extensive landscaping is proposed to the Ford Cottage garden including a new car parking and cycle parking element, areas of planting and paving. To the south of Ford Cottage, two areas of hedging have seen gaps created which has then been offset in other areas of the site.

Overtime, elements have been removed from the scheme which has included a café at ground floor to Ford Cottage as well as the use of the workshop adjacent to Ford Cottage. Following the pre-application on site a village shop and cycle hire element were dropped prior to this application.

It is important to note that the current earth mound on site as a result of works already undertaken to the car park area will form part of a separate application in order to address the core considerations of the use proposed within this original application now.

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SUPPORTING CASE

None currently submitted.

PLANNING HISTORY

22/00029/PREAPP: INFORMAL - Likely to refuse: 14/04/23 - PRE-APPLICATION FULL (WITH CONSULTATIONS AND A MEETING): Remodelling of Stag Inn to provide additional holiday let beds and improved bar space. Change of use of Ford Cottage from house and light industrial workshop to cafe, farm shop, concessions and additional bedroom spaces (holiday let) - West Acre, Stag, Low Road, West Acre

05/01763/F: Application Withdrawn: 17/10/05 - Construction of 3 dwellings following demolition of redundant farm buildings - Land At Church Green, West Acre

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council: OBJECT -

West Acre Parish Council (WAPC) has discussed at some length the possibility of supporting the revised proposals if a suitably robust series of conditions can be agreed. These should be aimed at removing all areas of potential confusion where there is a possibility of misinterpretation, and which could have a negative impact on the village. Reluctantly therefore WAPC has to continue to object to these proposals on the grounds explained below but Councillors could change their position to one of support if appropriate conditions are agreed.

West Acre Parish Council (WAPC) is pleased to note that the revised application is more limited in scale and that it attempts to reflect some of the comments made by consultees. The last paragraph on page 3 of the DAS appears to confirm that Ford Cottage will be developed as self-catering accommodation, complementing, we assume, a fully catered B & B offer in the Stag Inn. If this is correct, then councillors think it is a positive change in that it will serve to limit the amount of crossroad pedestrian movement, reducing the risk of accidents on the blind highway corner between Low Road and Church Green.

However, councillors still find the catering arrangements difficult to interpret. This is because the descriptions of the proposals on pages 11 & 12 of the DAS suggest that the ground floor at Ford Cottage may actually also provide dining space and breakfast for both the bedrooms above the Stag Inn and at Ford Cottage. Councillors regret this continuing confusion and struggle to understand how self-catering and dining spaces together with kitchen use shared between guests and management can be combined. Councillors believe therefore that these matters remain to be clarified before impacts can be understood in full.

The generous provision of toilets on the ground floor contributes to this confusion. There is an accessible toilet but no accessible accommodation, and guests at Ford Cottage have facilities in their own rooms. A single unisex toilet is surely the most that is needed if the intended use of the premises is as stated. Councillors do remain disappointed that there is to be no provision for accessible or family rooms included in the accommodation offer.

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WAPC very much recognises that the pub is a facility valued by many members of the community, and that the proposed expansion of the business is likely to bring some employment opportunities to the area. We would however note that this is not a 'community venture' in the sense that it is not directed, owned, or financed by the community. For the sake of balance, we would also point out that some members of that same community have felt alienated by developments at the pub and sadly have taken their custom elsewhere.

Councillors welcomed the opportunity to have confidential sight of the business plan. However, we found it very limited in scope – not least in its time span - and based on a confusion between the finances for the existing pub and the proposed expansion of the business. It was therefore not clear that the pub itself is not viable. There were also a number of miscalculations, some contradictions and an apparent confusion between set-up costs and running costs. While we welcome small scale employment opportunities (in line with the local plan) we think these should be based on a much clearer financial model.

If officers are recommending approval, WAPC would wish to see suitable conditions imposed because councillors remain concerned about the potential increase in both pedestrian and vehicular traffic on the narrow village lanes. The pub and Ford Cottage are located in a quiet residential area which is clearly not the village centre, and we would therefore expect to see conditions focused on ensuring that no further expansion is permitted.

We would suggest therefore the conditions listed below are needed in order to.

1. Conform to the local plan
 2. Protect village character
 3. Protect residential amenity
 4. Reduce cross movement of the highway
- Limit the use of the ground floor and garden at Ford Cottage to guests of the self-catering B & B only.
 - No further expansion of the pub and B&B business to be permitted beyond the current proposals.
 - Booking conditions specify that occupation of the accommodation is not permitted for large groups or for use such as stag and hen parties. This is in line with the tourist market outlined on page 1 of the DAS and not uncommon elsewhere.
 - Contact numbers of local personnel are made available should there be any problems with incidents such as anti-social behaviour - or - provision is made for a resident manager.
 - Reinstate the banks and hedgerow in the recently created gaps in the highway verge to the immediate south of Ford Cottage and on Fullers Lane. We note that there is easy access from Fullers Lane via the field gate for maintenance, so the new openings should not be needed for this purpose. (If it is proved that they are, the gap should be gated)
 - Install additional highway signage limiting the speed of vehicles entering and exiting the pub car park.
 - Install clear signage reminding pub patrons that the pub is located in a quiet residential area, and they should be respectful of that fact especially when leaving late at night.
 - Music to be limited to indoors, and specific limits to be imposed on the number and nature of events.
 - Control the venting of odours from kitchens etc.
 - Control Lighting – this corner of the village has always enjoyed dark skies and we note the Pub is already considerably brighter than it was.

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Councillors have also noted the advice that a further retrospective application is due to be submitted in order to seek approval for the recently constructed large mound with tunnels. This is already being used as a play area by some children visiting pub events with family. We have concerns about noise, safety, visual impact, and its incongruous nature. Councillors note that retrospective applications rarely offer a full and fair assessment of impacts, and it would have been better therefore for the mound feature to be included in this application so that all consultees had the opportunity to consider the bigger picture in a more comprehensive fashion. Members of the community were given an absolute assurance in a public meeting a few years ago that West Acre Estate would make no further retrospective applications. The current mention of a new retrospective application does lead us to question the assurances given in the current proposals and therefore to ask for the conditions listed above.

An overview is also important with regard to the increasing commercial pressures that are changing the nature of the village. The council would like to see much greater consideration given to such cumulative impacts.

Councillors would also note that there is already a great deal of holiday accommodation in this area of Norfolk. This application removes what were two family homes from the housing market. Given the increasing housing crisis we now face, WAPC would ask that this also be taken into consideration.

Highways Authority: NO OBJECTION -

No objection is raised to the final scheme. Conditions are recommended as well as an informative that would be included should the application be approved.

Public Rights of Way Officer: NO OBJECTION -

We have no objections on Public Rights of Way grounds as there are none in the vicinity. The Norfolk Trail known as The Nar Valley Way is aligned along the track adjacent to the Ford Cottage site, we would request that access remain available at all times.

Conservation Officer: NO OBJECTION -

No objections are raised to the revised scheme, however conditions are recommended for materials, doors and window details as well as landscaping.

Historic Environment:

The field to the north of the Inn has produced artefacts of Roman, Saxon, medieval and later dates. In addition aerial photographs, surveys and artefacts show that the field to the east of Stag Cottage contained medieval settlement. The precinct of the medieval West Acre Priory (a Scheduled Monument) lies immediately to the south. Consequently, there is potential that heritage assets with archaeological interest (buried archaeological remains) will be present at the site and that their significance will be adversely affected by the proposed development.

If planning permission is granted, we therefore ask that this be subject to a programme of archaeological mitigatory work in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework. Conditions are recommended and would be attached to an approval.

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Historic England: NO OBJECTION -

The proposed development site lies adjacent to the scheduled monument of 'West Acre Priory, and square barrow within the precinct' (List Entry Number 1008352). Based on the available information we consider that the proposed development would not have any adverse impact on the setting of the Priory scheduled monument and would not cause any harm to its significance.

However, we note and support the comments of the Borough Council's Conservation Team regarding the design and materials of the proposed extensions and the comments of Norfolk County Council Environment Service relating to non-designated buried archaeological remains.

Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION -

Due to the age of the property on site there is the potential for asbestos containing materials to be present- an informative is recommended for any approval. The information submitted does not indicate the presence of significant land contamination. However, the former use as a Blacksmiths yard means that it's possible that some unexpected contamination could be present. Therefore, a condition is recommended for any approval.

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.

Ecology: NO OBJECTION -

A lighting strategy will indeed need to be conditioned and must be agreed in consultation with a professional ecologist and in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Engineers.

The Proposed Site Plan shows that new hedgerow will be planted along the north-eastern boundary and along parts of the western boundary which borders Low Road. This is considered sufficient to offset the loss from the hedgerow that has been removed.

The updated information addressed my previous objection. If you are minded to grant consent please condition the lighting strategy.

Arboricultural Officer: NO OBJECTION -

No objection is raised to the latest proposal subject to conditions regarding the development being protected and carried out in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment as well as hard and soft landscaping details. These conditions are recommended for any approval.

Community Safety and Neighbourhood Nuisance:

There are no objections to The Stag Inn.

Despite the revised D&A Statement and plans, we still have an objection to Ford Cottage.

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The dining space still shows capacity for sixteen persons, yet there are only four double bedrooms in Ford Cottage. With a kitchen and dining space in The Stag, we do not see the requirement for breakfast facilities to be supplied for guests of the pub across the road in Ford Cottage. The desirability for a kitchen and breakfast room in Ford Cottage is recognised, however, having this as self-catering seems an unlikely scenario. We remain hugely concerned that to allow this permission as presented would likely result in this becoming a shared space, café or open access building and site for much larger numbers than ought to be (through the 8 persons maximum room capacity), particularly if the cycle hire and 'open' cycle spaces are included. This would be at detriment to residential amenity and we object (unless robust planning conditions can be utilised to control the use of the garden and house only for the occupiers of the four Ford Cottage bedrooms, including removal of cycle hire for 'tourists' who are not residing in the premises.)

The earth bank is still stated to be the subject of a separate planning application. It has still not been stated clearly what the purpose of this bank is and no elevational etc details have been shown on plans. Again, as it has been used as a play space for children, it appears to us that this is to facilitate a public/open use of the garden at Ford Cottage for passers-by and users of The Stag Inn, and no details have been supplied to the contrary. We object to this on residential amenity grounds.

REPRESENTATIONS

KLWNBUG The Norfolk and Fens Cycling Campaign (summarised for clarity)

Original comment:

The Stag Inn is in a location with great potential for cycle-tourism. It is brilliant to see the cycle parking provision much increased and, as it is on a road that already has a 20mph limit, could the objection from NCC Highways be resolved by making Low Road one way for motorists east of the church?

The current plans aren't "meeting NCC's parking guidelines" because the cycle parking is sited further from the entrances than the regular car parking, contrary to the "Essential cycle parking requirements" on page 35 of the Parking Guidelines. Additionally, the Parking Guidelines and National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 112 (a) and (c) effectively require that cycle parking is reached without conflicting with cars manoeuvring in the car park. Finally, the close proximity of the bins to both areas of cycle parking is also unattractive and likely to discourage cycling.

It would be better if the bulk of non-resident cycle parking could be provided near The Stag entrance, instead of requiring most visitors arriving by cycle to cross a Low Road near a blind bend. I am not sure whether this is a safety concern for NCC Highways.

Additional comment (following amended plans):

Thanks the applicant for addressing KLWNBUG's comments with regard to the cycle parking split and location and wish them well with finding an acceptable resolution for other consultee objections.

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Public Comments

To latest plans: **SIX** public **OBJECTIONS** regarding:

- No changes to address highway safety concerns.
- The site location is not the village centre- it is on a blind bend.
- Church Green and Low Road should be designated as pedestrian priority with the status of “a quiet lane” and with consideration given to further reducing the speed limit. Additional signage is needed at the exit to the pub carpark to remind patrons of the prevailing speed limit and of the need to respect the quiet residential character of this part of the village.
- A recent event helped by The Stag Pub/West Acre Estate used the garden at Ford Cottage as a base for a charity run. This event was advertised at starting and finishing at the Stag- evidence of future plans for both sites.
- The property should remain as a private dwelling providing a home for a single family, housing should now be a priority over holiday lets.
- Does not agree that The Stag currently has a "small but loyal customer base"- illustrates not conducting proper market research.
- No actual evidence is presented that the pub requires a development on this scale in order to be viable.
- At Ford Cottage no meaningful data or research on potential traffic movement and footfall numbers that would result from these proposed changes- increase in highway safety issues.
- The two properties are likely to be treated by as one site with a dual function. This means that Stag customers will be allowed to access facilities and the grounds at Ford Cottage and The Ford Cottage bed and breakfasters will also be allowed to use the Stag facilities- increase in pedestrian safety issues. How will this be effectively managed in order to limit the use of Ford Cottage and gardens to B & B residents only.
- If the flow of patrons across the road is to be controlled then the highway verge and hedgerow on Fullers Lane will need to be reinstated.
- *Additional signage may also be required to ensure all patrons understand that Ford Cottage and garden is for B & B guests only.
- The "adventure playground" mound- needs to be removed or made inaccessible.
- The current application may not yet fully describe the applicant's vision for greater public use of what was a private residential garden and that this is not being debated as part of the current application.
- Insufficient noise mitigation.
- Ambiguity over future use.
- No provision for on-site staff accommodation and no other suggestion as to how anti-social behaviour might be prevented and/or controlled, or how emergencies are dealt with.
- The Borough Council should approve the plans for the Stag, but refuse the plans for Ford Cottage.
- Reiteration of the disproportionate scale of the development based on West Acre as a smaller village and hamlet.
- A bat colony has been seriously disturbed, hedgerows have been destroyed in the nesting season, and hedgehogs have disappeared from the vicinity.
- Cumulative effect of continued development in the small village of West Acre (expansion of the theatre, expansion of Duration brewery, expansion of the Stag Pub, change of use at Ford Cottage).

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To previous consultations: **FIVE** public **NEUTRAL** comments regarding:

- Over intensification of vehicular movement.
- Detrimental impact on residential amenity.
- Highway and pedestrian safety concerns.
- Opening hours of The Stag.
- Amenity impacts- noise from intensified use, music from inside and odour.
- Excessive lighting.
- Drainage.
- Bin stores close to boundaries.
- Impact on bats.
- Size and location of garden on plans. Play area.
- Solar array.
- Catering arrangements.
- Wider village context.

THIRTY TWO public **OBJECTIONS** from **TWELVE** objectors regarding:

- Support development of The Stag Inn and do not object in principle to modest development of the Ford Cottage site if it is shown to be in line with the requirements of the Local Plan which specifies very limited development in the village.
- Impact on West Acre's quiet and rural character.
- Boundary issues such as demarcation and planting (a meeting with the applicant has reached agreement on the line of the boundary and the height (2m) and position of the proposed fence 1m from boundary).
- Planting.
- Noise mitigation.
- Impact for biodiversity.
- Disappointed to see that there is no real reference to the Estate's rewilding project- little detail on ecological gains.
- Loss of privacy.
- The mound is to be subject to a separate application, and in terms of coherence it is not at all clear why this should be necessary- currently causing amenity issues.
- Confusion as to the intended ground floor uses for Ford Cottage and how the proposed kitchen, toilets and dining area (which looks like it could also be a café) will work in reality.
- Openings already created in the existing garden boundary hedgerows to Ford Cottage suggests that there is an intention to open up a much larger visitor attraction in what should be a private garden.
- Local roads are not suitable for increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic- blind corner between The Stag and Ford Cottage.
- Concerns have been expressed by the cycling community, and the area is already problematic for walkers.
- Transport note is unclear and unjustified.
- Impact on amenity- noise and disturbance.
- Retrospective nature of some works.
- There seems to be an assumption that the application has to be accepted in its entirety in order to render the village pub viable. Questionable financial viability of the proposal.
- CSNN concerns and objection.
- Smell from existing pub- deep fat fryer.

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- As the work carried out by the Estate had disturbed bat roosts and colonies, the intervention of the Rural Crimes Officer of Norfolk Constabulary resulted in a Community Resolution Order being served on the Estate.
- Increased lighting and impact on ecology such as bats and dark skies.
- Bat colonies must be protected by a bat mitigation license to ensure that the colony is not disturbed unlawfully.
- Ecological value of hedge lost.
- Discrepancies on plans.
- Size of kitchen to Ford Cottage.
- The garden of the stag pub is now converted to a car park and there is now no seating area at all.
- Turning Ford Cottage into a holiday destination will remove one possible home for locals.
- State of current site and health and safety issues.
- Scale of proposed developments- over intensification in use, and inappropriate for the location.
- Disabled rooms provision- would the ground floor at Ford Cottage not be an opportunity for very well located accessible accommodation.
- Use as holiday let to Ford Cottage including potential for large parties. Tourists would not be part of the local community of residents.
- There does not appear to be any staff accommodation and it is not clear how the catering arrangements are supposed to work. Office space and a laundry are no longer on plans. Would staff be from the village or create increased vehicle movements.
- Unclear plans regarding materials.
- Concerns over maintenance of Ford Cottage in relation drainage and the River Nar.
- Level of parking.
- Suggesting that The Stag is experiencing a decline in trade may be misleading as it only reopened in the last few years.
- More detailed business plan required.
- What ecological protections are in place.
- Low Road should become one way.
- Location of bins adjacent to neighbours boundaries and associated impacts.
- Drainage.
- Consultee objections.
- Café opening hours.
- Solar array.
- Opening hours of The Stag.
- Potential transportation of food from one premises to another.
- Potential new road signs.

THIRTY SIX public **SUPPORT** comments from **THIRTY ONE** supporters regarding:

- Strongly support refurbishment of the pub- The Stag is at the centre of the community.
- Site is an easy walk or cycle along newly opened routes. Being on the Nar Valley Way, and with the new Rewilding project, the village attracts many walkers and visitors.
- The Stag and the surrounding buildings involved can only benefit from the updating and money that will be spent.

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- Development will support the local community and give opportunities for local people to be employed .
- This regeneration of the pub and surrounding buildings will be a great asset to the village.
- The works that have been carried out so far have been done sympathetically.
- The proposal would be managed well to have minimal impact on local amenities, highways and noise and will help the local economy supporting the other rural leisure and tourism businesses without unreasonably excessive increase in noise or footfall and without unreasonably impacting residential amenity.
- The addition of more parking and lodgings would help all the local businesses become more sustainable.
- It could be argued the existing businesses in the village already brings footfall and vehicle movements into the village with relatively little disturbance - so the addition of rooms could actually reduce traffic in the village outside of arrivals and departures.
- Support local business.
- The need to preserve the rural nature of West Acre should be balanced with the needs to make the British countryside more generally available to both locals and visitors.
- The scheme was submitted initially as a pre-application enquiry and has been modified several times during the planning stage in response to concerns. It has been a democratic and inclusive process with the involvement of the local community.

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS10 - The Economy

CS11 – Transport

CS12 - Environmental Assets

CS13 - Community and Culture

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES PLAN 2016

DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM3 - Development in the Smaller Villages and Hamlets

DM11 – Touring and Permanent Holiday Sites

DM15 – Environment, Design and Amenity

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DM17 - Parking Provision in New Development

DM19 - Green Infrastructure/Habitats Monitoring & Mitigation

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Design Guide 2021

OTHER GUIDANCE

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations are:

- Principle of development
- Form and character
- Impact on neighbour amenity
- Highway safety and parking
- Flood risk
- Ecology
- Impact on Trees
- Any other matters requiring consideration prior to determination of the application

Principle of Development:

The application site consists of The Stag- an existing pub and Ford Cottage, a currently vacant dwelling. These properties are located on Low Road, within the village of West Acre. West Acre is defined as a smaller village and hamlet within Policy CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011 whereby development will be limited to specific identified in rural areas.

Policy DM3- Development in the Smaller Villages and Hamlets states:

“New development in the designated Smaller Villages and Hamlets will be limited to that suitable in rural areas, including:

small scale employment uses (under Policy CS10);
community facilities (under Policy CS13);
smaller scale tourism facilities (under Policy CS10);
conversions of existing buildings (under Policy CS06);
rural exceptions affordable housing; and
development to meet specific identified local need, including housing to support the operation of rural businesses (under Policies CS01 and CS06);”

Policy CS10 states that “the Council will permit the development of new tourism accommodation in rural areas subject to the following criteria being met:

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It should be located in or adjacent to our villages and towns;
It should be of a high standard of design in line with national guidance;
Will not be detrimental to the landscape;
Mechanisms will be in place to permanently retain the tourism related use

In the Countryside, preservation of the natural and historic environment should be a priority.”

The proposed development has been amended over time with the removal of a village shop, café and workshop unit in response to the location within a smaller village and hamlet.

The final proposed use now relates to retaining and enhancing The Stag as a pub as well as introducing 5 individually let bedrooms at first floor for holiday let use with an associated extension and works to the external plot.

Ford Cottage would also see extensions and alterations to the building as well as extensive landscaping work to the ground floor to facilitate 4 holiday let rooms at first floor with a self-catering element at ground floor including kitchen, breakfast room and snug as well as further toilet facilities. Landscaping includes gabion walling, levelling for the new car park area, removal of area of hedging to the south, new planting and hedges across the garden as well as paving and flower beds.

With supporting documentation in accordance with Policy DM11 the use of the holiday lets are confirmed to be self-catering and the provision is considered to be in low in scale and appropriate with the status of West Acre. The location is within the village and, as explored below, the proposal is not considered to unacceptably harm the landscape.

Two conditions are recommended for any approval that would limit the use of the Ford Cottage Garden to be for the use of holiday let guests only as well limiting the use of the ground floor of Ford Cottage (kitchen, breakfast room and snug) as self-catering for use of the holiday let guests only. A separate condition would limit the number of holiday lets rooms to that currently proposed (9) and secure the use of the accommodation for holiday let purposes in accordance with Policy DM11.

With the above fully considered and balanced, the development is considered to be acceptable within the given setting of West Acre as a smaller village and hamlet taking into account existing development within the village and the requirements of policy. The retention of The Stag as a pub is supported and the addition of the now limited self-contained holiday let use is considered appropriate in scale. Therefore, the principle of development of the finally proposed scheme is considered acceptable and in accordance with Policies CS06, 10, 12, 13 as well Policy DM3, DM11 and the NPPF 2023.

Form and Character:

The application in relation to form and character will be addressed by looking at works to The Stag followed by works to Ford Cottage.

The Stag is a historic two storey building formed from a main range with a pitched cat slide roof and addition to the western gable, fronting Low Road. Fenestration is traditional in proportions with mostly traditional materials consisting of red brick, flint and brick with red pantile roof. Later poorer quality single storey additions are present to the rear.

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The original submission for the Stag included two large, pitched roof gables to the rear of the building alongside a detached outbuilding for toilets. The building was identified as a non-designated heritage asset and it was felt by the Conservation Officer that the extension should be more subservient.

As such, the scheme has been amended over time to now include two gables with an inset first floor element between to house a new stair to first floor and new bedrooms. This would see the removal/demolition of existing rear lean-to extensions. These gables would be limited in stature, set below the ridge of the main dwelling. At ground floor, each gable would have a single story pitched roof element below and closest to the northern boundary with the neighbouring dwelling a small flat roof element.

Materials would be flint and soft red brick in lime mortar. The single-story elements to the rear would be in larch cladding. Pantiles to the roof are proposed and timber joinery is also detailed on plan.

An external storage shed to the eastern boundary of the car park area would be single storey, pitched roof and clad with a bin store to the west of the rear extension. To the rear of The Stag a temporary store would be removed and the site would be generally tidied up with appropriate storage buildings, a clearly defined shingle parking area and some elements of landscaping such as the planting by the entrance.

It is noted that some works have already taken place during the application which has included refurbishment work to the Stag (the first floor is not refurbished, and the loft is unchanged), the gravel/shingle car park area has been regraded and extended in size to cover the former beer garden area and there is a new 'community herb garden' adjacent to the road and access. The car park would provide 22 spaces, 2 EV parking spaces, 3 spaces for powered two wheelers (such as motor bikes and scooters etc), in addition 14 cycle spaces adjacent to The Stag.

Ford Cottage

The current dwelling consists of a two storey cottage with twin gables to the north and a detached workshop building further to north with parking area in front adjacent to Low Road. The cottage consists of a mix of brick with flint as well as red pantiles to the roof. Set within a very large garden the cottage is located on the edge of the village. Work already carried out has seen extensive stripping out of the building.

The original submission for Ford Cottage included a large extension and extensive alteration to the dwelling including varied and large openings as well as extensive areas of cladding. Ford cottage was also identified as a non-designated heritage asset and the Conservation Officer felt the proposal was not appropriate.

It was also previously proposed to replace the workshop at Ford Cottage with accessible bedrooms. Later proposals to use the workshop as an office and support building (e.g. laundry) have also been removed due to concerns over extensions and alterations to the building. A ground mounted solar pv array and additional pv panels have also been removed from the current application. The proposals at pre-application stage to build a courtyard to support a small shop and additional units, for e.g. a local potter, bike hire etc. have been removed.

The final submission for Ford Cottage is therefore significantly reduced compared to its original iterations. The form of the dwelling is proposed to be retained and remodelled to

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provide self-catering accommodation with limited changes and reordering to fenestration. The scheme presented maintains the existing form of the building with remodelled rear extensions. Two gables would be present with an inset element between to the north. Materials are shown to be pantiles to the roof, new walls in soft red brick and lime mortar and a mix of timber and aluminium fenestration as shown on plan.

Work to Ford Cottage has already included the interior being stripped-out, most of the first floor windows removed as well as extensive external works to the grounds including excavation, levelling for the car park area, a new earthen mound (subject to a separate planning application which the agent for the application has informed the Officer for this application would be submitted prior to Christmas if possible) stone-filled gabion walls added and the removal of sections of hedge.

The final proposal to the garden includes the provision of the new shingle car park and cycle space area to the north of the dwelling providing 4 parking spaces and 10 cycle spaces. A single storey bin store is also proposed in this area. To the western boundary new native hedging is proposed on the bank between Low Road. Steps would lead to the east from the car park towards areas of grass. Paving is shown around Ford Cottage with low gabion walls and new flower planting. New native hedging is shown to the north eastern boundaries with various tree planting around the garden. To the southern boundary two areas of hedging are shown to be removed and the southern area of the garden, a new sewerage treatment plant and below ground drainage field is proposed.

Notwithstanding the above, a hard and soft landscaping plan is proposed as well as further details for boundary treatments.

The current earth mound on site as a result of works already undertaken to the car park area will form part of a separate application.

Conditions would be attached for material samples, sample panels and joinery details for both buildings.

Overall, it is considered the extensions and alterations to both buildings are in keeping and acceptable subject to material samples and details as described above. The works to The Stag's plot are more limited and are not considered to have an adverse impact on the visual amenity of the locality. To Ford Cottage, the proposed works are more extensive. However, the Low Road boundary hedge is shown to be retained and where hedging has been lost to the southern boundary, there is extensive replacement hedging around the plot. As such, it is considered that the final result as shown on plans would be acceptable and in keeping with the rural setting.

Therefore, the application would be in accordance with policies CS06, CS08, CS12, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity:

It is considered that the continued use of The Stag as a pub alongside proposed holiday let rooms and the use of Ford Cottage for self-contained holiday letting would be compatible with the amenities of the rural residential locality based on the now limited scale of the proposal and appropriate control via planning conditions as outlined.

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In relation to Ford Cottage itself, the extension would remain substantially set back from the northern boundary which is also screened by significant vegetation. To the northwest, views would only be towards Low Road or across the road to the front of The Stag and neighbouring dwelling to the north. Other boundaries to the south and east are to open countryside. Works to the garden of Ford Cottage are proposed to involve the new car park and cycle space area to the north of the dwelling, areas of paving, low gabion walls and new flower, tree and hedge planting. None of these elements are considered to offer a negative impact on neighbour amenity and the use of the garden would be controlled by condition to be in association with the holiday let us only.

It is important to note that the current earth mound on site as a result of works already undertaken to the car park area will form part of a separate application.

To The Stag, the continued use of the building as a pub is considered appropriate as the long standing and established use of the building. Parking was already present to the rear of the pub and the finally proposed plans show a modest increase and reconfiguration which is not considered to lead to any unacceptable neighbour impacts. The external storage shed to the eastern boundary of the car park area would be single storey and pitched roof. The building would be partially screened by an existing outbuilding in the neighbouring garden and would be well separated from the dwelling itself. As such, whilst quite large, this relationship is considered acceptable.

To the rear of The Stag, the first-floor extension would be, at the closest point, at least 7.4m away from the neighbouring dwelling. The height of the gables at first floor would be 5.5m, which is set below the ridge of the main building. The width of the gables would be approx. 3.9m. These gables would be of limited stature. At ground floor, each gable would have a single story pitched roof element below and closest to the northern boundary with the neighbouring dwelling a small flat roof element is proposed. Windows have been amended so that the only rear windows at first floor would be small and serving bathrooms (these are conditioned to be obscured glazed). Side facing first floor windows to the rear gables would not have direct views to neighbour amenity space.

It is considered that the impacts to the northern neighbour as a result of this extension would therefore be acceptable. The proposed extension at first floor would be overbearing and would not have a significant impact compared to the current relationship with the neighbouring dwelling and The Stag. Ground floor elements would be mostly screened by existing boundary treatment (close board fence). There would be ample separation to the western neighbour with no other nearby neighbouring dwellings.

Overall, the development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011 and DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.

Highway Safety and parking:

Issues from NCC Highways have seen amendments over time which have included the types and level of uses proposed as part of the development. Alongside this, the provision of parking, cycle parking as well as location and design has all been altered over time to suit highways requirements.

Based on the current and final submission, NCC Highways raise no objection on either highway safety or parking grounds including cycle parking. Various conditions and an

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informative are recommended and would be included on any approval including in regard to new access, visibility splays and cycle parking.

Therefore, subject to these conditions the development is considered to be acceptable in regard to highway safety, parking and cycle parking in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 and DM17 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.

Flood Risk:

The application site is located within flood zone 1, the area with the lowest level of flood risk. Mapping also shows the site itself (at either The Stag or Ford Cottage) not to be at risk from surface water flooding.

Ecology:

Protected Species

Ecological Impact Assessment Reports have been submitted both in regard to The Stag and Ford Cottage first in November 2022 and updated October 2023.

Ford Cottage

The site has been surveyed as follows: Phase 1: 01/06/2022, Phase 2 bat surveys: 21/07/2022, 22/08/2022. It is noted that: "demolition work was carried out inside the cottage between the two bat activity surveys. The incident was reported by NWS to the Westacre Estate and the project architect, who then notified the Norfolk Constabulary and had follow-up with the Wildlife Crime PC. The inspection and first bat activity survey had been carried out prior to this incident, with a prediction of low numbers of day-roosting pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats being present. The second bat survey also recorded this result, although the roosts had undoubtedly been interfered with between the surveys as the ceiling and first floor had been removed (photo 5). No evidence of harm to individual bats was found...this incident is regrettable but not considered a significant constraint to the overall survey results and impact assessment".

The site was surveyed again on 31/07/2023, it is noted that the site inspection found Ford Cottage to be seemingly the same as observed previously. This is set out below.

Bats

A minor negative impact on local soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat populations is predicted as a result of roost displacement. A mitigation licence for bats will be required prior to construction activities re-commencing on the cottage. The workshop is deemed to be without associated bat roosts. There is further potential for minor negative disturbance impacts on local bat behaviour as a result of any excessive external lighting scheme for the development.

Hedgehogs

There is a potential for minor negative impacts on a local hedgehog population by way of accidents occurring to transient hedgehogs during the site construction, and long-term displacement impact from any impervious boundary fencing. Mitigation is advised.

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Birds

Given an expected site absence, a neutral impact on birds is predicted.

Reptiles

Given an expected site absence, a neutral impact on reptiles is predicted.

Amphibians

Given an expected site absence, a neutral impact on amphibians is predicted.

The Stag

The site has been surveyed 01/06/2022, 14/07/2022, 28/07/2022 and 23/11/2022. It was then subsequently surveyed 03/08/2023 after the pub reopened with the current refurbishment taken place.

The most recent survey found that, in regard to bats:

The bat impact assessment remains unchanged from 2022. A minor negative roost displacement impact on a local soprano pipistrelle population is predicted as a certain result of re-roofing. Masonry repairs on the south elevation would have a certain minor negative roost displacement impact on a local soprano pipistrelle population and could have an intermediate negative impact from mortality if the repairs proceeded without confirming the roost was unoccupied. The current evidence is that The Stag no longer supports a very large maternity roosting colony of pipistrelles. However, the site's previous suitability for such a roost, and the current presence of a soprano pipistrelle maternity roost (albeit smaller) in the next-door property, points to a risk of a more significant (intermediate – major negative) impact on the local soprano pipistrelle colony if the works proceeded without suitable mitigation. There is further potential for minor negative disturbance impacts on local bat behaviour as a result of any excessive external lighting scheme for the refurbished pub and beer garden.

Birds

Previously in 2022 it was noted that Swift nesting in the pub roof was not confirmed, but one observed incident of roosting does raise it as a credible possibility in future. Mitigation was advised. In 2023 this was not however observed.

Hedgehogs

There is a potential for minor negative impacts on a local hedgehog population by way of accidents occurring to transient hedgehogs during the site construction, and long-term displacement impact from any impervious boundary fencing. Mitigation is advised.

Reptiles

Given an expected site absence, a neutral impact on reptiles is predicted.

Amphibians

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Given an expected site absence, a neutral impact on amphibians is predicted.

A European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence for bats will be required for the conversion and refurbishment to proceed lawfully. Local planning authorities must consider the potential for developments assessed as affecting European Protected Species to satisfy the three derogation tests set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for licensing to permit otherwise unlawful activities.

The Three tests of Derogation are as follows:

Test 1 - Overriding Public Interest

In relation to Ford Cottage, the overriding public interest of the proposed development project is derived from it renovating deteriorating buildings into a new small-scale local business opportunity. This would provide some economic benefits for local builders and suppliers, and on-going staff requirements. The cost would be negative ecological impacts which are rated as being of a minor magnitude at a local level, and amenable to effective mitigation and compensation under a mitigation licence. Two bat boxes and two bird boxes are also recommended within the Ecological Impact Assessment as enhancements.

In relation to the Stag, the overriding public interest of the proposed development project is derived from it renovating a dated commercial building (public house) to achieve a more viable business. Proposed is to construct additional space to improve the bar and to provide guest bedrooms to supplement the income derived from the pub sales. There would be economic benefits for local builders and suppliers, employment from the business staffing needs, and development of the tourist use. The Stag is noted to be converted to a sustainable source of heating, and will be fully insulated, plus the doors and windows upgraded to double or triple-glazed. The cost is stated to be negative ecological impacts which are rated as being of a minor magnitude at a local level and amenable to effective mitigation and compensation under a mitigation licence.

Test 2 - No Satisfactory Alternative

In relation to Ford Cottage, the proposal is to convert and alter the existing building and subsequently use it for holiday letting purposes.

The only alternative to this proposal would be to leave the existing building as it is. This option would be a set-back to the property owner and would leave a potentially useful structural asset to continue unused and to further deteriorate (as there would be reduced purpose to repairing or replacing it). The economic benefits from the construction works and tourism use would be lost.

In relation to The Stag, the proposal is to renovate an existing locally-used public house and introduce a holiday let element. The alternatives to the proposed works would be to do nothing and leave the existing building without the full scale of proposed refurbishment. This option would not provide the level of economic benefits possible from the development proposal in relation to construction work and tourism, and may not include the full range of sustainability improvements. This option would also be a set-back to the property owner.

Test 3 - Maintaining A Favourable Conservation Status

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In relation to Ford Cottage, the third test, maintaining a favourable conservation status for the local protected species population, is shown to be possible for the development works proposed with mitigation measures included as conditions.

The submitted Ecological Report states: “The surveys identified non-breeding day roosts for small numbers of soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats. The surveys did not identify significant numbers of bats within the site, nor any species other than ones recognised as relatively common. Roost compensation will be created for the destroyed roosts and there are plentiful alternative roosting opportunities in the locality. There is no conceivable reason why the favourable conservation status of the bat species involved would be detrimentally impacted by the proposal if carried out under EPS mitigation licence.”

The submitted Report states “a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence for bats will be required for the conversion to proceed lawfully. Following the currently approved English Nature Bat Mitigation Guidelines (MitchellJones 2004), the appropriate mitigation/compensation requirement for the level of impact currently predicted would be: “Flexibility over provision of bat boxes, access to new buildings etc. No conditions about timing or monitoring.” The bat roost status does not require any seasonal timing restrictions to avoid the maternity period or any dedicated bat lofts, and the hibernation roost potential has been assessed as low.” Two bat boxes and two bird boxes are also recommended within the Ecological Impact Assessment as enhancements. To mitigate potential impacts from lighting, a wildlife-sensitive lighting scheme would be adopted, this is secured by condition.

In relation to The Stag, the third test, maintaining a favourable conservation status for the local protected species population, is shown to be possible for the development works proposed with mitigation measures included as conditions.

The submitted Ecological Report states: “The surveys identified non-breeding day roosts for small numbers of soprano pipistrelle, although a potential for satellite maternity roosting should be recognised. There is no credible reason why the favourable conservation status of the bat species involved would be detrimentally impacted by the proposal if carried out under EPS mitigation licence. Timing restrictions and ecologist oversight should avoid most disturbance and any mortality, and the roost feature (pantile roof) would be reinstated so that bat roosting use could continue in future.”

The submitted Report states “A European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence for bats will be required for refurbishments affecting the established bat roost locations. To ensure that the proposal will not harm the long-term conservation status of the bat species concerned, a planning condition can be secured”, this licence would include precautionary measures. In addition, like-for-like replacement of the roof using traditional pantiles and an underlining that is either a bitumen type 1F felt with a hessian matrix or another Natural England-approved product would be used and the retention of the southeast elevation wall cavity or its replacement with an integral-style bat box is detailed. To mitigate potential impacts from lighting, a wildlife-sensitive lighting scheme would be adopted, this is secured by condition.

Construction impacts to hedgehogs are to be mitigated by barricading wet/drying concrete, fitting any open excavations with escape ramps and having precautionary methods of green waste and building material storage and movement. Boundary fences, where they exclude access to hedgehogs, will incorporate hedgehog access holes of 150mm by 150mm at ground level, this is secured by condition.

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In addition, the commencement of roof stripping works, including setting scaffolding in place, must avoid the typical swift nesting season (1st May to 15th August); this timing restriction echoes the timing restriction to avoid the bat maternity season. Ideally, the reroofing of the building should be completed without (or only with partial – as directed by an ecologist) bird exclusion filler comb under the south roof aspect edge tiles.

Given the information provided within the Ecology Reports, the public benefit of providing a tourism use, the boost to the local economy and the limited impact on species which can be mitigated against, it is considered that a license is likely to be granted and that the scheme therefore passes the test of derogation.

It is recommended that any approval of the works should only be subject to a planning condition to implement the mitigation and enhancement measures set out in the Ecology Reports. Accordingly, it is recommended that this be controlled by way of planning condition.

It is noted that some works have taken place during application which has included refurbishment work to the Stag (the first floor is not refurbished, and the loft is unchanged), the gravel car park area has been regraded and extended in size to cover the former beer garden area and there is a new 'community herb garden'. As well as this, work to Ford Cottage includes the interior being stripped-out and most of the first-floor windows removed as well as extensive external works to the Ford Cottage grounds including excavation, levelling for the car park area, a new earthen mound (subject to a separate planning application) stone-filled gabion walls added and the removal of sections of hedge. This informed the additional surveys taken place as detailed within this report.

New planting is proposed including both new trees and flower beds around the Ford Cottage garden and new native hedgerow to the Low Road boundary in front of the car park as well as to the north east boundaries to the rear garden.

Protected sites and drainage

It was originally considered by Natural England that the development could cause potential significant effects on River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) based on the impacts of the disposal of sewage and surface water runoff.

Submitted information states that parking areas are constructed using pervious techniques, and any extension to the parking areas will also be constructed this way. Where works have already taken place shingle has been used for parking areas. The surface water runoff from the roofs currently drain to soakaways, this would be the case going forward with soakaways 'sized to contain up to and including the 1 in 100 year rainfall event plus climate change'. As the surface water is proposed to infiltrate on-site, it is stated that there should be negligible impact on the nearby River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest as the drainage will be contained on-site.

In relation to foul drainage, there is existing drainage in the north of the site, which serves the Stag Inn and comprises a septic tank and drainage field. Ford Cottage currently drains to a septic tank with associated drainage field to the south west. As part of the proposed works this drainage system will be upgraded and a 'Marsh Ensign Ultra Treatment Plant' which will discharge to a new drainage field (as shown the submitted site plan with this application: 190. PL06F) to the south of Ford Cottage within the grounds. As the foul drainage is proposed to be treated and infiltrate on-site, supporting information states that there should be negligible impact on the nearby River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest as the

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drainage will be contained on-site. The installation of the treatment plant is considered to provide a betterment to the existing drainage system for the site.

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

The submitted reports state that The River Nar SSSI and Castle Acre Common SSSI are linked to the proposed development site by the Nar Valley Way footpath. A minor but permanent negative impact on designated nature conservation sites is possible as a result of the renovation and use of the new facilities. An increase in pressure from dogs off the lead is of potential concern in the bird nesting season, and mitigation is proposed to nullify this impact.

The submitted Ecology Reports states that “monitoring and mitigation of the possible increase in pressure on nesting birds within the River Nar SSSI from dog walking activity is recommended to be adopted into the management plan for the ‘Nar Valley Wilderness Belt’. Monitoring for off-lead dog activity is advised within the site during March-August, and additional signage stating that dogs must be kept on a lead is recommended.” The report states that “the on-going management actions to prevent increased disturbance should be reviewed annually and consultation with Natural England sought for any changes in management.” This was previously questioned regarding the feasibility of Westacre Estate imposing these modifications to the River Narr SSSI management plan. The report considered that “given that the River Narr SSSI falls within Westacre Estate property the management plan modifications are regarded as feasible.” Natural England raised no objection in this regard nor did the BCKLWN Ecologist. This would be the responsibility of the West Acre Estate (the applicant) and the ecology report documents are conditioned which would secure that this mitigation is required in line with other elements outlined.

It is noted that all lighting has been removed from proposed plans and a prior to installation condition would be attached to any approval to ensure lighting is appropriate for the sensitive nature of the site and both buildings.

The Borough Council Ecologist raises no objection to the final scheme with the above lighting condition considered with a lighting scheme that must be agreed in consultation with a professional ecologist and in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Engineers. It is also noted that the Proposed Site Plan shows that new hedgerow would be planted along the north eastern boundary and along parts of the western boundary which boarder Low Road. This is considered sufficient by the Ecologist to offset the loss from the hedgerow that has been removed.

Therefore, the application is considered to be in accordance with Policy CS08 and CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 and DM19 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.

Impact on Trees:

The Arboricultural Officer raises no objection to the final submission which has seen the layout of the drainage field to Ford Cottage amended to take into account the nearby trees.

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) details that up to five C category trees (T7, T18 and possibly 3 trees from G3) will be removed for development purposes. The AIA states ‘in order to mitigate the loss of the above trees, a minimum of 2 new heavy standard root balled or containerised trees (12 to 14 cm stem girth) will be planted. The species, selected to be in

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keeping with the development, will be as follows: 1 x Sweet Gum Lane Roberts - Liquidambar styraciflua 'Lane Roberts' 3 x Field Maple - Acer campestre (If G3 (3trees) are removed) and 1 x Small-leaved Lime - Tilia cordata'.

It is also of note that the latest site plan demonstrates additional new planting around the Ford Cottage garden.

Conditions are recommended and would be attached to any approval in regard to tree protection and tree management measures as well as the tree protection plan within the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment. A further condition would be attached regarding hard and soft landscaping.

Overall, with the above controls it is considered that the development would be acceptable in regard to the impact on trees and would therefore be in accordance with Policy CS08 and CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.

Other matters requiring consideration prior to the determination of this application:

Parish Council objection

The holiday let units proposed would be self-catering and access to the ground floor of Ford Cottage as well as the garden/plot would be limited via conditions for use of the holiday let rooms only. The self-catering kitchen, breakfast room and seating would be available for holiday let residents. This is considered an acceptable arrangement as detailed above. The level of toilet provision to Ford Cottage and the lack of accessible accommodation is noted. However, it is not considered that there is any explicit policy reason that could warrant refusal or further amendment on this basis.

The business plan/supporting information submitted with this application is sufficient to understand that the proposed use is for self contained holiday lets as well as the retained pub use to the Stag. Full details are included above as well as the controls recommended via conditions. The exact financial details and viability of the business is outside of the scope of this application and submitted documentation is considered adequate.

The number of holiday let rooms is conditioned as detailed in the above report, planning permission would be required for any operational development or further change of use. As The Stag is an existing business and the holiday let use is now more limited, assessment has been taken place both by the LPA and consultees based on the proposed level of use. It is therefore not considered reasonable to request further details or a management plan relating to the ongoing running and management of the use. As noted, separate nuisance legislation exists outside of the planning system which could deal with any potential future noise or amenity issues.

In relation to the front boundary of Ford Cottage facing Low Road, the hedge is shown on plan to be reinstated. Where gaps have been made to the southern boundary the BCKLWN Ecologist raises no objection as ample replacement planting is shown around the site. It is not considered a refusal could be substantiated on this basis.

It is not considered reasonable to add a condition regarding highway signage as this has not been requested by NCC Highways and would be controlled separately to this planning application. Signage to the existing pub use would not be reasonable to condition as this is an existing use. This relates to the playing of music as well as odour from the existing

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building. New plant would be the subject of a separate planning application where impacts could be assessed. Lighting is controlled by a condition recommended on any approval.

In relation to the mound, this is addressed within the above report. Retrospective applications are a valid way of seeking planning permission and the LPA would assess the application in a consistent manner. The principle of development is explored within the above report, taking into account the loss of Ford Cottage as a single dwelling the principle of development remains valid despite this consideration in relation to policy.

Response to CSNN

CSNN raise no objection to the works to The Stag. In relation to Ford Cottage, it is considered that robust conditions would be suitable in relation to controlling the use of the ground floor and garden for users of the holiday lets only.

The merits of the earth mound are not assessed within this proposal and the agent for the application has stated they wish to submit an application before Christmas if possible.

Third Party Comments

KLWNBUG The Norfolk and Fens Cycling Campaign

Following amendments to the scheme concerns were withdrawn by this group and no comment has been received to the latest proposal. Cycle parking is considered adequate and acceptable by NCC Highways.

Public Objections and Comments

Issues raised regarding the scale and principle of the development, form and character of the proposal, impact on amenity, impact on ecology (including hedges) and protected species, drainage and impact on trees are addressed within the above report as well as the earth mound constructed on site. The majority of points raised by public objections and comments are addressed within the response to the Parish Council and wider report above.

Whilst some works were undertaken prior to the decision for this application being made, the LPA requested that these be stopped which has taken place on site. The health and safety of the current site is outside of the scope of this planning application. Plans have been amended over time and the agent for the application has confirmed that discrepancies have been assessed and resolved on plans. Whilst there are no ground floor disabled rooms provided it is not considered that there is any explicit policy reason that could warrant refusal on this basis. Where staff are employed from would be outside of the scope of this application, as noted the use of the holiday lets would be self-catering.

Making Low Road one way, designation as a 'quiet lane' and road signage would be outside of the scope of this planning application and would relate to Highways regulations and legislation. Bin stores are no longer adjacent to neighbouring boundaries. Consultee responses are noted within this report and addressed where necessary. Elements such as a Café and solar array are no longer part of the scheme. The opening hours of The Stag relate to an existing use outside of the control of this application. The potential transportation of food from one premises to another is not included within any supporting documentation. Food would be served within The Stag and the kitchen within Ford Cottage would provide a self-catering opportunity for holiday let residents. It is important to note that each application is determined on its own merits and any future operational development or change of use

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would be subject to a separate planning application. A temporary event would be outside of the scope of this application.

CONCLUSION:

Overall, it is considered that the proposed scale and type of use is appropriate within the rural setting of the village of West Acre given its status as a smaller village and hamlet where development is limited to that suitable in rural areas. Two conditions are recommended for any approval that would limit the use of the Ford Cottage Garden to be for the use of holiday let guests only as well as to limit the use of the ground floor of Ford Cottage (kitchen, breakfast room and snug) as self-catering for use of the holiday let guests only. A separate condition would secure the use of the accommodation for holiday let purposes as well as limit the number of holiday let rooms to 9.

It is considered that the physical works to both The Stage and Ford Cottage are appropriate including use of materials. Several conditions are recommended to ensure a suitable visual finish to works. Landscaping works to both plots, especially notable to Ford Cottage, are also considered to be acceptable based on submitted plans with ample planting despite the loss of some openings to the south boundary hedge. Tree protection measures are secured via condition and the BCKLWN ecologist does not object to the proposed plans. The development is also considered acceptable based on drainage and impact on protected sites. Protected species impact is also considered to be acceptable as extensively explored within the above report.

It is considered that the combination of the existing use at The Stage as well as the now limited level of holiday let provision as well as control on this use would ensure a suitable impact on neighbour amenity. It is also noted that control exists outside of the planning system in regard to the potential for future nuisance via separate legislation. Norfolk County Council Highways raise no objection based on Highway Safety and parking with several conditions included within this recommendation. Flood risk is considered acceptable and conditions are recommended in relation to archeology.

Overall, the development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policies CS06, CS08, CS10, CS11, CS12, CS13 as well Policy DM3, DM11, DM15, DM17 and DM19 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023 and is duly recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to the imposition of the following condition(s):

- 1 Condition: The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - THE STAG INN, PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS, Drawing Number: 190. PL06F
 - FORD COTTAGE AND WORKSHOP PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS, Drawing Number: 190. PL07D
 - PROPOSED SITE PLAN, Drawing Number: 190. PL09F
 - LOCATION PLAN, Drawing Number: 190. PL08D

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- 1 Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
- 2 Condition: The use of Ford Cottage (including the kitchen, snug, breakfast room and toilet facilities at ground floor), plot and garden (as shown on plan 190. PL09F) shall be explicitly limited at all times to be in association with the holiday let use hereby permitted only unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- 2 Reason: In order that the Local Planning Authority may retain control over the development in interest of the amenities of the locality and to ensure that the scale of the development is appropriate given the location within a smaller village and hamlet in accordance with Policies CS02 and CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM3 and DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.
- 3 Condition: The number of holiday lets hereby approved shall be limited to no more than nine rooms as shown on plans: THE STAG INN, PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS, Drawing Number: 190. PL06F and FORD COTTAGE AND WORKSHOP PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS, Drawing Number: 190. PL07D. These holiday let rooms shall be used for short stay accommodation (no more than 28 days per single let) only and shall at no time be occupied as a person's sole or main place of residence. The owners shall maintain an up-to-date register of lettings/occupation and shall make the register available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority
- 3 Reason: In order that the Local Planning Authority may retain control over the use of the premises where an alternative use would be detrimental to the amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.
- 4 Condition: The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance in regard to the recommendations, mitigation and enhancements within the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment Reports for both Ford Cottage and The Stag (report references: 2022.060.1 and 2022.060) as well as the subsequent Addendum to both Ford Cottage and The Stag (report references: 2022.060.03 and 2022.060.02) Mitigation and enhancements shall be carried out prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted. This shall include but not be limited to :
 - Two bat boxes and two bird boxes (which should include a swift terrace).
 - Boundary fences incorporating hedgehog access holes of 150mm by 150mm at ground level.
 - Like-for-like replacement of the roof and the retention of the southeast elevation wall cavity or its replacement with an integral-style bat box (to The Stag).
 - The commencement of roof stripping works, including setting scaffolding in place, must avoid the typical swift nesting season (1st May to 15th August).
 - Dog walking activity to be adopted into the management plan for the 'Nar Valley Wilderness Belt'.
- 4 Reason: To ensure that the development takes place in accordance with the principles and parameters contained within the Ecological Impact Assessment Reports in accordance with Policy CS08 and CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011 as well as DM15 and DM19 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.

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- 5 Condition: Prior to any further development on the development hereby permitted all Tree Protection and Tree Management measures shall be implemented in strict accordance with the Tree Protection Plan (Appendix 4) and Arboricultural Method Statement (Appendix 5) of the ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AT FORD COTTAGE, WEST ACRE, KINGS LYNN by AT Coombes Associates Ltd. Dated 12 September 2023.
- 5 Reason: To avoid damage to existing trees that make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area in accordance with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.
- 6 Condition: No further development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. Soft landscape works shall include planting plans, written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment) schedules of plants noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers and densities where appropriate. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation or use of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species as those originally planted, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written approval to any variation.
- 6 Reason: To ensure appropriate landscape design in accordance with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.
- 7 Condition: Notwithstanding approved plans, prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, a plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority indicating the positions, heights, design, materials and type of boundary treatment to be erected. The boundary treatment shall be completed before the occupation hereby permitted is commenced or before the building is occupied or in accordance with a timetable to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 7 Reason: To ensure that the development is compatible with the amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.
- 8 Condition: Prior to the installation of any outdoor lighting, a detailed scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must be agreed in consultation with a professional ecologist and in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Engineers and shall include details of the type of lights, the orientation/angle of the luminaries, the spacing and height/locations of the lighting, the extent/levels of illumination over the site and on adjacent land and the measures to contain light within the curtilage of the site. This shall include any lighting to both The Stag and its plot as well as Ford Cottage and its

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plot. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and thereafter maintained and retained as agreed.

- 8 **Reason:** In the interests of minimising light pollution and to safeguard the amenities of the locality in accordance with the NPPF, Policy CS08 and CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011 and Policy DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016
- 9 **Condition:** Prior to the commencement of the use hereby permitted the vehicular access for Ford Cottage shall be upgraded in accordance with the Norfolk County Council residential access construction specification TRAD 5 for the first 2 metres as measured back from the near channel edge of the adjacent carriageway. Arrangement shall be made for surface water drainage to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.
- 9 **Reason:** To ensure construction of a satisfactory access and to avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in the interests of highway safety and traffic movement in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.
- 10 **Condition:** Prior to the first use of the Ford Cottage development hereby permitted a 2.4 metre wide parallel visibility splay (as measured back from the near edge of the adjacent highway carriageway) shall be provided across the whole of the site's roadside frontage. The splay(s) shall thereafter be maintained at all times free from any obstruction exceeding 1.05 metres above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.
- 10 **Reason:** To ensure the permanent availability of the parking/manoeuvring areas, in the interests of satisfactory development and highway safety in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.
- 11 **Condition:** Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted the proposed access / on-site car and cycle parking / servicing areas shall be laid out, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan and retained thereafter available for that specific use.
- 11 **Reason:** To ensure the permanent availability of the parking/manoeuvring areas, in the interests of satisfactory development and highway safety in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.
- 12 **Condition:** Prior to first use of the development hereby permitted a scheme for the parking of cycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented before the development is first occupied or brought into use and thereafter retained for this purpose.
- 12 **Reason:** To ensure the provision of adequate cycle parking that meets the needs of occupiers of the proposed development and in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport in accordance with Policy CS08, CS11 of the Core Strategy 2011, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as the NPPF 2023.

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- 13 Condition: No further development shall take place until an archaeological written scheme of investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and 1) The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording, 2) The programme for post investigation assessment, 3) Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording, 4) Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation, 5) Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation, 6) Nomination of a competent person or persons/organization to undertake the works set out within the written scheme of investigation and 7) any further project designs as addenda to the approved WSI covering subsequent phases of mitigation as required.
- 13 Reason: To safeguard archaeological interests in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.
- 14 Condition: No development shall take place other than in accordance with the written scheme of investigation approved under condition 13 and any addenda to that WSI covering subsequent phases of mitigation.
- 14 Reason: To safeguard archaeological interests in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.
- 15 Condition: The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the archaeological written scheme of investigation approved under condition 13 and the provision to be made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.
- 15 Reason: To safeguard archaeological interests in accordance with the principles of the NPPF
- 16 Condition: No development shall take place within the site until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of historic building recording, the results of which have been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. In this instance the programme of historic building recording will comprise a photographic survey of the structures for which a brief is available from the Norfolk County Council Historic Environment Team.
- 16 Reason: To safeguard archaeological interests in accordance with the principles of the NPPF
- 17 Condition: Before the first occupation of the first floor holiday lets to The Stag hereby permitted, the windows to the rear at first floor serving en-suites shall be fitted with obscured glazing and any part of the windows that is less than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed shall be non-opening. The windows shall be permanently retained in that condition thereafter.
- 17 Reason: To protect the residential amenities of the occupiers of nearby property in accordance with Policy DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 and the NPPF 2023.

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- 18 Condition: No development shall take place on any external surface of the development hereby permitted until samples of the materials to be used have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 18 Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance and grouping of materials in accordance with the principles of the NPPF, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as Policy CS122 of the Core Strategy 2011.
- 19 Condition: No development shall commence on any external surface of the development until a sample panel of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted (for both Ford Cottage and The Stag) has been erected on the site for the inspection and written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The sample panel shall measure at least 1 metre x 1 metre using the proposed materials, mortar type, bond and pointing technique. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.
- 19 Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance and grouping of materials in accordance with the principles of the NPPF, DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 as well as Policy CS122 of the Core Strategy 2011.
- 20 Condition: No further development over or above foundations shall take place on site until 1:20 drawings of all new and/or replacement windows and doors have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plans shall include joinery details, cross sections and the opening arrangements as well as window style, reveal, cill and header treatment. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
- 20 Reason: To ensure that the design and appearance of the development is appropriate in accordance with the principles of the NPPF as well as Policy CS08 and CS12 of the Core Strategy 2011 and DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016.
- 21 Condition: In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken in accordance with current best practice, and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. Following completion of measures in the approved remediation scheme, a verification report must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.
- 21 Reason: In the interests of protecting the environment and the future occupants of the development in accordance with the NPPF, policy CS08 of the Core Strategy 2011 and Policy DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016.