

Planning Statement

Change of Use and Alterations for the

Barn at
York Lane Farm,
York Lane,
Flaxton,
YO60 7QZ

To Use as Open Plan Office

Introduction

York Lane Farm is a registered agricultural holding of 26 acres and lays to the West of Flaxton, adjacent to the City of York's boundary. The barn was constructed in 2014 and has been in agricultural use since then. However following a change of ownership the holding now produces hay, mainly for the equestrian market. Hay is harvested by a contract farmer who has the large equipment necessary, and so the applicant is looking to generate additional income from the building.

The applicant is available to work proactively with the Council if they have any suggestions to improve the application or require further information.

Proposal

The income generated by diversification is a vital component of many agricultural businesses with 68% having some form of diversified activity. Letting buildings is the most popular with 45% of farms renting out buildings for non-farming use(Savills Diversification Report Nov 2020). The conversion of farm buildings to offices can generate additional income, reduce business risk and also help sustain rural communities, bringing in economic activity, providing local jobs and workspaces.

The applicant researched alternative uses for the barn and discovered there is demand for out of town office space in the locality. Rural locations offer more attractive settings and promote the well-being of users. They also provide better value and amenity for some, including professionals such as surveyors and architects. This low impact proposal to convert the building to an open-plan office will result in approx 1,500 sq ft of office space.

Planning policies

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The applicant has reviewed the Local Plan, who's purpose is to encourage new development and support economic growth, and believes this proposal meets the objectives of Ryedale's Rural Economy Strategy policies as detailed below:

"Whilst the allocation of new employment development will be in towns, it is important to recognise the significant contribution of the rural areas to Ryedale's economic base, which is over twice the national average. Over 25% of businesses in Ryedale are 'micro' in scale, employing less than 10 employees (Source: Nomis/Yorkshire Futures). This does not only reflect the rural nature of Ryedale with agriculture still playing an essential role, but also the number of small rural businesses, high levels of self employment and home working.

...Whilst allocations will not be made in the villages for employment purposes specifically, small-scale employment schemes, the conversion of existing rural buildings for employment purposes and rural diversification schemes will be supported.

...To help to increase local wage levels, retain and attract young people, reduce out commuting and ensure a more skilled workforce in the longer term, it will be essential to diversify the District's economy to reduce dependence on vulnerable sectors and to foster a wider choice of employment opportunities.

SP9 The Land-Based and Rural Economy

Conversion of existing buildings and provision of new buildings to support appropriate small-scale rural economic activity in line with Policy SP6

SP6 Delivery and Distribution of Employment/Industrial Land and Premises

Expansion land for existing major employers/ established businesses; small scale conversion of existing buildings or provision of new buildings to support appropriate rural economic activity in line with the provisions of Policy SP9”

The updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 is a material consideration in making planning decisions and also supports rural business and economic growth:

“Supporting a prosperous rural economy

84. Planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;”

Policy 89 exempts small scale rural offices from the sequential approach applied to typical town centre uses.

In terms of sustainability the NPPF states ‘Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport.’

Highway safety is also a consideration and the NPPF states ‘Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.’

The site is in the countryside, but is well-related to the large scale development opposite who’s total footprint amounts to over 7 acres, though part in low density caravan site and holiday cabin use. Located on the edge of York it also provides the opportunity to build links and benefit from York’s economy, as encouraged in Ryedale’s Development Plan. It’s a short drive/cycling distance of just 2 miles from Strensall which has a population of over 6,000. It is also close to the A64, a major route in North Yorkshire. Given the support from the above planning policies it is considered the principal of conversion is acceptable.

Details

The building measuring 18.3m x 9.1m is constructed from a steel frame with sheet cladding, corrugated roofing panels and concrete floor.

As detailed in the attached structural report and shown by the photos of each elevation, the building is in good condition and suitable for conversion.

As per the attached indicative plans, it is proposed to create :

- a) parking space within the building for vehicles and cycles
- b) open plan office space amounting to approx 140 sqm, including toilets and store/utilities room.

In order to minimise changes to the buildings external appearance, the existing steel frame and box profile sheet cladding will be retained, as will the corrugated roofing panels and roller shutter vehicle entrance door. The form, scale and footprint of the barn would remain unaltered. No new openings are proposed to the front (South) elevation adjacent to York Lane. Exterior changes will consist of the addition of a rear fire exit door and 4 window openings placed low on the elevations as marked on the plan. Windows will be recessed with dark grey frames. Overall the external changes amount to around 10 sqm, whereas the total external area of the building is over 250

sqm not including the roof, so the exterior changes are minimal when taken as a whole and viewed from public vantage points.

Services such as mains water, electric and telephone lines are available. Foul drainage will be handled by a packaged treatment system(See attached plan). Surface water will continue to discharge to a soak-away.

Access is good and will be through the existing entrance off York Lane. Visibility is excellent in both directions. Parking for both cars and cycles will be inside the building and also on the existing hard standing parking area to the West of the building. The current bric-a-brac of aged farming equipment and paraphernalia will be removed leading to an improvement in the appearance of the site. The traffic generation associated with an office would be low and have no discernible impact on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby houses. The second entrance to the holding off Cross Lane will be used as the main entrance for farm vehicles, and so any increase in traffic using the York Lane entrance from this proposal will be balanced by a reduction in agricultural traffic movements. Large agricultural vehicles will no longer use this entrance so they'll be less disturbance to the neighbouring dwellings and caravan park in the form of dust, noise and so on. There are no public footpaths crossing the land.

Opposite the building is Flaxton Meadows caravan and camping site, a Surveyors office, 3 dwellings and other farm buildings. Given the adjacent developments it is considered this conversion, which retains its exterior elevations and roofing, will not look out of place and compliments the character of the surrounding activities. Furthermore use as an office will not create substantial amounts of noise or otherwise affect the residential amenity of the adjacent homes, over and above the existing neighbouring uses. The new window openings will not overlook the neighbouring properties.

Visibility of the site is partially shielded from York Lane by trees and hedging. The applicant also proposes further landscaping, details to be agreed with the Council, adjacent to York Lane as shown on the attached plan. The rest of the holding is down to grass for hay and will not impact on users of the building. It was previously established the views of the site are filtered by the current landscaping, that it is physically and visually related to the group of buildings opposite and that it is not unacceptably prominent or isolated in the open countryside.

The NPPF and development plan impose a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means approving planning applications without delay where development proposals accord with the development plan. As described above the conversion of rural buildings for business purposes is supported by both national and local plan policies. We therefore respectfully request that the application is approved.