

APP/W3520/W/25/3364061
Land at School Road
Elmswell

**HERITAGE SUMMARY PROOF OF
EVIDENCE**

Thomas Copp

Introduction

1. This Summary Proof of Evidence has been prepared in response to Reason for Refusal 3 and relates to the heritage impacts of the proposed development. It has been prepared by Thomas Copp and my qualifications and expertise are set out at paragraph 1.1-4 of my Proof of Evidence.
2. The Site forms part of the setting of three listed buildings, each of which are identified in reason for refusal 3. These are:
 - The Grade II* listed Church of St John (NHLE 1032468)
 - The Grade II listed Almshouses to the east of the Church of St John (NHLE 1181926)
 - The Grade II listed Elmswell Hall (NHLE 1032472)
3. The Site and local area have seen various changes during the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st century. Notably, this has included the removal of all field boundaries within the Site to facilitate its arable use. The changes have also included the development of the surrounding area, including ribbon development along School Road, 1980s development to the east of School Road and recent development to the north-east of the Site. The Site is now in arable use and is experienced within the context of this neighbouring 20th and 21st century development, as well as the railway line to the north.

Significance and Contribution of Site to Significance

4. The significance of the Church of St John is primarily bound in the historic form and fabric of the building. It is drawn from its historic interest as a medieval parish church, with connections to the Benedictine Abbey at Bury St Edmunds. In addition to this association, the building also illustrates religious architecture and practices over time, with the medieval building providing strong evidence of this, while the later restorations also illustrate the changing practices and the Victorian emphasis on a distinctly Anglican form of ecclesiastical architecture.
5. The significance of the Almshouses is primarily bound in its historic form and fabric. It is particularly derived from the historic interest as Almshouses granted by the Lord of the Manor to house poor parishioners, with the Dissolution marking a shift from alms and care for the poor being primarily undertaken by the Church, to being cared for by secular organisations or individuals. The listed building also possesses historic interest in providing evidence of historic construction methods and architectural interest from the simple symmetrical design, which provides an attractive frontage to Church Road.
6. The significance of Elmswell Hall is strongly drawn from its historic and architectural interests as a late medieval, timber-framed manor house with the construction techniques and fabric used providing evidence of former construction methods. However, this is not evident externally. The building also possesses historic interest due to its historic association with the wider Elmswell Manor, although the substantial alterations to the building undertaken after the separation of the Hall and Manor in the 17th century have weakened this association and the ability to appreciate it.
7. The contribution the Site makes to the significance of each of the heritage assets varies and is dependent on its proximity, visual relationship and historic relationship.
8. The Site makes the strongest contribution to the significance of the Church of St John, as a surviving, though altered, element of its rural setting. The undeveloped nature of the Site assists in reinforcing the relative separation of the building from the core of

Elmswell and the prominence and landmark status of the building. It contributes to the historic interest and architectural interest of the church.

9. The undeveloped nature of the Site also contributes to the historic interest of the Almshouses, reinforcing their use serving a settlement within a predominantly rural parish, and allowing them to be experienced alongside the church as an important grouping.
10. The Site also shares a historic association with Elmswell Hall, although successive changes to the Hall and local area have diminished this link. The Site now makes a limited contribution to the historic interest of the Hall and its overall significance.

Impacts of the Proposed Development

11. The proposed development will change the setting of the heritage assets by the alteration of the northern part of the Site to provide new development, by the alteration to the southern part of the Site to provide informal open space and by the change in views to and from the listed buildings.
12. The proposals have been designed to respond to the setting and significance of the identified heritage assets, with key design principles and mitigation measures identified prior to the design process beginning. These seek to retain a significant part of the rural setting to the Church of St John and the Almshouses, retaining their relative isolation, while also retaining the prominence of the church and its landmark status.
13. At the same time the proposal seeks to enhance the retained open areas between the proposed development and the listed church and Almshouses. New public views of the church will also be created, increasing the ability to appreciate its architectural interest and significance.
14. The development has therefore been designed to retain those elements that make the greatest contribution to the significance of the Church of St John.
15. As a consequence, harm to the significance of the heritage assets has been minimised, with any harm remaining less than substantial (as agreed with the Council) and, in my view, limited. Specifically, the harm to the significance of the Church of St John will remain low, while the harm to the significance of the Almshouses and Elmswell Hall will remain very low.
16. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF requires this harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the development (recognising the considerable importance and weight given to the conservation of heritage assets. This planning balance is provided within the Appellant's Planning Proof of Evidence.

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