

Heritage Statement

**Martins Farm
53 Boxworth Road
Elsworth
Cambridge
CB23 4JQ**



John Selby

10th December 2019

Contents

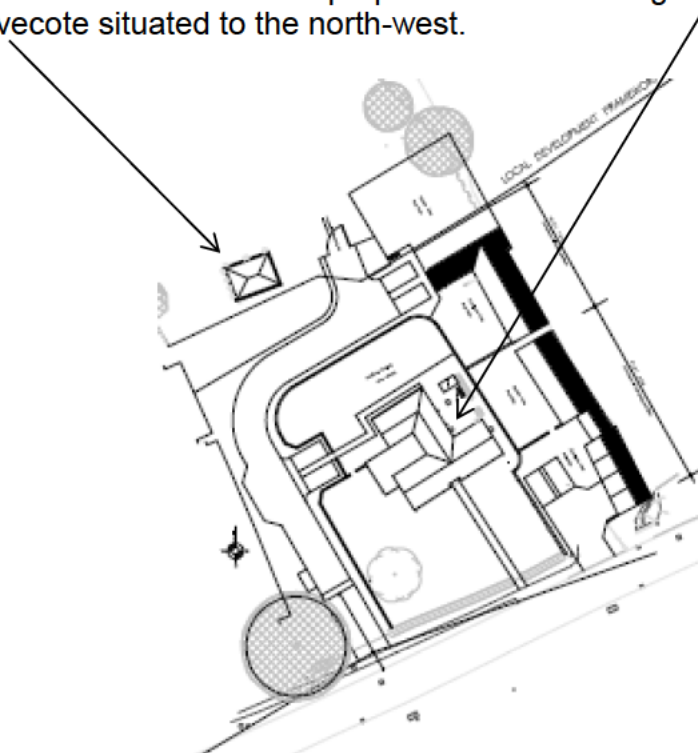
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1.0 Introduction & Recent Planning History

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been written to support applications for planning permission and listed building consent for the provision of ten residential units and the repair of the listed dovecote at Martins Farm, Elsworth. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (paragraph 189).
- 1.2 This Statement provides an appraisal of the heritage assets affected and assesses significance in accordance with the policies contained in the NPPF. The impact of the proposed works on the significance of the heritage asset is then described and considered.

Recent Planning History

- 1.3 In August 2017 an application was made to the District Council for the partial conversion and rebuilding of outbuildings at Martins Farm Elsworth, to form two dwellings (ref. S/3067/17/FL). The proposal affected buildings on the east side of the former farm and did not include proposal for the existing bungalow or the grade II listed dovecote situated to the north-west.

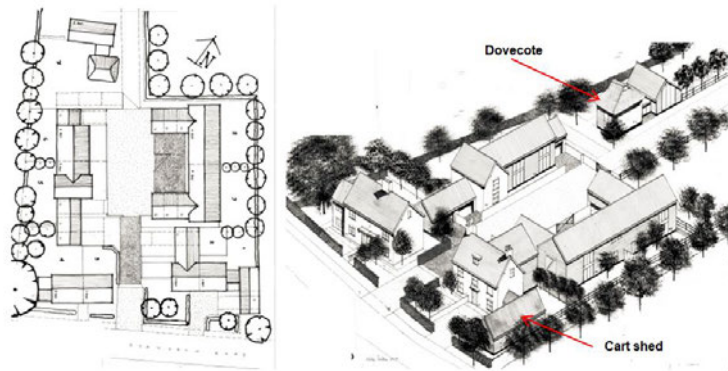


- 1.5 Following discussions with planning officers, the application was placed 'on hold' whilst an alternative proposal for the entire site, including the dovecote, was prepared for pre-application discussion.

- 1.6 Two alternative options were then prepared in sketch form and presented for pre-application discussion.

Option A

- 1.7 This option involved the demolition of the existing bungalow and the row of buildings on the eastern edge of the site, apart from the roadside cart shed, which was to be retained as previously proposed. Two pairs of cottages were proposed facing the roadside, with the main access to the site between them. The eastern cottage was attached to the roadside cart shed which provided garaging for that unit.



- 1.8 To the rear of the cottages, four new dwellings in the form of agricultural buildings were arranged, leaving views between them to allow the dovecote to be seen from the road. The dovecote was to be converted to residential use linked to a modest extension to the rear.
- 1.9 This scheme had the advantage of retaining the buildings of greatest significance and improving their setting with the re-creation of the farm yards. The dovecote was to be given a viable use to ensure its long term retention and an improved roadside view of the building was opened-up.
- 1.10 However, this was not without causing harm to the dovecote. It is difficult to see how this small building can be converted to residential use without harming its small scale and internal features. It is situated, and historically has always been, remote from other farm buildings. Its upper floor, accessed by a ladder had nesting boxes (no longer there) and the saddleback roof contained the flight platforms to allow the birds access. This is still largely intact. Granary bins were provided on the ground floor and these still exist. Much would need to be removed in any conversion, no matter how sensitively executed.



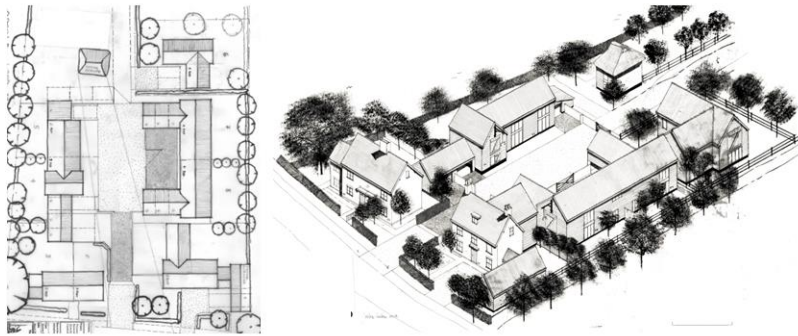
Granary bins



Flight platform

Option B

- 1.11 This provided a pair of cottages facing the road on the west side of the access with a single 'farmhouse' to the east, reflecting the historic arrangement of the site. Again, to the rear of the cottages, four new dwellings in the form of agricultural buildings were arranged, either side of a yard, leaving views between them to allow the dovecote to be seen from the road. But in this option a further dwelling was provided in the north-east corner, occupying a large plot which included the dovecote which was not converted to residential use. Instead it was to be fully repaired, retaining all its internal and external features, to be used as an outbuilding, at most a summerhouse or studio.



- 1.12 This had the advantage of retaining the dovecote unaltered, but repaired, still slightly remote from the other building, thus protecting its setting. It was the preferred option and provided a total of eight dwellings.



Pre-Application Advice

- 1.13 A site meeting was held on the 3rd April 2019 with the Planning Officer, Dean Scrivener. It was broadly agreed that option B could be developed further. Further advice was limited to the extent that heritage matters could not be discussed in detail owing to the absence of the Council's Conservation Consultant. Despite repeated attempts to reconvene on site with conservation input, a further meeting was not forthcoming.
- 1.14 The application now presented has been prepared following the Planning Officer's advice.

2.0 The Heritage Assets: Description & Significance

- 2.1 The dovecote at Martins Farm was listed, grade II on the 25th September 1984. In terms of the NPPF, it is considered to be a 'designated heritage asset'. The list description reads as follows:

"Granary and Dovecote. C17. Timber framed and weatherboarded with brick foundations; thatched roof, hipped with prominent gablets. Boarded door facing south."



- 2.2 Elsworth Conservation Area was designated on the 2nd July 1975. Although no character appraisal has been published, the boundary included the core of the village embracing the parish church and the 'grid' of lanes that were probably established by Ramsey Abbey, which held the parish from the tenth to the sixteenth century¹. The Conservation Area extends eastwards along Boxworth Road to a point east of The George & Dragon, with its eastern boundary edge running alongside outbuildings to the former farm lying to the west of the application site. The site is situated just beyond the eastern edge of the Conservation Area.



- 2.3 The Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset and though the application site lies outside its boundary, the effect of the proposed development on the setting of this heritage asset is a planning consideration.

¹ Taylor 1997 p.42

- 2.4 Dale Farmhouse to the west of Martins Farm is also a grade II listed building, as are its stables and wall. It dates from around 1840 the buildings are designated heritage assets.
- 2.5 Elsworth was a prosperous village from medieval times to the late eighteenth century. Its population peaked around 1841 before declining steadily afterwards². This decline left a somewhat scattered settlement concentrated on Brook Street and the area around the church, which forms the core of the Conservation Area. The application site lies in a secondary area to the east of the village core. By the fourteenth century this was known as Caldewell End and by 1567 was called Cowdell End³. It comprised a loose scattering of cottages and small farms of which Martins Farm was a part. Gradually from the eighteenth century, the spaces between farms and cottages were infilled with substantial houses of gault brick rather than timber frame.
- 2.6 The character of the Conservation Area at Cowdell End is formed by buildings dating from the nineteenth century and including properties built later, often of brick and substantial in size, set between the surviving farms with weatherboarded barns and pantiled roofs. The area is characterised by grassy verges with substantial trees and bushes, giving an informal feel.
- 2.7 Originally, Martins Farmhouse was a substantial timber framed and thatched building with a mansard roofed rear wing. It probably dated from the seventeenth century with the wing added in the eighteenth century. It was destroyed by a fire in the early 1960s and replaced by the existing single storeyed house shortly afterwards.



Martins Farmhouse in the early 1900s with the Murden family



Destroyed by fire ca. 1960⁴

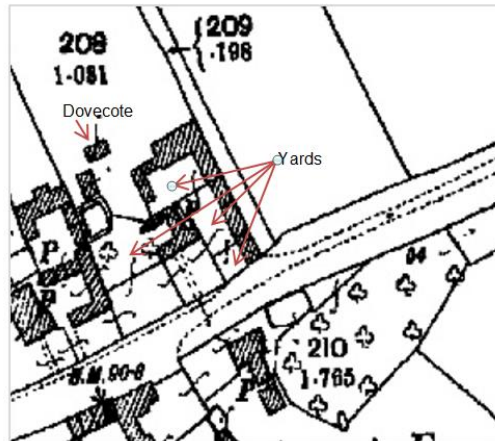
- 2.8 Only the dovecote or granary remains of the earlier farm holding. Early maps show that the row of farm buildings on the east side of the farmhouse formed three yards, with the northern yard enclosed by buildings along the field boundary.

² VCH p.305

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Photos from the Elsworth Chronicle (<http://www.elsworthchronicle.org.uk/Boxworth%20Road.html>)

- 2.9 A further yard lay to the west of the house, south of the dovecote, possibly served the farmhouse itself. This arrangement, shown on Baker's map of 1821, is clearly depicted on the 1902 OS map.



- 2.10 The form of the eastern row of buildings survives, though the yards have gone, as have the buildings south of the dovecote. The survivors comprise a cart shed nearest to the road, followed by a rather ramshackle former stable block, then a recently rebuilt annexe (a former barn) and finally at 90° to the row a former barn with a corrugated sheet roof. The original yard wall separates the modern house from the row of farm buildings.



Significance

- 2.11 Significance may be assessed on a scale from very high to none depending on the values society places on a particular historic asset. Historic England considers that these values may be 'evidential' (from past activities or remains), historical, aesthetic, communal (commemorative or symbolic, cultural, social or spiritual) or natural⁵. Understanding such values can help in deciding the most efficient and effective way of managing the heritage asset so as to sustain its overall value to society. In assessing significance, the importance of the setting of the heritage asset should also be considered.

⁵ English Heritage 2008 pp. 27-40

2.12 The farm buildings have historical and social values. The dovecote is of high significance and is a grade II listed building, standing apart from the others. The farmhouse is a 1960s replacement and of little or no significance and the outbuildings, whilst individually are of limited significance, collectively form a group which makes a positive contribution to the setting of the dovecote. This form or grouping is significant and also contributes to the street scene approaching the Conservation Area. The buildings are within the curtilage of the listed dovecote and are, collectively, a designated heritage asset.



Cart shed and interior



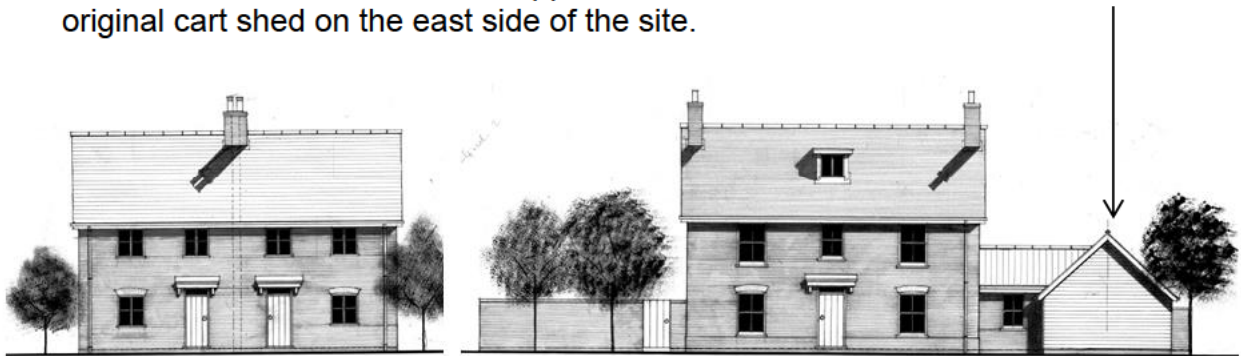
Stables and (right) east elevation to the farm track



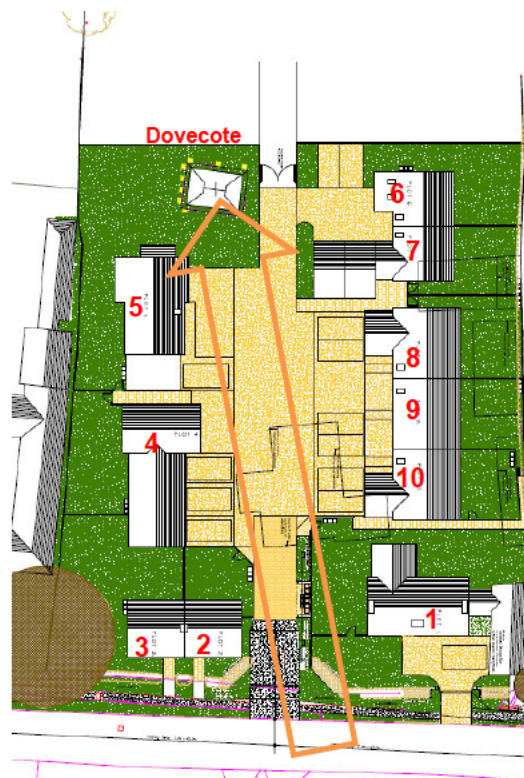
Annexe (left) and former barn (right) with dovecote

3.0 Proposed Works & Heritage Impact Assessment

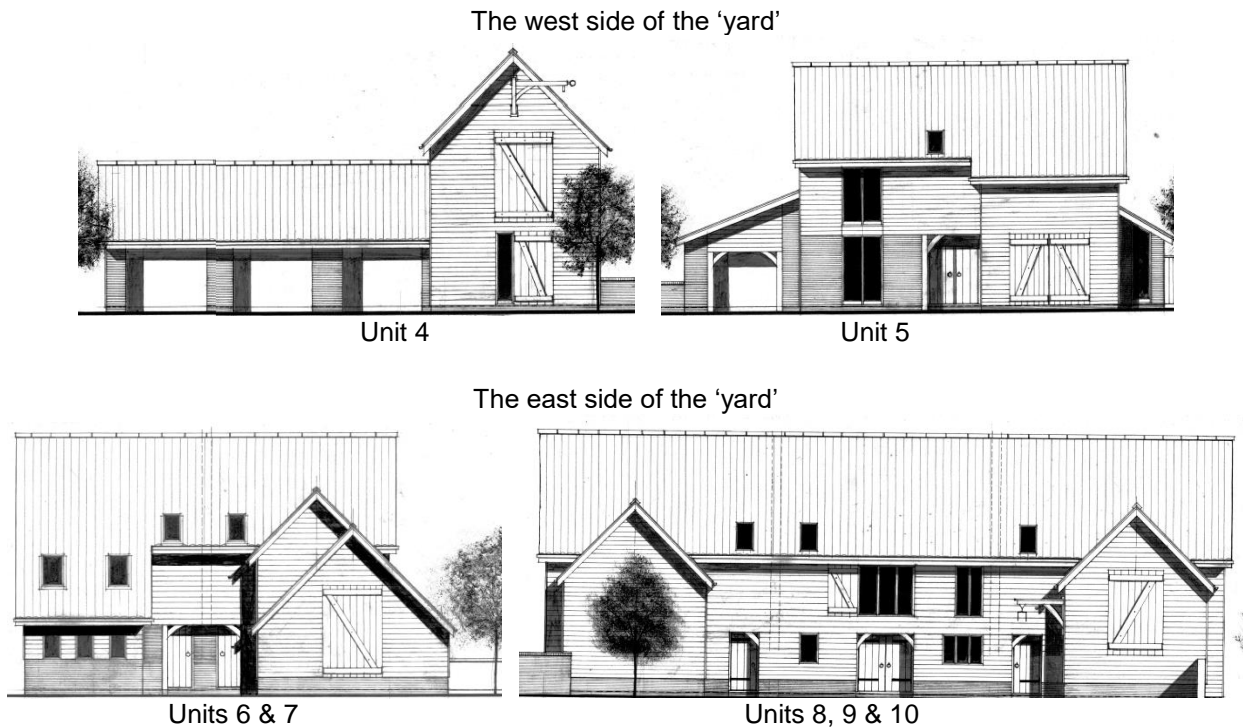
- 3.1 The development is based on Option B, but is now proposing a reduction in the number of four bedroom dwellings and an increase in the number of smaller units, so that a total of ten dwellings form the submitted application. The dovecote remains repaired and unaltered, retaining all its internal and external features, forming an outbuilding for unit 5.
- 3.2 A pair of cottages is proposed (units 2 & 3), facing the road on the west side of the access with a single 'farmhouse' to the east (unit 1), reflecting the historic arrangement of the site. This also presents a roadside elevation which reflects the style, form and scale of existing properties along Boxworth Road. This will respect and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, and retains the original cart shed on the east side of the site.



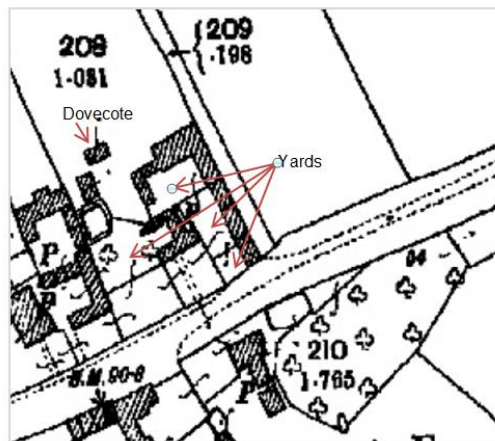
- 3.3 The access road between these will give a view of the repaired dovecote across a 'farmyard' with dwellings either side in the form of agricultural buildings. The yard will be surfaced in bound gravel, giving a unity to the farmyard design.



- 3.4 The dovecote will be viewed across a yard enclosed by buildings which reflect the original arrangement of Martin's Farm.



- 3.5 The proposal provides a group of dwellings in a traditional form, leaving the listed dovecote as a separate entity, a short distance away from the 'yard' buildings, following a similar layout to that shown on early maps. The intention is to reinforce local distinctiveness and enhance the setting of the heritage asset and the conservation area.



4.0 Discussion & Conclusion

- 4.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering applications for development which affects a heritage asset or its setting, local planning authorities shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting (paragraph 66.1). Special attention shall also be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in the exercise of any powers under the planning Acts (paragraph 72).
- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) expands on the 1990 Act. It identifies protection and enhancement of the historic environment as an important element of sustainable development and establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development in the planning system (paragraph 11). The NPPF also states that the significance of listed buildings and conservation areas can be harmed or lost by alteration to them or by development in their setting. Paragraph 200 states that proposals which preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of the heritage assets should be treated favourably.
- 4.3 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF requires an applicant to “describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting”. Paragraph 192 requires local planning authorities, in determining applications to take account of “the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation”.
- 4.4 Paragraph 194 states “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. The question is whether the proposal causes harm to the significance of the heritage assets or their setting, or causes harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 4.5 The proposal causes no harm to the heritage asset, the dovecote, which is to be fully repaired without any alteration, or its historical setting. Nor does the proposal cause any harm to the Conservation Area or the setting of Dale Farmhouse, its front wall and stables to the west. It ensures the retention of the most significant of the outbuildings and is wholly in keeping with the locality.
- 4.6 The site location is at the village entrance and the proposed development will enhance this visually significant site. The form of the proposed development and the choice of materials respect the location and the setting of heritage assets.
- 4.7 The proposal helps also to meet the housing needs of the District.
- 4.8 The proposal is wholly within the spirit of the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Also it satisfies local planning policies which seek to protect the historic environment and encourage design which enhances the locality and reinforces local distinctiveness.

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