

Covering letter, 'The Fox' Ch. Eversden.

APPENDIX 1
5/05/04 LA.

P&M TEBBIT

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**REF: THE FOX/ HOLBEIN FARM PLANNING APPLICATIONS – FOR THE
RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT FARM BUILDINGS**

This application will bring the above buildings into economic use for the farming business. By means of residential and holiday letting.

Red House Farm Background

Red House Farm is a family run working arable farm owned by Paul and Margaret Tebbit. The family has farmed in the area for 5 generations and has been at Red House Farm for 34 years.

This period has seen many changes, the arable land has been increased to try to maintain financial viability whilst beef and pig farming have ceased. The sheep flock has been reduced.

Agricultural economics have always driven change, and farmers have either to react to market forces or be swallowed up by larger farming companies and neighbours, often with access to capital from development.

The recently announced mid-term review of the common agricultural policy will accelerate these changes. Reduced income from actual farming means diversification must take place.

The Farm has a number of valuable environmental assets, including the Bourne Brook, badger sets, and rare species such as, Skylark Lapwing, Bullfinch and Brown Hare. These have been encouraged through the use of DEFRA Countryside Stewardship Agreements and the adaptation of modern farming techniques to enhance the wildlife habitats that we have on the farm.

The Tebbits are now diversifying into rural tourism, with the Grade II listed farmhouse being used as a successful five diamond rated bed and breakfast, and a redundant barn has been converted into two self catering cottages, with the support of the Local Tourist Office, DEFRA Rural Enterprise Scheme and EEDA Redundant Building Grant.

The Tebbits farm is well placed to help satisfy the need for recreation and tourism in the area, as well as residential lettings for those working in the Cambridge. The farms many footpaths linking to local places of interest including Wimpole Hall and Kingston Wood, is to be expanded by a network of field conservation margins to allow visitors access, to their water meadows along side Bourne Brook, and the fishing pools in disused brick pits on the farm.

Red House Farm is one of only two working farms remaining in the Parishes of Eversden and Kingston. These planning applications, if successful will allow the continual adaptation and development of the farm to meet the changing needs of the rural economy.

The Proposed Sites

The Fox and Holbein Farm buildings are located on High Street, Great Eversden, approximately one hundred metres from Red House Farm. Both sets of buildings are on the sites of a redundant pig farm, and are opposite each other, split by the High Street. Both sites have excellent access and visibility onto the Great Eversden High Street, and do not require any addition access points.

The Fox Cottages - For Disabled Use

It is proposed that we convert an old red brick 'swill shed' into two, two bedroom cottages. We aim to convert this building to National Accessible Scheme guidelines, for a facility specifically designed for disabled tourists and their carers. These cottages are adjacent to the farms old 'brick pits', where guests would be able to enjoy the peaceful surroundings, or fish. The remaining buildings, except for a winter sheep barn, will be removed from the site, and the area re-seeded and trees planted.

Holbein Farm Cottages

This planning proposal consists of the conversion of four redundant barns into four two bedroom and one, one bedroom cottages. These cottages will be built to current building regulations.

Visitors to the above developments would have the use of the 'brick pit' fishing ponds and also have access to numerous farm walks, linking the farm to nearby villages, Wimpole Hall and Cambridge. We are currently in the process of having farm walk maps printed for the use of our existing B&B guests.

Traffic Movements

When used for agricultural purposes, these sites are subjected to regular feed lorry deliveries, haulage of livestock, visits by sales representatives, and potential livestock purchasers, tractors and trailers, and up to seven employees driving to the site daily. These movements will no longer take place. The traffic produced from these conversions will not represent any increase, and indeed apart from the construction phase, there will be far less traffic than in the past, and of a less hazardous type.

The Vision

The Fox and Holbein Farm cottages aim to extend on the current diversification initiative undertaken by the business at Red House Farm. We wish to continue to provide high quality accommodation, and will complete the cottages to the highest standard.

The farm is ideally located just seven miles south west of Cambridge and has the advantage of a quiet and peaceful rural environment. This is complimented by the excellent transport links in the area, with the M11, A14, A1M and Stansted airport all within a forty-minute drive.

Market Research

This planning proposal is supported by external market research provided by the East of England Tourist Board, and Acorus Rural Property Services. We commissioned the Tourist Board to carry out a development assessment on our proposal for self catering cottages. This report concluded;

- There is a low supply of existing self catering accommodation in the South Cambs area.
- Out of a total of 21 properties identified just 2 are located within 0-5 miles, and the remainder are within 5-10 miles.
- Few properties participate in a quality assurance scheme, and none are rated as five star, indicating a market opportunity.
- The existing Five Diamond bed and breakfast at Red House Farm may indicate the level of demand for high quality accommodation in the area.

Both reports highlight the excellent amenities that are on offer to visitors in the local area, including the various walks, cycling and fishing available at Red House Farm. In addition they are positive about the high quality disabled accommodation that will be provided. Stating that, Holiday Care Service research has revealed an increasing number of enquiries for disabled accommodation.

The existing Rose Barn Holiday Cottage located at Red House Farm, won local support from South Cambridgeshire District Council, the South Cambs Tourism Liaison Officer, and the South Cambs. District Council with the Portfolio for Tourism, who all highlight the need for quality accommodation in South Cambridgeshire. In addition local businesses such as Pubs and the village shop benefit from visitors to the self catering cottages, as they prefer to use local facilities, within easy walking distance, as opposed to traveling by car.

In addition, Mrs Tebbit has carried out primary research into the market. This involved discussing the factors influencing Bed and Breakfast guests when choosing their accommodation. We believe most of these factors

are relevant to self-catering accommodation. This research concluded that the main factors of choice are as follows:

- Tourist Board Rating
- Location;
 - Distance from Cambridge
 - Distance from Duxford Air Museum
 - Rural location
- Aesthetic Choice
- Availability of local walks/recreational activities

We believe there is also a need for quality residential accommodation in the area, to accommodate those working in and around Cambridge. The easy access to the Madingley Road and Trumpington Park and Ride sites are an advantage, as this helps to reduce the already congested city centre.

National and Local planning Policy

Having carried out some research into National Policy Guidance Notes and the New South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, it is apparent that both National and Local planning policy encourage farm diversification, where it is of an appropriate nature, and sympathetic to the local environment.

The agricultural buildings for conversion are currently unused, but have been assets to the farm for many years. If left redundant they will become an unwelcome maintenance cost to the farming business in the future, and could become unsightly. The barn conversions will be undertaken in an appropriate manner to reflect the architectural style of the area (please see detailed plans), and would be landscaped accordingly.

Both sites are positioned away from other properties, and are surrounded by the rest of the farm. This development would benefit the village of Great Eversden economically, by increased revenue to local retailers.

We feel that Paragraph 3 of Planning Policy Guidance Notes No.7 "The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development" is appropriate in relation to our planning application;

- *3.14 The re-use and adaptation of existing rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development (see paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10), as well as for tourism, sport and recreation. It can reduce demands for new building in the countryside, avoid leaving an existing building vacant and prone to vandalism and dereliction, and provide jobs.*
- *3.12 Rural tourism makes a major and growing contribution to rural economic activity and the rural labour market. It needs to develop in a way which draws on the character of the countryside and does not destroy the very asset on which its popularity depends. Given that*

guiding principle, a wide variety of tourist developments, in terms of nature and scale, can be acceptable in the right location.

This application is also relevant to the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, adopted in February 2004. In particular I refer to Chapter 3 – Green Belt, Policy GB2: points 2 and 6.

Section 3.14 states; Proposals to change the use of existing buildings are capable of being 'appropriate' development subject to criterion (6) of policy GB2. Such re-use can assist rural diversification through providing new accommodation for commercial, industrial or recreational users, or for tourism....

Chapter 9 – Recreation and Tourism, Policy RT10: Points 1,2 and 3. I refer to Sections;

- 9.32 The District Council acknowledges that tourism proposals can assist in diversifying the rural economy.....*
- 9.33 Accommodation for tourists through the conversion of existing buildings is an important element of rural diversification.....*
- 9.34 The policy will allow farmers and others to diversify their business while safeguarding the countryside and remaining consistent with the housing policies of this plan.*

In closing, the planning applications for both The Fox and Holbein Farm sites, are in line with both National and Local planning Policy. The development will represent economic value for the farming business and also the local community. It will also allow greater public access and recreational use of an undervalued and attractive area of South Cambridgeshire. It also enables visitors to Cambridgeshire an opportunity to see a working farm that is actively enhancing the environment, to retain the natural heritage of the area.