

Parish:	Brancaster	
Proposal:	Conversion of existing barn into residential dwelling	
Location:	The Big Barn Common Lane Brancaster Staithe Norfolk PE31 8BN	
Applicant:	Mr & Mrs R. Scott-Moncrieff	
Case No:	22/01638/F (Full Application)	
Case Officer:	Lucy Smith	Date for Determination: 7 December 2022

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Called in by Cllr Lawton

Neighbourhood Plan: Yes

Case Summary

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the change of use of an existing storage building to use as a single dwellinghouse at Common Lane, Brancaster Staithe. The application site is outside of the development boundary on land which is considered to be within the wider countryside for the purposes of planning policy.

The site is within the Norfolk Coast AONB

Key Issues

Principle of Development
 Design and Impact on the AONB
 Highway Safety
 Impact on Protected Sites
 Landscaping and Biodiversity

Recommendation

REFUSE

THE APPLICATION

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the change of use of an existing storage building to use as a single dwellinghouse at Common Lane, Brancaster Staithe. The application site is outside of the development boundary on land which is considered to be within the wider countryside for the purposes of planning policy.

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The subject site comprises a Dutch-style barn (previously used as a B8 storage building) constructed from concrete blocks with steel columns and with a barrel design roof clad with powder coated corrugated metal sheeting. An existing hardstanding area to the north of the building, surrounded by existing mature hedgerows will be utilised as garden.

Extensions and alterations are proposed to facilitate the change of use, largely retaining the footprint of the existing building however with a lower ground floor extension proposed to the north and a carport to the south. Walled courtyards areas and a raised terrace are proposed as further additions.

The extensions and overall vernacular are modern in design, albeit retaining a broad sense of the building's historic form and use. Larger areas of glazing have been broken-up or otherwise concealed by timber louvres or set within the walled courtyard space.

SUPPORTING CASE

Most applications fall neatly within the planning policy framework, but some do not, which is why we find ourselves at Committee with this application. We have a building, a former agricultural field barn which has been used as a builder's yard for 20+ years. We are asking the Committee to approve its conversion to residential use, to save an important piece of agricultural history and enhance the AONB.

The planning officer references Planning Policy CS06 and states hesitation to date is an 'on balanced' point of view. Policy CS06 says: Conversion to residential use will only be considered where:

1. The existing building makes a positive contribution to the landscape
2. A non-residential use is proven to be unviable
3. The accommodation to be provided is commensurate with the site's relationship to the settlement pattern
4. The building is easily accessible to existing housing, employment, and services

We believe the barn makes a positive contribution to the AONB and the findings in the Heritage Statement agree. Paragraphs 1–4 below summarise our responses to CS06, two final paragraphs cover sustainability.

1. Malcolm Starr RIBA, AABC, Dip Arch, Dip Cons, AA Grad Dip, the Conservation Architect who wrote the Statement says "the barn meets the criteria set out by Historic England that entitle it to be classed as a

Non-designated Heritage Asset... making a distinctive and positive contribution to the local landscape." The Statement continues, "The design for the conversion is sympathetic to the character of the barn and its context. It would improve the present appearance of the barn, constituting an enhancement of the building and its setting ... and would offer short- and long-term public benefits, locally and more widely. On this basis, there is a case for the local authority to consider that the heritage and environment benefits of the proposals are sufficient to outweigh any policy objections."

2. Savills have assessed the viability of the barn based on the following end uses: residential, warehousing, offices, community uses and have concluded in their detailed report and assessment that the only viable option for the barn is to convert it to residential in accordance with the planning application.

3. The plan is to restore this little gem of a barn and further reinforce its agricultural heritage by cladding it to echo the original use, preserving the barn for future generations. At its heart will be a 3-bedroom home, a permanent home for a local couple; Jane, Norfolk born-and-bred, and Robert, both of whom work from home. Jane needs the space for both her studio and a display space for her garden design business. A business that provides regular work for over 20 local people, which will continue to grow jobs and futures.

4. The building is only 175m from Brancaster Staithe neighbours, a 4 minute walk down to the harbour, and is therefore easily accessible to existing houses and services.

The proposed landscape improvements are in line with National and Local biodiversity objectives, particularly to *maintain and enhance the range, functionality and connectivity of characteristic habitats and species*, p20, KLWNBC Sustainability Appraisals 2020. Sydney Jacus, Project Officer at the Norfolk Coast Partnership, Norfolk County Council Protected Landscapes comments: "Currently the barn and its surroundings are a mess and environmental wasteland. The detailed landscaping plans promise to reverse that... the garden and planting will deliver a meaningful positive impact on the biodiversity of the site, which has been disused for some time."

The environment and sustainability are of vital importance to the applicants. All proposed works will adhere to the government's environmental objectives; to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment. The proposed conversion will optimise site potential (re-use & recycle materials, source new materials locally), optimise energy use (solar panels and ground source heating), protect and conserve water (install a bore hole & harvest rainwater), and use energy efficient materials throughout.

PLANNING HISTORY

22/00661/F: Application Withdrawn: 19/08/22 - Conversion of existing barn into residential dwelling - Barn Buildings and Land SE 19 Town Lane And 200M S of 24 Common Lane Common Lane

2/99/1524/CU: Application Permitted: 16/02/00 - Continued use of warehouse and yard - Common Lane Farm

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council NO OBJECTION no reasons given

Highways Authority: NO OBJECTION In relation to highways issues only, as this proposal does not affect the current traffic patterns or the free flow of traffic, that Norfolk County Council does not wish to resist the grant of consent. Recommended conditions relating to the laying out of the proposed access/parking & turning areas.

Environmental Health & Housing - Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS with the following comments: Due to made ground, previous site use and potential presence of Asbestos contaminating materials in the building's construction. The desk study recommends further investigation to better categorise the site and investigate the level of contamination using trial pits.

Recommended pre-commencement contamination conditions and asbestos informative.

Natural England: NO OBJECTION with the following comments:

'We consider that without appropriate mitigation the application would:

- have an adverse effect on the integrity of one or more of the European designated sites scoped into the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy ('GIRAMS').
- have a significant impact on the character of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

In order to mitigate these adverse effects and make the development acceptable, the following mitigation measures are required / or the following mitigation options should be secured:

- Financial contribution will be collected for the Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (GIRAMS). A tariff of £185.93 per new dwelling is required as mitigation for recreational disturbance. For further details
- please see the current Norfolk GIRAMS document.
- External lighting which follows the principles of lighting in an AONB as detailed in the Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lights.

We advise that an appropriate planning condition or obligation is attached to any planning permission to secure these measures.'

Norfolk Coast Partnership: OBJECTION with the following comments:

'We had concerns with the previous application, primarily due to the location. The barn is isolated in the AONB countryside and is therefore a predominant feature in a rural setting. The proposal lies in the Coastal Slopes area of the Integrated Landscape Character guidance document of the AONB. A key force for change that is relevant to this application includes conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.

Since the last application I feel that the impact of light pollution and the impact on Barrow Common has been considered and the reduction in glazing on the east elevation is an improvement. Certainly, glazing is modest in comparison to many other developments on the coast and the slatted windows are a nice feature to minimise light pollution in the upper levels.

The garden design is well considered and would make an enhancement to biodiversity. However, because of the location being surrounded by arable fields visually this will make the development more striking in the landscape. Admittedly the garden won't suburbanise the landscape, but it will create a block of semi natural informal garden space into a blank canvas of agricultural land. Therefore, there will be a visual landscape impact albeit with biodiversity benefits.

In relation to CS06 it is arguable if the development 'will make a positive contribution to the landscape' or meet the NPPF 176 requirements to 'conserve and enhance the AONB'. The garden will make an enhancement to biodiversity but perhaps not the landscape as a whole in this area of the AONB which is a large scale open intensely farmed landscape that is sensitive to change. 'The design of new development should be sensitive to the surrounding area, and not detract from the inherent quality of the environment' CS12.

I reiterate my previous comments that this is not a 'modest' house as described and is in a very prominent location in the AONB outside of the settlement boundary. The Local Authority

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has a statutory Duty of Regard to protect and conserve the AONB. Developments like this cumulatively will erode the special features of the designation 'sense of remoteness, tranquillity and wildness.

Whilst I cannot support the application, if it is approved, I would suggest a condition on external lighting and to carry out the ecological enhancements identified in the report. National Planning Policy Framework Clause 125 and Norfolk County Council's Environmental Lighting Zones Policy both recognise the importance of preserving dark landscapes and dark skies. In order to minimise light pollution, we recommend that any outdoor lights associated with this proposed development should be:

- 1) fully shielded (enclosed in full cut-off flat glass fittings)
- 2) directed downwards (mounted horizontally to the ground and not tilted upwards)
- 3) switched on only when needed (no dusk to dawn lamps)
- 4) white light low-energy lamps (LED, metal halide or fluorescent) and not orange or pink sodium sources

Please also refer to the Institute of Lighting Professionals, Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lights which gives guidance for lighting in an AONB'

CONSERVATION OFFICER: Provided the following comments:

'Whilst the application is not located within a conservation area or near to listed buildings, the applicants believe that the building is a non-designated heritage asset and have accordingly submitted a Heritage Appraisal for consideration.

Historic England have carried out some research into Dutch Barns which is documented in both the Heritage Appraisal and the Design and Access Statement, stating: "the barns were first built of timber and corrugated iron, and then a mixture of timber iron and steel frames. They became standardised from the 1880's when firms began to advertise and issue printed details with drawings usually along with other kit buildings such as parish halls". The report highlights that pre 1880's versions would be rare.

The heritage appraisal states that this Dutch Barn was constructed between the early 1900's and the 1950's, some more analysis of a closer date of construction would have been useful. The photographs submitted with the report show an interesting roof structure, but vastly altered walls and roof coverings. On this basis, I am not convinced, given the alterations and lack of accurate date, that this is a particularly important example of a building type. Moreover, as importantly, the application seeks to change materials, extend, add balconies all of which go far beyond the minimal alteration required to convert the building but still retain its functional characteristics, or indeed the applicants' perceptions of its historical importance. On this basis from a conservation perspective the application cannot be supported and should be refused accordingly.'

REPRESENTATIONS FIVE letters of **SUPPORT**, the comments summarised as follows:

- Enhances local area
- Good design
- Positive use of vacant building

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS07 - Development in Coastal Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS10 - The Economy

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

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

Policy 1 - Appropriate Housing

Policy 8 - Protection of Heritage Assets and Views

Policy 9 - Rural Exception Sites

Policy 10 - Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment and Landscape

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Design Guide 2019

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations are:

Principle of Development

Design and Impact on the AONB

Heritage Impact

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Highway Safety
Impact on Protected Sites
Landscaping and Biodiversity
Other material considerations

Principle of Development:

The application proposes the conversion of an existing storage building on the outskirts of Brancaster to use as a dwellinghouse. The site comprises a utilitarian agricultural barn which was granted change of use for warehousing/storage in the late 1990s. Land to the north of the barn is currently used for the storage of building materials - this area is proposed to be used as residential curtilage post-conversion.

Brancaster Staithe, alongside Brancaster and Burnham Deepdale, is categorised as a Key Rural Service Centre by CS02 of the Core Strategy (2011).

The site is within the Norfolk Coast AONB.

The application site is wholly outside of the development boundary for Brancaster Staithe shown on inset map G13 of the SADMPP (2016) and therefore considered to be within the wider countryside for the purposes of planning policy and countryside protection policies apply.

Core Strategy Policy CS06 states that in rural areas, conversion to residential use will only be considered where 'the existing building makes a positive contribution to the landscape; a non-residential use is proven to be unviable; the accommodation to be provided is commensurate to the site's relationship to the settlement pattern; and the building is easily accessible to existing housing, employment and services.'

Evidence has been submitted (a Viability Report) to suggest that an economic use would be non-viable and as a single-family home with three bedrooms, the proposed development is commensurate to the site's relationship to the pattern of Brancaster Staithe. The proposed dwelling is also reasonably well located in regard to the distance to the main built extent of the village. However, the barn has an unremarkable utilitarian appearance and the site is not considered to make a positive contribution to the landscape to an extent that would result in the building complying with Policy CS06. The LPA therefore considers that the principle of the creation of a residential unit in this position is unacceptable.

The utilitarian appearance of the building does not make a positive contribution to the landscape. The wording of Policy CS06 is aimed at preventing the conversion of buildings such as this for residential use, limiting the exceptional policy to apply only to buildings that positively contribute to the landscape which is not the case in this instance.

As the site's lawful use is for Storage (B8), the application represents the redevelopment of brownfield land. Paragraph 120c of the NPPF (2021) refers to substantial weight being given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes - given the location outside of the settlement, and its sensitive location with the AONB, the site is not considered suitable brownfield land.

Both the Development Plan and the NPPF (2021) must be read as a whole. The limited benefits of the conversion of the building to residential use, considering the location and conflicts with the policies discussed above are not considered to provide suitable justification for development.

For the above reasons, the proposed development is not considered to comply with the overarching aims of NPPF (2021), Policies CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016).

Design and Impact on AONB:

The design focuses around the existing built form of the barn however limited extensions/rebuilding are proposed around the main structure which aim to both provide additional accommodation and car parking areas as well as prevent light spill off-site, in order to protect the surrounding AONB. Long views of the site are available in most directions, with some viewpoints partially screened by existing vegetation.

The dwelling is proposed in a modern design, with a lower ground floor proposed below a terrace to the north as well as walled courtyards proposed to the rear. Materials include a mix of cladding of the more utilitarian elements, and flint blockwork on the modern extensions. Sedum roofs are proposed above flat roofs.

The larger expanses of glazing are set within existing openings, with louvres used along certain elevations to further block/split up light. Information provided as part of this application states that the amount of glazing proposed totals approximately 1m more than the existing building, although it should be noted that the existing figure used includes large doors which could realistically be closed during certain times of the day/night and therefore this may not be a fair representation of the true impact. Visual light spill assessments have also been provided which include examples of the potential current impact of the building and external lighting on long views across the AONB.

Norfolk Coast Partnership raised concerns over the visual impact of the development on the surrounding landscape and on the AONB, noting that the strategic gaps are important in this landscape and whilst there is already a building here there will be associated extensions and landscaping alongside increased light pollution and domestication of the countryside if a change of use is granted. Boundary walls and louvres, whilst shielding some elements from view and breaking up expanses of lighting, will not fully mitigate this visual impact. Biodiversity improvements associated with the proposed landscaping scheme, whilst providing ecological enhancement, will not erase the impact of a change of use of land to residential.

Policy 1 of the Brancaster Neighbourhood Plan requires development to take into account key features of views within the AONB. Policy 9 relates to landscape character and adverse impacts on the AONB.

Policy 8 of the Neighbourhood Plan relates to view of heritage assets. P4 within the explanatory text includes the subject barn as part of an important viewpoint which the Parish aims to protect.

Whilst consideration has been given to the design of the scheme to mitigate light spill and retain/enhance the utilitarian nature of the building, the scale of the building is such that long views will be visible across the landscape. As noted by the Norfolk Coast Partnership, the change of use of land and associated domestication will have an impact on the landscape and given that the land rises to the south, the building in its more modern altered form and landscaping would be more visually prominent in the AONB to its detriment.

Whilst it is noted that the applicant has sought to resolve matters, on the basis of the above, the application is considered contrary to the NPPF, Policies CS06, CS07, CS08 and CS12 of

the Core Strategy, and Policy DM15 of the SADMPP and Policies P1, P8 and P9 of the Brancaster Neighbourhood Plan in relation to design and impacts on the AONB.

Heritage Impact

The Applicants have provided a statement by a qualified conservation architect in relation to the history of Dutch Barns, noting that the retention of the barn would retain a rare example of such a building. As noted by the Conservation Officer above, the building is not considered to be a non-designated heritage asset for the purposes of the NPPF or the Development Plan. Therefore, its retention is not considered to provide any benefits which would result in the application being supported by Policies CS08 or CS12.

Notwithstanding the above, if the application were to be assessed as a non-designated heritage asset, the application proposes significant external changes and extensions to an extent that the functional characteristics of the building, which provide much of its historic interest, are vastly altered and lost. The provision of multiple extensions in a modern style and including prominent balconies, courtyards and sedum roofs when combined with the material changes proposed would not retain the character of the building as would be required by planning policies.

Highway Safety:

Access and parking areas are provided in accordance with the required standard. The lawful use of the site could generate a level of traffic such that the residential use of the site as one dwelling will not impact on highway safety in the vicinity.

The existing hardstanding to the front of the building is largely proposed to remain and will provide adequate parking/turning areas on site.

The application therefore complies with Policies CS08, CS11, DM15 and DM17 of the Local Plan.

Impact on Protected Sites:

Six statutory designated sites are located within a 2km radius of the application site, including The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA).

Natural England provided comments regarding recreational disturbance of surrounding protected sites which have been reiterated by the Norfolk Coast Partnership. The LPA can confirm that the Habitat Mitigation Fee (£185.93) was paid on submission of the application.

The Norfolk Coast Partnership manages the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and assists the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) by facilitating their Habitats Monitoring and Mitigation (HMM) Fund. Developers within the BCKLWN boundary are required to pay a levy per dwelling to the Borough Council in order to help monitor and mitigate the adverse effects of increasing visitor numbers to Natura 2000 sites resulting from the increased development. These Natura 2000 sites include those such as Barrow Common and the North Norfolk Coast SAC, SPA and Ramsar site. Considering the single dwelling proposed under this application and the prior payment of this fee, no significant impact is considered likely as a result of increased potential for recreation disturbance of protected sites in the immediate vicinity.

The application complies with the NPPF (2021) and Policies CS08, CS12 and DM19 of the Local Plan in regard to impacts on protected sites and the Habitat Mitigation Fee.

Landscaping and Biodiversity

The garden area is proposed to be landscaped with an aim of restoring habitats and increasing biodiversity on site, as designed by a suitably qualified landscape architect. This will enable some biodiversity benefit as a result of the overall scheme however given the extent of land involved and the use of the land as garden post-development, the benefits of this are limited, hard to control and would not warrant approval of the application on these grounds. Full details of the proposed planting/landscaping scheme could be conditioned.

The proposed landscaping scheme could provide some benefit to the ecology of the immediate which is supported by Policies CS08 and CS12 of the Local Plan.

Other Material Considerations:

Protected Species – A ecological survey provided as part of this application indicates limited potential for protected species such as bats and owls to be impacted by the proposed development. No further surveys are necessary however the report provided sets out mitigation measures and enhancements such as controlling external lighting and construction techniques which could be conditioned. Proposed planting and hedgerows could also be conditioned in line with the recommendations.

Impact on Neighbours - Separation distances between the proposed dwelling and the closest houses on Common Lane are more than adequate and will allow both future residents and neighbours to enjoy good quality residential amenity.

Lighting – Norfolk Coast Partnership recommend conditions relating to the position and type of external lighting proposed – to preserve dark skies and minimise light pollution. Natural England reiterated this, requesting conditions to control lighting in like with the Principles of the Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lights. This document sets out key considerations in relation to the position and type of light fitting and the implications for light spill and glare etc. It is considered that external lighting conditions could adequately control the impact on the AONB with regard to lighting.

Contamination As a result of the previous use of the site, there is potential for contamination to be present on the site. A desk study has been provided which recommends further investigation to categorise the site and allow further consideration of impacts. Conditions are therefore recommended in line with the recommendations of this report. Subject to these conditions, the contamination impacts are likely to comply with the requirements of the NPPF (2021).

Crime and Disorder There are no known crime and disorder impacts

CONCLUSION

The application proposes the creation of a new dwelling outside of the development boundary. New development in the countryside is restricted to the exceptions permitted by Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016) and Policy CS06 of the Core Strategy (2011). Policy DM2 lists several exceptions for residential development in the countryside, none of which apply to this scheme.

The utilitarian appearance of the building does not make a positive contribution to the landscape. The wording of Policy CS06 is aimed at preventing the conversion of buildings such as this for residential use, limiting the exceptional policy to apply only to buildings that positively contribute to the landscape which is not the case in this instance.

The building is not considered to be a non-designated heritage asset for the purposes of the NPPF or the Development Plan. Therefore, its retention is not considered to provide any benefits which would result in the application being supported by Policies CS08 or CS12.

Whilst the benefits of the redevelopment of previously developed land are noted, because of the site's position in the countryside and outside of the main built extent of the settlement, the application is not considered to represent the redevelopment of suitable brownfield land for the purposes of Para 120 of the NPPF (2021).

The Agent's design and access statement which refers to measures in place to protect from adverse impacts on light spill and outlines the biodiversity benefits of the proposed landscaping is noted, however these considerations are not considered to outweigh the conflict with Policy CS06 discussed above or otherwise justify the creation of a new dwelling in the countryside.

The application is therefore considered contrary to overarching aims of the NPPF (2021), Policies CS01, CS02, CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policies DM1 and DM2 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (2016).

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason(s):

- 1 Core Strategy Policy CS06 states that in rural areas, conversion to residential use will only be considered where: the existing building makes a positive contribution to the landscape; a non-residential use is proven to be unviable; the accommodation to be provided is commensurate to the site's relationship to the settlement pattern; and the building is easily accessible to existing housing, employment, and services.

By reason of its form, scale and utilitarian appearance in an area of open countryside, the existing building is not considered to make a positive contribution to the landscape. Whilst the benefits of the redevelopment of previously developed land are noted, as a result of the site's position in the countryside and outside of the main built extent of the settlement, the application is not considered to represent the redevelopment of suitable brownfield land for the purposes of Para 120 of the NPPF (2021).

The proposal therefore constitutes the creation of a new dwelling in a location which is not supported by the local plan, contrary to Paragraph 79 of the NPPF, Policies CS01, CS02 and CS06 of the Core Strategy (2011), and Policies DM1 and DM2 of the SADMP (2016).

- 2 Whilst consideration has been given to the design of the scheme to mitigate light spill and retain/enhance the utilitarian nature of the building, the scale of the building is such that long views will be visible across the landscape. The change of use of land and associated domestication would have an impact on the landscape given that the land rises to the south and the building in its more modern altered form and associated landscaping would be more visually prominent in the AONB to its detriment. On this

basis, the application is considered contrary to comply with the NPPF, Policies CS06, CS07, CS08 and CS12 of the Core Strategy, and Policy DM15 of the SADMPP and Policies P1, P8 and P9 of the Brancaster Neighbourhood Plan.