



## Design and Access Statement

### Project Information:

<b>Project:</b>	Flanesford Priory Farmhouse Re-imagined
<b>Client:</b>	Miss Rebecca Roper
<b>Job Number:</b>	A396
<b>Date:</b>	March 2024
<b>Ref:</b>	A396 / 03.05 / 01.03.24 / D&A



# Design and Access Statement



Existing site of proposed development *Communion Architects*

## The Process

### The Assessment:

This application relates to Flanesford Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building (1099458) located on Flanesford Priory Farm, near Goodrich. In the late twentieth century the farm was subdivided and the farmhouse and another property, the Cider Mill, were sold off to a holiday timeshare company where they were used as accommodation for workers. During this period of ownership, alterations were carried out to Flanesford Farmhouse, some of which were not consented by the local planning authority.

In recent years, the family who owns the remaining Flanesford Priory Farm site reacquired the farmhouse and Cider Mill, thus, somewhat unusually, reversing the subdivision and enabling the site to regain its integrity. Since then the family has carried out conversion works to the Cider Mill, enabling it to provide a sustainable income for this building. Also on the site is a small cafe which provides high quality food for the local area and is well used. The works proposed look to expand the existing business model for the site, in order to support the local tourist industry and enable this historic site to have a long-term, sustainable use.

Alterations to Flanesford Farmhouse in the late twentieth-century subdivided it into flats, the proposals will remove these internal subdivisions to restore the property to a single dwelling and carry out repairs to enable the property to be used as high-quality holiday accommodation. Works to the interior of the farmhouse include the introduction of new internal partitions to facilitate the creation of bedrooms and en-suites. Additionally, some knocking through will be required to open up internal spaces and create doorways. The works will look to preserve the floor plan of the farmhouse and

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will, in places, restore the historic plan which has been lost. Insulation will be added to the roof cavity and the internal walls will be insulated with wood fibre installation, finished with lime plaster, and painted with clay plasterboard paint.

Works to the exterior of the farmhouse are generally minor in nature. Windows in poor condition will be replaced, Velux windows will be replaced with conservation roof lights, and external doors will be replaced with examples based historic design. New aluminium rainwater goods will be installed, and repairs will be carried out to the stone walling, slate roofs and lead coverings to the bay windows.

The works will conserve the historic fabric and sustain and enhance the cultural heritage significance of the farmhouse, providing a viable, suitable and economically sustainable use for the building.

As the works do not involve extending the existing farmhouse, there will be no significant visual change to the exterior of the property. Therefore, the works will not affect the setting of the proximal designated monuments, which include the dual designated Flanesford Priory (1157248 and 1157248), Goodrich Castle (1348917 and 1014904) and Kerne Bridge (1099459 and 1005534). A detailed assessment of the heritage impacts can be found in the accompanying Justification Statement.

Flanesford Farmhouse is also located within the Wye Valley AONB. The proposed works will also protect the landscape character and conserve the natural beauty of the AONB.

Communion Architects has worked carefully with the applicants to develop a design which respects and restores the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, and will not cause any harm to the setting of the proximal designated structures, the AONB or the amenity of the adjoining land owners.



Images of the exterior of Flanesford Farmhouse *Communion Architects*

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## Involvement:

The proposed scheme has had the benefit of pre-application advice from Gemma Webster, Senior Planning Officer, and Conor Rutledge, Historic Building Officer, both of Herefordshire Council. The pre-application advice request was submitted on the 13th June 2023 and on 16th October 2023 formal pre-application advice was received (231915/CE).

Regarding the proposal to convert the Farmhouse back to a single residential unit and use as tourism let, the planning officer was supportive:

*Overall, it is considered that the conversion of the residential property known as The Priory for use as part of the existing holiday let business would be in accordance with planning policies.<sup>1</sup>*

From a heritage perspective, the Historic Building Officer was also broadly supportive in principle of converting the farmhouse into a holiday let, and advise some reconsideration of aspects of the plan:

*The principle of altering the farmhouse to accommodate a new holiday let function is broadly supportable from a heritage perspective, but given some of the less than sympathetic interventions which have been undertaken to sub-divide it in the past (lawful or otherwise) a scheme which seeks to re-instate aspects of the farmhouse's historic form and character would be advised, and may require some reconsideration.<sup>2</sup>*

During the pre-application process it was established that whilst the property had been under the ownership of the holiday timeshare company some changes had been carried out to the property which did not benefit from listed building consent. These changes include the re-arrangement of two staircases, the re-arrangement of the landings and en-suites on the first and second floors and the introduction of five additional roof lights. It was therefore advised that a future scheme incorporate and address some of these negative elements:

*[I]t is advisable to understand these differences in order that a harm/benefit analysis can be properly informed, and that measures to potentially address some of these harms can be incorporated into a future scheme; the applicant's own records may also be able to shed some light on these matters.<sup>3</sup>*

This advice has been taken onboard and the revised scheme has looked to address existing elements which harm the significance of the farmhouse, thereby sustaining and enhancing the special interest of heritage asset.

## Staircase removal, kitchen/dining room and en-suite bathrooms:

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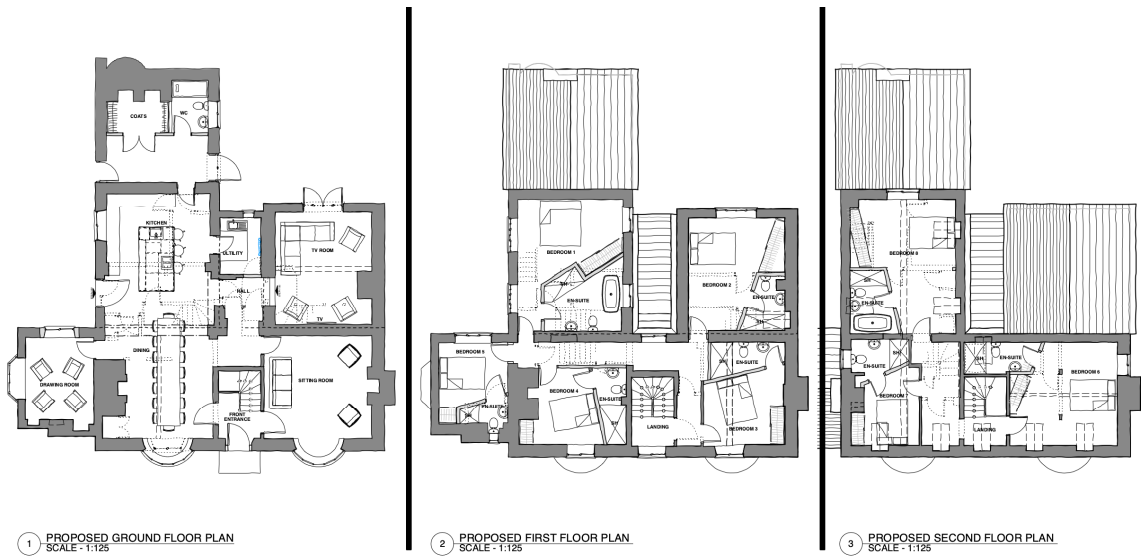
<sup>1</sup> Pre-Application Planning Advice (231915/CE), *Herefordshire Council* (16.10.23), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

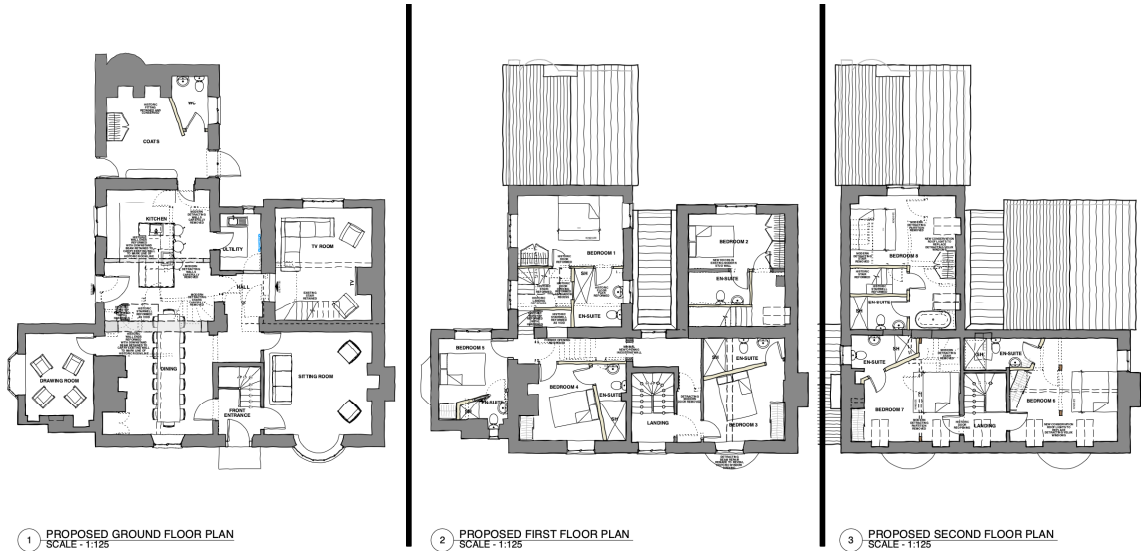
<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.



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Plans prepared at pre-application stage *Communion Architects*



Revised plans *Communion Architects*

Concern was expressed over the removal of multiple staircases, the open-plan nature of the ground floor and the reliance on the proposed first-floor circulation route:

*Whilst the removal of certain staircases could be supportable it is considered the reliance on the original farmhouse staircase to service all rooms on the upper floors, the aspiration for a larger, open-plan kitchen and 16-seater dining area, and the inclusion of en-suites for each bedroom, will result in harm to the historic plan form of the farmhouse, particularly at 1st floor level, which would effectively be turned it into one*

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*large and circuitous corridor area, with uncharacteristic and detrimentally compromised bedroom proportions.*<sup>4</sup>

However it was also acknowledged that retention of all eight proposed bedrooms with en-suites may be possible:

*Retention of eight bedrooms could be feasible, alongside the retention of the existing hall and Flat 3 staircases, and it is also likely each room can be en-suite (although the provision of services and outlets etc. needs careful consideration), but the ability to accommodate 16 diners in the configuration illustrated may not be achievable.*<sup>5</sup>

These comments have been taken onboard and, where on the pre-application proposals only the original farmhouse staircase was retained, in the revised scheme the original farmhouse staircase is retained along with one of the staircases in the north-east extension. In addition, the third staircase, in the north-west extension, will be retained at the first- and second-floor levels. It will also be re-arranged to match the historic plan, thus removing the element of harm. These revisions to the plan also reduce the reliance on the first-floor corridor for providing access to the upstairs bedrooms.

Regarding the concern expressed about the open-plan nature of parts of the proposals, and the concern that this will result in harm to the historic plan form of the farmhouse, the revised scheme has minimised the number of places where knocking through was proposed, and (as discussed above) reduced the reliance on the first-floor corridor for access. Furthermore, where there is the proposed removal of historic walling, particularly in the kitchen/dining-room, wall-nibs and down-stands will be retained, in order to visually illustrate the historic plan form and mitigate harm. We trust that the revised floor plan can now be considered positively as part of the application.

### **Coat/WC area:**

Concern was expressed over the enclosure of the former bread oven:

*Enclosing the former bread oven feature to create a coat room would be detrimental to how this former space and feature are experienced, and retention of this area as open space would be advised; the insertion of a WC would be supportable, as would the creation of a doorway from the existing window, as this was a post-1984 alteration from a former doorway.*<sup>6</sup>

These comments have been taken onboard, and as advised, the revised scheme retains the coat/WC area as an open space, enabling the former bread oven feature to remain visible and can be experienced. As part of this, the proposed WC has been retained and redesigned to retain views towards the bread oven. The proposed creation of a doorway from the existing window, which was supported, has been retained in the revised scheme. We trust that the revised design of the coat/WC area with retention of the bread oven feature can now be considered positively as part of the application.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.11.



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## **TV room:**

Concern was expressed over the proposed replacement of a window for a set of doors in this room and the proposed removal of the staircase:

*[the] retention as a window, and functioning access to the upper floor, would be advised as it is considered the level of alteration and loss would not be justifiable in this instance as it would be harmful to both historic fabric and evidential form.<sup>7</sup>*

These comments have been taken onboard, and the revised scheme retains the existing opening as a window, and functioning access to the upper floor, thereby protecting and preserving the historic fabric and the evidential forms. We trust that the revised design of the TV room can now be considered positively as part of the application.

## **Additional bay window:**

Concern was expressed over the proposed replacement of the existing ground-floor window on the principal facade with a bay window:

*Historically, an original ground floor window on the eastern side of the southern elevation was converted to bay window, and whilst this may have some heritage value as an evolutionary phase, the western window exists in its original form and is the sole remnant at ground floor level of the original scheme for this primary elevation; whilst the current arrangement is asymmetrical, retention of the existing window is advised as a new bay window would be considered harmful to significance.<sup>8</sup>*

These comments have been taken onboard and the revised scheme no longer proposes a bay window on the western side of the southern elevation. The existing window opening will be retained. We trust that the revised design of southern elevation can now be considered positively as part of the application.

## **Rooflights:**

Concern was expressed regarding roof lights, as several of the existing had been installed without consent and are visually intrusive.

*The 1985 approval allowed for two rooflights within the southern roof pitch, but five rooflights have been installed, and this has been to the detriment of the farmhouse's character and significance, and is particularly intrusive from long-ranging views of the historic group (see previous photo and 1985 elevations/plans)...A rooflight in the main northern pitch also appears to have been installed without consent, in addition to another on the eastern pitch of the Flat 3 roof, and it would be advisable to replace these with conservation rooflights as previously detailed.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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These comments have been taken on board, the pre-application proposals looked to replace the existing Velux rooflights, which are detrimental to the significance of the farmhouse, with new conservation roof lights. These proposals have been retained as part of the revised scheme, and we trust that it can be considered positively as part of the application.

### **Windows:**

The pre-application advice was supportive of replacing the existing modern windows on the north elevation with slimline double-glazed, timber windows of an appropriate design:

*All windows on the north elevation appear to be modern in origin, and so their replacement with slimline double-glazed, timber windows of an appropriate design for their aperture size would be supportable.<sup>10</sup>*

It was also suggested that the existing first-floor windows on the southern elevation could be replaced using the same design:

*The southern elevation contains cruciform windows of an unknown date, but with interesting canopy details at 1st floor level; these could potentially be replaced to the same pattern.<sup>11</sup>*

These comments have been taken onboard. The existing windows described are visually similar in design to those in a photo from the 1980s (the image is included in the justification statement). The revised scheme proposes that where timber windows are in a poor condition, they will be replaced with new painted hardwood alternatives and the pattern will be based on historical precedent, as seen in the 1980s photograph. We trust that the revised scheme can now be considered positively as part of the application.

It was also suggested that on the west elevation the ground-floor bay window and first-floor casement windows could be refurbished:

*On the west elevation, the six-light ground floor window is modern and could be replaced in the same manner; the bay window south of this appears to be of greater age, and could be refurbished with new slimline double-glazing panes introduced (Fineo or similar); at 1st floor level, the two multi-pane windows with central casements appear to be the oldest windows remaining, albeit both have had their casements replaced, with only one retaining its complete pintel hinge mechanism and hook stay, but these could potentially be refurbished, with new steel casement introduced; the small gable window is of a similar age/design, and could also be retained.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

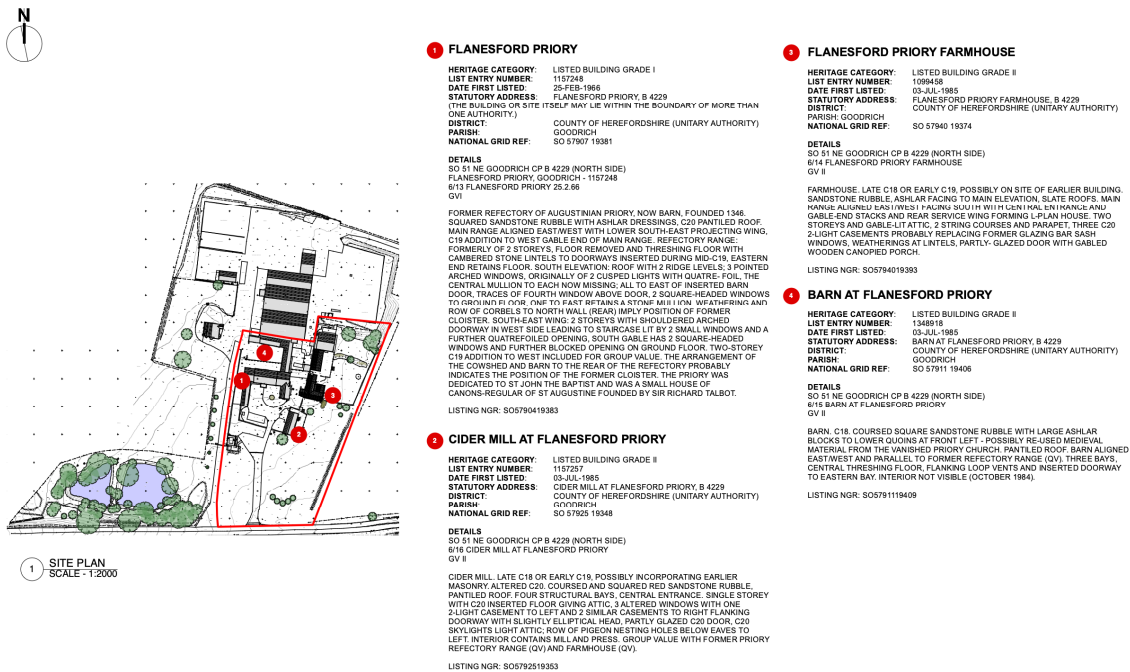


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These comments have been taken onboard, however it is not believed that refurbishing the west elevation ground-floor bay window and first-floor casement windows is feasible. Therefore, for the west bay window, the revised scheme proposes a new painted hardwood bay window matching the existing design and reforming of the roof using traditional carpentry covered with code 6 lead. For the first floor, the revised scheme proposes new, sensitively designed oak windows. We trust that the revised scheme can now be considered positively as part of the application.

Taken as a whole we trust that these adjustments will allow the principle and the design of the scheme to be supported.

To this end, we have provided appropriately scaled drawings detailing the existing house, the revised proposed design and this Design & Access Statement so that the application can be fully appraised.



Listed buildings on the Flanesford Priory Farm site *Communion Architects*

## Evaluation:

The design, we believe, will conserve the historic fabric and with sustain and enhance the special architectural and historic interest of the heritage asset. It will also conserve the setting of the proximal heritage asset, and landscape character of the AONB. The revised design also removes elements considered to be harmful to the significance of Flanesford Farmhouse.

## Design principles:

The primary design principles are as follows:

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1. Conserve and sustain the historic fabric and elements which contribute to its significance;
2. Remove twentieth-century elements which harm the significance of the heritage asset;
3. Protecting the setting of the proximal heritage assets, which include Flanesford Priory, Goodrich Castle, and Kerne Bridge; and protecting the landscape character of the Wye Valley AONB;
4. Remove the existing internal subdivisions and return Flanesford Farmhouse to a single dwelling;
5. Beautifully renovate the farmhouse to become a 16-person holiday let, in order that it can have an economically sustainable use; and
6. Thermally upgrade the existing accommodation to reduce the energy required to heat the property. At the same time, reduce the carbon associated with this through low-carbon technology.

### Layout:

Flanesford Farmhouse was historically the principle dwelling at Flanesford Priory Farm, housing the farmer, their family and servants. In the late twentieth-century, the single dwelling was subdivided into workers' flats, introducing internal partitions, new staircases and additional services, disrupting the historic layout of the property.

The proposed layout looks to remove the internal subdivisions and return the farmhouse to a single dwelling, and does not look to extend the existing footprint of the house. On the ground floor, the historic layout will be largely retained to create multiple gathering spaces for guests, namely the proposed sitting room, TV room and drawing room. An open-plan design is proposed for the kitchen/dining room. This will involve the removal of some historic walling, however the historic floor plan of the property will be illustrated through the retention of wall-nibs and down-stands. The creation of the open-plan kitchen/dining room also involves the removal of a staircase. The staircase route is an historic access route, however the existing staircase is modern. While the proposals involve the removal of the staircase, the historic stairwell will be illustrated through the creation of a void in the ceiling, above the dining table.

However, while the staircase will be removed at ground-floor level, the proposals look to retain it at first- and second-floor level. Historically there was a staircase in the north-west extension of the property, but the existing staircase follows a different route to historic precedent. The proposals therefore look to recreate the route of the historic staircase in this location, thus restoring the historic layout of the property in this area, and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset.

The proposals utilise the existing footprint of the house to accommodate eight en-suite bedrooms in order to create a 16-person holiday let. The bedrooms will be located on the first and second floors of the property, and largely honour the historical



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Existing layout of ground floor *Communion Architects*

arrangement of the farmhouse. Where new internal partitions are necessary, they will be fully reversible, constructed to a high design standard and clad with timber panels.

Therefore, the proposed internal layout respects the historic character and floor plan of the farmhouse and returns it to a single dwelling. The proposals also remove elements of harm and will conserve and restore the heritage asset so that it can provide a viable and sustainable economic income. The proposed works will be finished to a high design standard and respect the historic and agricultural character of the property.

## **Scale:**

The scheme has been carefully designed to suit the existing dwelling and there is no change to the existing footprint or external elevations of the farmhouse. As the works are kept with the scope and scale of the existing building, it is believed that these works are therefore of an appropriate scale to the site.

## **Appearance:**

The principal facade of the farmhouse is a two-storey, three-bay ashlar elevation, with evidence of a former porch around the central door. On the ground floor, the east window has been converted to a bay window and roof lights are visible in the attic storey (second floor). The house has several historic extensions to the north (rear) and west. These are constructed from a mixture of rubble stone walling and red brick. The majority of the windows and doors are modern replacements in poor condition. The character of the property is a vernacular mix of agricultural and eighteenth-century architecture.

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As there are no major external alterations the proposals retain the character and appearance of the farmhouse, the setting of the proximal heritage assets and AONB. The only changes to the external appearance of the property are minor in nature and include restoring the former entrance porch, and replacing windows and doors with hardwood alternatives using designs based on historic precedent. These minor changes will be an overall enhancement to the heritage asset and its special interest. Parking

The existing parking arrangements will not be changed.

### Access

The existing access arrangements are maintained and generally improved by the proposed work. A historic entrance route to the rear of the property will be re-opened as part of the proposed works.

### Inclusive Design

The works aim for improved inclusive design to the existing dwelling.

### Energy Design

The external walls will be insulated with wood fibre insulation, and the slate roof will be relaid with insulation. In addition, the new windows will provide a significant thermal upgrade compared to what is presently there. Overall, the works will improve the energy efficiency of the farmhouse.

### Planning Policy

We believe that the revised scheme is in accordance with Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-2031 (adopted 2015).

#### **Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy (CS):**

Policy SD1 - Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency

Policy E4 - Tourism

Policy LD1- Landscape and Townscape Policy

Policy LD4 - Historic Environment and Heritage Assets

#### **Review of policies**

Policy SD1 states that development proposals should create safe, sustainable, well-integrated environments for all members of the community. Proposals should be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through detailing and materials, respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development. The proposal should also safeguard the amenity of existing and proposed residents in terms of overlooking, overshadowing and overbearing. We believe this to be the case.

Policy E4 provides the framework as to the criterion for the support of development proposals which relate to tourism in Herefordshire. It is stated that the county will be



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promoted as a destination for sustainable tourism. Development proposals would be supported where it is ensured that there is no detrimental impact on the county's varied natural and heritage assets and the overall character and quality of the environment; there would be new accommodation and attractions throughout Herefordshire which would diversify the tourist provision and extend the tourist season and increase the number of visitors staying overnight; and, regards are had to the visual amenity of public/cycling routes such as Public Rights of Way (PRoW). We believe this to be the case. This was also the view taken by Gemma Webster, Senior Planning Officer in the pre-application response.<sup>13</sup>

Policy LD1 requires that the character of the landscape/townscape has positively influenced the design and scale of development whilst conserving and enhancing the local distinctiveness. This policy also requires that the natural, historic and scenic beauty of important landscapes and features, including AONB, are conserved and enhanced. These policies accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, last updated December 2023), specifically Policy 135 with regard to good design and ensuring a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers, and Chapter 16 with regard to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. We believe this to be the case.

Policy LD4 is associated with heritage assets and is applicable to this proposal. It states that proposals should protect, conserve and/or enhance heritage assets where possible, ensuring local distinctiveness and character is maintained. LD4 also states that development proposals which affect heritage assets and the wider environment should record and advance the understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) and to make this evidence or archive generated publicly accessible. We believe this is the case.

### **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

#### **Review of policy**

Excerpt from justification statement (p.38):

*The proposals are, in the words of paragraph 197 of the NPPF, sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset. The proposed works to the exterior of the Flanesford Farmhouse are repairs to the historic fabric which sustain the listed building, or are alterations which look to return the building to a state closer to historical precedent, and therefore enhance significance of the heritage asset. The proposals also sustain the setting of the listed building, the views towards it, and the views towards the proximal heritage assets, which include the listed and scheduled monuments at Flanesford, Goodrich Castle, and Kerne Bridge. The proposed works to the interior of the farmhouse enhance its significance through the removal of the harmful alterations and partitions, and sustain the special architectural and historic interest in the property through the retention of historical features and the floor plan, either physically or illustratively.*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.2-3.

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*The proposals also, in the words of paragraph 197 of the NPPF, put Flanesford Farmhouse to viable use consistent with its conservation, as the proposals return the property to a single dwelling, and its use as holiday accommodation is consistent with its conservation. The conservation and proposed use of the property will contribute to the 'economic vitality' of the local community, while the retention of the vernacular character of the listed building enables it to continue to make a 'positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness', in the words of paragraph 197 of the NPPF, and therefore should be supported.*

*The proposed works will sustain and enhance the heritage asset. Where there is some loss of historical fabric this will, in the words of paragraph 202, lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset. The loss of fabric is slight, and will be minimised through the preservation of wall-ends and down-stands. The impact is also offset by public benefit and securing an optimum viable use for the heritage asset. The listed farmhouse will be returned to use by becoming holiday accommodation. It will also form part of visitor views at Flanesford, in association with the on-site cafe. The proposed works will also be mitigated through preservation by record, thereby conforming with paragraph 205 of the NPPF. Therefore, the proposed works should be supported.*

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## Conclusion

Communion Architects takes seriously the responsibility of working with our clients to deliver exceptional projects. To this end, we have received a good measure of success, with projects receiving national recognition from many quarters.

The proposed design responds to the applicant's brief in a way that resonates with the architectural and historic special interest of the farmhouse and its setting. The design removes elements of harm and overall enhances the significance of the listed building. The proposed design also conserves the setting of proximal heritage assets and the Wye Valley AONB.

The proposed design also provides a viable and economically sustainable use for the building, and supports Herefordshire's sustainable tourism strategy by providing accommodation as well as forming part of a farm diversification strategy.

We trust that the above allows a useful dialogue with Herefordshire Council and will enable the proposal to be met with a favourable response.

We look forward to working with you further on this project.

Kind regards,

Alex Coppock

Director

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