

**13. FULL APPLICATION - FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF AN EXISTING AGRICULTURAL BUILDING WITH A NEW DWELLING, AT HOPE FARM, ALSTONEFIELD (NP/SM/1123/1405, DH)**

**APPLICANT: MR & MRS HAMBLING**

**Summary**

1. The application is for the replacement of an existing agricultural building with a new build open market dwelling.
2. The application follows a refusal in November 2023 of a conversion of a non-traditional redundant agricultural building to a dwelling.
3. The applicants have not demonstrated an eligible local need for new housing within the National Park. Nor do they demonstrate a functional need for a dwelling in this location.
4. The application is recommended for refusal.

**Site and Surroundings**

5. Hope Farm stands in open countryside off the south side of Hopedale Road, opposite the junction of Furlong Lane, approximately 680m to the south-west of Alstonefield, which is the nearest named settlement in policy DS1.
6. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity. Neither does the site lie within a designated conservation area, the nearest point of the Alstonefield Conservation Area is 266m to the north-east.
7. The site comprises two distinct yard areas, largely separated by a drystone wall. In the yard to the north, by the road, there is a holiday cottage, which is a conversion of a small traditional stone building, the farmhouse itself, and small stone outbuilding. In the yard area to the south there is a small range of more modern agricultural buildings, two profile sheeted buildings, small timber buildings, plus the building which it is proposed to replace. A pole barn and a lean-to off the larger of the portal frame buildings stand in the field to the west, to the rear of the yards. A further two fields extend the entire holding, including the yard areas, to a total of approximately 1.58 hectares (3.91 acres).
8. The building the application proposes to replace is a long, narrow single storey former cattle building and dairy which spans both yards, though mainly being in the southern yard. The building is of no historic or vernacular merit.
9. The nearest neighbouring property is Hope Farm House, approximately 40m to the west of the building which is the subject of the application.

**Proposal**

10. The proposal is to replace the single storey linear building, formerly an agricultural building, with a new build open market dwelling. Furthermore, the agent has stated by email dated 5 December 2023, that the applicants would like the new dwelling to be legally separate from the farm, i.e. they seek to create a new planning unit.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

### **11. That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:**

- **The applicant does not have an eligible local need for new housing within the National Park and the current application is therefore contrary to policy HC1(A) of the Core Strategy.**
- **In this instance, there are no exceptional circumstances or any other material planning consideration that would justify a departure from the Authority's adopted housing policies.**

## **Key Issues**

### 12. The key issues are:

- Whether an exception to policy HC1 is justified; and
- Whether the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the site and its setting, or the wider landscape setting within which it sits; and
- Whether the proposal would harm the amenities of nearby neighbouring properties.

## **History**

13. 1990 - The restoration of a disused farmhouse to a dwelling was granted subject to conditions by NP/SM/0590/075 – Condition 14 imposed an agricultural occupancy condition.
14. 2002 - The conversion of a small stone traditional building in the yard to a holiday cottage was granted subject to conditions under NP/SM/0702/041.
15. 2018 - Extensions to the farmhouse were refused under NP/SM/0818/0742, an appeal was dismissed, and a resubmission was made, NP/SM/1018/0968, for a reduced scheme, which was granted.
16. 2023 – The conversion of a redundant agricultural buildings to a new dwelling was refused under NP/SM/0823/0928
17. 2023 – A Section 73 application, NP/SM/1023/1281, for the removal of condition 14 (the agricultural occupancy restriction) on NP/SM/0590/075 was granted.

## **Consultations**

18. Staffordshire County Council (Highway Authority) – No highway objections subject to a condition requiring the site access to have a bound surface for a minimum of 5m.
19. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – No response to date.
20. Alstonefield Parish Council – No objections.
21. Natural England - No response to date.
22. PDNPA Ecology - No response to date.

## **Representations**

23. During the publicity period, the Authority received 8 representations, all of which are supportive of the proposed development, though some are duplicates, and some refer to the previous conversion scheme as opposed to the current proposal for a new build. The following reasons are given in the relevant representations:
- *It is an unobtrusive development in keeping with other buildings in the locality.*
  - *The existing building is a redundant eyesore which detracts from its surroundings.*
  - *Much more in keeping with the local area than the brick barn it would replace.*
  - *It is important to have residents in the village to support the community and economy further.*
  - *The applicants would be an asset to the village, and with their financial expertise, are willing to take on important roles in the community.*
  - *Support adding to our permanent local community rather than short term rental, transient visitors.*

## **Main Policies**

24. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, CC1, CC2, DS1, HC1 & L1
25. Relevant Local Plan policies: DMC3 & DMC4
26. National Planning Policy Framework

## **Wider Policy Context**

27. National Park designation is the highest level of landscape designation in the UK. The Environment Act 1995 sets out two statutory purposes for national parks in England and Wales:
- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
  - Promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public
  - When national parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to:
  - Seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the national parks.

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

28. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. A revised NPPF was published in December 2023. The Government's intention is that the document should be considered as a material consideration and carry particular weight where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and policies in the Peak District National Park Development Management Policies document 2019. Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF.
29. Paragraph 182 of the NPPF states that *'great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are*

*also important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.'*

30. Paragraph 82 of the NPPF states that in rural areas, planning policies and decisions should support housing developments that reflect local needs. It goes on to say that consideration can be given to market housing on sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, if allowing some open market housing would help to facilitate this.
31. Paragraph 84 clearly states that planning policies and decisions should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:
  - (a) meeting an essential need;
  - (b) ensuring the longevity of a heritage asset by allowing a viable use;
  - (c) the development would re-use redundant buildings and enhance its setting;
  - (d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
  - (e) the design is of exceptional quality.

#### Peak District National Park Core Strategy

32. GSP1 & GSP2 - *Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park*. These policies set out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives, and jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conversion and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage
33. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles*. GSP3 states that all development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings, paying particular attention to, amongst other elements, impact on the character and setting of buildings, scale of the development appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park, design in accordance with the National Park Authority Design Guide and impact on living conditions of communities.
34. CC1 – *Climate change mitigation and adaptation*. CC1 requires all development to make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources to achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions.
35. CC2 – *Low carbon and renewable energy development*. CC2 states that proposals for low carbon and renewable energy development will be encouraged provided they can be accommodated without adversely affecting the landscape character, cultural heritage assets, other valued characteristics, or other established uses of the area.
36. DS1 - *Development Strategy*. This sets out what forms of development are acceptable in principle within the National Park.
37. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. L1 states that all development must conserve and enhance valued landscape character and valued characteristics, and other than in exceptional circumstances, proposals in the Natural Zone will not be permitted.
38. HC1 – *New housing*. Policy HC1 states that provision will not be made for housing solely to meet an open market demand, and sets out the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside.

## Local Plan Development Management Policies

39. DMC3 - *Siting, design, layout and landscaping*. DMC3 states that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, protects and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape, including the wildlife and cultural heritage that contribute to the distinctive sense of place.
40. DMC4 – *Settlement limits*. DMC4 (B) states that development that is separated from existing settlements will not be permitted as it is likely to result in pressure to infill intervening gaps.

## Assessment

### Principle of the development

41. Policy HC1 states that provision will not be made for housing solely to meet an open market demand, and sets out the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside.
42. The proposal does not meet any of the exceptional circumstances set out in HC1 and is therefore not acceptable in principle.

### Discussion

43. The application follows the refusal of a previous application, NP/SM/0823/0928, for the conversion of a redundant agricultural building to a dwelling. There was reference in that application to the dwelling being intended for the parents of the owner of the farm. The application was therefore considered on two grounds, whether the existing building was considered to be of sufficient architectural merit to justify its conversion to provide a viable use, and also, whether the scheme could be considered acceptable under DMH5 as an ancillary dwelling. The conclusion was that it was not acceptable in either regard.
44. At the Planning Committee meeting in November 2023, to determine the previous application, the possibility of a new build ancillary dwelling in place of the redundant building was raised. Clear advice regarding the acceptable scale of ancillary dwellings had been provided during the course of the previous application, and was reiterated to after the Committee meeting.
45. The development description is for, “Replacement of an existing agricultural building with a new dwelling”
46. It has been made clear, in an email dated 5 December 2023, that the applicants would like the new dwelling to be legally separate from the farm, i.e. they seek to create a new planning unit, therefore the proposal is not for an ancillary dwelling.
47. For clarity, the proposed dwelling would not be an affordable dwelling as may be acceptable under DMH1. Nor is it an essential workers dwelling, as may be acceptable under DMH4. Neither does it constitute re-development of previously developed land to dwelling use (policy DMH6) as paragraph 6/91 of the Local Plan states that for the avoidance of doubt previously developed land is not land that has been occupied by agricultural buildings.

48. The dwelling would be for the parents of the owner of the farm who currently live in the south of England. The information provided indicates that the applicants want to retire and move closer to their daughter and her family. It can therefore be concluded that the proposed dwelling would not address eligible local needs, nor is it for aged persons' assisted accommodation, as required by HC1 (A). Neither would the dwelling be a provision for key workers in agriculture, forestry or other rural enterprises, as set out in HC1 (B).
49. The farmstead is in open countryside over half a kilometre to the south-west of Alstonefield. Therefore, it does not lie within the settlement boundary, and, as a new build would not conserve or enhance a valued vernacular building. It therefore fails to meet the exceptional circumstances of HC1 (C).
50. Therefore, it is concluded that the proposal is contrary to Core Strategy policy HC1.

### **Sustainability**

51. A statement was provided with the application, and the proposals include the provision of solar panels. Had the conversion been acceptable in principle, it is considered that it would comply with the requirements of CC1.

### **Conclusion**

52. The applicants have not demonstrated any eligible local need or functional need for housing in this location.
53. As such, it is concluded that the proposal is contrary to the Core Strategy Policy HC1 and national planning policy.

### **Human Rights**

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

### **List of Background Papers** (not previously published)

Nil

### **Report Author and Job Title**

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