

17. FULL APPLICATION – CONVERSION OF TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL BUILDING TO OPEN MARKET DWELLING AT RIDGE FARM, BOTTOM OF MOOR, LONGNOR (NP/SM/1123/1314/PM)

APPLICANT: MR. ARTHUR GEE

Summary

1. The application seeks planning permission for the conversion of a traditional agricultural building to an open market dwelling at Ridge Farm, Bottom of Moor, Longnor.
2. The report concludes that the proposed open market dwelling is acceptable in principle. Whilst the proposed conversion would cause less than substantial harm to the significance and setting of the non-designated heritage asset, this harm is at the lower end and is deemed to be outweighed by the public benefit of securing a long-term future use for the building.
3. The proposal subject to conditions is acceptable in terms of the impact upon landscape character, residential amenity, protected species, highway safety and climate change mitigation.
4. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the policies of the development plan and the NPPF and is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Site and Surroundings

5. Ridge Farm is a working beef farm extending to 34 hectares with 25 beef cattle located approximately 2 kilometres to the south of Longnor along the B5053 within the parish of Fawfieldhead. The farmstead dates from the late 18th or early 19th century and is located on the eastern side of the B5053. Until the 1950s, it was part of the Harpur Crewe estate.
6. The farmstead originally consisted of the gritstone farmhouse, which lies south of the application site, and the range of barns, subject of this application, separated from the farmhouse by a narrow yard. The farmstead has gradually developed over time with additional stone buildings, and extensions to stone buildings, added in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, and then a considerable array of modern agricultural buildings from the mid twentieth century onwards.
7. The building proposed for conversion is a two-storey structure with an existing single storey lean-to extension on its western gable.
8. None of the buildings on site are listed and they are not within a Conservation Area however Ridge Farm is a historic farmstead recorded in the PDNPA Historic Buildings, Sites and Monuments Record and the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record. Therefore, the farmhouse and its historic outbuildings are considered to constitute a non-designated heritage asset.
9. The nearest neighbouring residential property is known as 'The Ridge' and is located on the western side of the B5053 immediately opposite the vehicular access for the proposed dwelling.
10. Ridge Farm is located in an elevated position to the west of the Manifold Valley and is located within an upland pastoral landscape.

Proposal

11. Planning permission is sought for the conversion of a traditional agricultural building to an open market dwelling. The building proposed for conversion is located to the north of the farmhouse. The building would be converted to create a 3 bedroomed property.
12. Vehicular access would be provided via an existing vehicular access from the B5053 located to the north of the main vehicular access to Ridge Farm with off road parking for 2 vehicles provided to the north of the building.

RECOMMENDATION:

13. That the application is **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:
 1. **Standard time limit**
 2. **Carry out in accordance with specified approved plans and documents**
 3. **No development shall take place until a Written Scheme of Investigation for a scheme of a programme of level 2 building recording has been submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority.**
 4. **Consent not granted for stone wall along southern boundary of application site. Details of alternative positioning of boundary treatment to be submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority prior to occupation.**
 5. **Adjoining dairy barn to be demolished prior to first occupation of the dwelling.**
 6. **Removal of permitted development rights relating to extensions, porches, ancillary buildings, satellite antenna, solar pv panels, gates, fences, walls or other means of boundary enclosure.**
 7. **New window frames and doors to be constructed from timber and painted a dark recessive colour at the time of installation.**
 8. **Precise details of works to north elevation stonework necessitated by removal of adjoining barn and blocking up of existing doorway to be submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority prior to work being undertaken.**
 9. **Any service lines associated with development should be placed underground**
 10. **All new rainwater goods shall be either timber or cast metal, painted black. The gutters shall be fitted directly to the stonework with brackets and without the use of fascia boards.**
 11. **All pipework, other than rainwater goods, shall be completely internal within the building.**
 12. **Prior to the installation of any external lighting a scheme of external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority.**
 13. **Prior to their installation details of soft and hard landscaping to be submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority.**
 14. **Dwelling not to be occupied until a scheme to maximise visibility from the**

vehicular access has been submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority.

15. Development hereby permitted not to be brought into use until the parking and turning areas have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The parking and turning areas shall thereafter be retained unobstructed as parking and turning areas for the life of the development.
16. Development hereby permitted not to be brought into use until the access drive has been surfaced in a bound material for a minimum distance of 5 metres from the rear of the carriageway edge.
17. The proposed creation of an additional bat roost and swallow cups in the adjoining barn as set out in section 4 of the protected species survey shall be carried out prior to first occupation of the dwelling.
18. Pre-works bird nest checks shall be carried out on the barn by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to any works taking place within the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). If active bird nests are present works must cease until chicks have fledged the nest.
19. The sensitive working methods outlined in paragraph 4.4.3 of the protected species survey shall be followed in full.
20. An air source heat pump shall be installed and operational before the completion or first occupation of the approved dwelling. The air source heat pump shall not be installed other than in complete accordance with a detailed scheme which shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the National Park Authority.

Key Issues

14. The principle of the conversion to an open market dwelling; the impact upon character, appearance and significance of heritage asset; the impact upon landscape character; the impact upon residential amenities; the impact upon protected species, the impact upon highway safety and climate change mitigation.

History

15. There have been numerous planning applications at the wider site relating to its function as a farm however there are no previous planning applications relevant to the current proposal to convert an agricultural building to an open market dwelling.

Consultations

16. PDNPA Archaeology – Detailed design comments provided. In summary the amended plans are considered to result in a minor degree of harm to a non-designated heritage asset of local significance. If the planning balance is favourable a scheme of conditioned building recording is recommended to ensure the harm to the archaeological, architectural and historic interest of the site is appropriately mitigated.
17. PDNPA Ecology – No response to date.
18. Highway Authority (Staffordshire County Council) – No objection subject to conditions regarding visibility splays, surfacing of the driveway and the need to ensure that parking and turning areas are provided prior to the development being brought into use.

19. Fawfieldhead Parish Council – No response to date.
20. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – No response to date.
21. Natural England – No response to date.

Representations

22. Objection letters have been received from 4 occupiers of 'The Ridge' (neighbouring property) raising the following concerns:
 - Increased noise and disturbance from additional property in area.
 - Proposed dwelling will face towards the private yard of 'The Ridge'.
 - Vehicular entrance to the proposed property directly opposite living room window of 'The Ridge' resulting in harm to amenity due to noise and light from use of driveway.
 - Concern about highway safety – additional vehicle movements onto a road with fast traffic near a big bend.
 - Understand that utilities to 'The Ridge' run underneath proposed vehicular entrance to property. Concern that digging could damage utilities during construction period.
23. A representation has also been received from CPRE Peak District & South Yorkshire. This advises that the national park authority should ensure that the proposed market dwelling will deliver the conservation / enhancement of the building and either conserve or enhance the significance of the undesignated heritage asset including its setting. The authority should also consider if the conversion of the building to a separate planning unit is incompatible with the farm operation at the site. It is also noted that the building conversion will remove an opportunity for new accommodation for farm succession or farm workers.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

24. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. The latest 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 Development Management Policies (adopted May 2019) 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.
25. Paragraph 176 of the NPPF states that 'great weight should be given to conserving 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 landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

Main Development Plan Policies

Core Strategy

26. GSP1, GSP2 - Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park. These policies jointly seek to secure national park legal purposes and duties through the conservation and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage assets.
27. GSP3 sets out development management principles and 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.
28. DS1 - Development Strategy. Sets out the forms of development that are acceptable in principle in all settlements and in the countryside outside of the Natural Zone.
29. L1 identifies that 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.
30. L2 – Development must conserve and enhance sites, features or species of biodiversity importance and their setting and development likely to have an adverse impact on any of the above, that have statutory designation or are of international or national importance for their biodiversity, will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.
31. L3 requires that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal significance of archaeological, artistic or historic asset and their setting, including statutory designation and other heritage assets of international, national, regional or local importance or special interest.
32. HC1 – New Housing – Sets out the situations where, exceptionally, new housing (whether newly built or from re-use of an existing building) can be accepted.
33. CC1 states that development must make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources. Development must also achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions.

Development Management Policies

34. DMC3 - requires development to be 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. It also provides further detailed criteria to assess design and landscaping, as well as requiring development to conserve the amenity of other properties.
35. DMC5 - Assesses the impact of development on designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.
36. DMC10 –addresses conversion of heritage assets, permitting this where the new use would conserve its character and significance, and where the new use and associated infrastructure conserve the asset, its setting, and valued landscape character. It also notes that new uses or curtilages should not be visually intrusive in the landscape or have an adverse impact on tranquillity, dark skies, or other valued characteristics.
37. DMC11 Safeguarding, recording and enhancing nature conservation interests. Proposals should aim to achieve net gains to biodiversity or geodiversity as a result of

development. Details of appropriate safeguards and enhancement measures for a site, feature or species of nature conservation importance must be provided in line with the Biodiversity Action Plan. For all sites, features and species development proposals must consider amongst other things, the setting of the development in relation to other features of importance, historical and cultural.

38. DMT3 - a safe vehicular access should be provided in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality and where possible enhances it.

Supplementary Planning Documents

39. Peak District National Park Authority Design Guide (2007): The Design Guide states that, when considering a conversion, the building in question should be of sufficient historic or architectural merit to warrant its conversion. Factors such as location, size and character of the building and its means of access will all be assessed. The guiding principle behind the design of any conversion should be that the character of the original building and its setting should be respected and retained.
40. Peak District National Park Conversion of Traditional Buildings SPD (2022): The SPD provides detailed guidance on the principles to be considered when proposing the conversion of traditional buildings. This is set out as 6 key principles: 1. Understanding the building and its setting 2. Working with the existing form and character 3. Following a conservation approach 4. Creating responsive new design 5. Using appropriate materials and detailing. 6. Conserving and enhancing the setting.

Assessment

Principle of the development

41. Core Strategy policy DS1 (the development strategy) allows in principle the conversion of buildings for housing in countryside outside of the natural zone, preferably by re-use of traditional buildings. The proposal therefore accords with policy DS1.
42. Core Strategy policy HC1 part C in accordance with core strategy policies GSP1 and GSP2 allows for the creation of open market housing if “it is required in order to achieve conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings”.
43. Para 12.18 of the Core Strategy provides context on policy HC1 part C:
“Occasionally, new housing (whether newly built or from re-use of an existing building) may be the best way to achieve conservation and enhancement (for example of a valued building) or the treatment of a despoiled site. Sometimes this requires the impetus provided by open market values, but wherever possible and financially viable such developments should add to the stock of affordable housing, either on the site itself or elsewhere in the National Park. It is accepted that for small schemes capable of providing only one dwelling (whether new-build or changing the use of a building such as a barn) this is unlikely to be viable.”
44. In addition, where it is established that a scheme is for and can only accommodate one dwelling unit, there is no requirement within policy for that unit to be affordable or for applicants to discount other uses in order to justify an open market house. The submitted application proposes one open market residential unit.
45. The key judgment in determining whether the proposal is acceptable in principle is whether the building is a valued vernacular building of sufficient architectural merit or historic interest to allow for an open market residential unit on an exceptional basis as permitted by policy HC1 part C, and whether the proposed scheme would conserve and

or enhance the character and significance of the heritage asset.

46. The barn is a traditional farm building of vernacular design and appearance, a historic element of a historic farmstead which appears on the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record and is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset of local significance.
47. In addition, the proposed development has to conserve and enhance the heritage asset and its setting. The assessment below concludes that on balance the proposed development would conserve the character and significance of the building and its setting and therefore the principle of an open market dwelling as part of the scheme is acceptable in principle in accordance with policy HC1 part C.

Impact upon character, appearance and significance of heritage asset.

48. Policy DMC10 relating to conversion of a heritage asset requires that works to the building to facilitate conversion conserve and or enhance the character and significance of the heritage asset.
49. Following advice from the authority's archaeologist the scheme has been amended with bedrooms now on the ground floor and the living area on the first floor. This means that the hayloft at first floor level can retain its open character rather than being subdivided into bedrooms. Additionally, amendments have been made to the design and configuration of windows to reduce their domestic appearance.
50. Windows and doors would be in existing openings or former openings currently blocked up. No rooflights are proposed.
51. The authority's archaeologist considers that the amended scheme would result in a minor degree of harm to a non-designated heritage asset of local significance. The archaeologist considers that the harm will result from the introduction of a residential curtilage to the former agricultural building, diluting the agricultural character of the building and harming its significance.
52. The proposed residential curtilage serving the property would be well contained bounded by the site boundaries to the north and west and modern agricultural buildings to the east.
53. It is considered that the proposed insertion of a stone wall within the farmyard between the farmhouse and the building proposed for conversion would be contrived and undermine the open character and relationship between the farmhouse and former agricultural building. The agent is content for this wall to be removed from the scheme by way of condition.
54. It is intended to remove permitted development rights from the converted building to allow future control over the extension and alterations to the building and erection of outbuildings within the curtilage.
55. With the removal from the scheme of the proposed wall between the building and the farmhouse, it is considered that the level of harm (minor less than substantial) to the character and significance of the building as a result of the conversion and creation of residential curtilage is outweighed by the level of public benefit accruing from a long term use being secured from the heritage asset, it being accepted that the building does not meet modern farming requirements for agricultural use.
56. The proposal accords with policies DMC3, DMC5, DMC10 and L3 in this respect.

Impact upon Landscape Character

57. The building proposed for conversion is located within an established farmyard setting. Therefore, whilst the proposed creation of a residential curtilage to serve the proposed dwelling would cause some harm to the setting of the building as identified above, the creation of a residential curtilage and the presence of domestic paraphernalia (garden furniture, washing lines etc) would not result in any harm to the surrounding landscape character, the site being well contained and viewed from the road with modern agricultural buildings behind it. The proposal accords with policy L1.

Impact upon Residential Amenities

58. There would be a sufficient distance between the proposed dwelling and the existing farmhouse to ensure a satisfactory standard of residential amenity for future occupiers of the proposed dwelling and the occupiers of the existing farmhouse.
59. With regard to the compatibility between the proposed residential use and the adjacent working farm, the scheme proposes the demolition of 5 bays of an existing dairy barn to provide a sufficient distance between the proposed residential use and adjacent agricultural uses.
60. In terms of the relationship between the proposed dwelling and 'The Ridge', the neighbouring property on the western side of the B5053, the contents of the objection letters received from the occupiers of 'The Ridge' have been noted. Whilst the additional dwelling would result in some increase in activity in the area this would not be significant enough to cause harm to the residential amenity of the occupiers of 'The Ridge'.
61. Additionally, the vehicular access would be more intensively used than at present, but would only be serving 1 dwelling so the increase in level of usage would not be significant enough to cause harm to the residential amenity of the occupiers of 'The Ridge'
62. Due to the intervening distance between the application property and 'The Ridge' there would be no harmful overlooking between the curtilage of the proposed dwelling and the neighbouring property.
63. Issues raised in the objection letters relating to damage to utility connections during the construction period are a private legal matter. Issues raised about highway safety are addressed in the highway section below.

Impact upon Protected Species

64. The submitted protected species survey concludes that the proposed conversion would result in the loss of a bat day roost site considered to be of local ecological value. The survey states that the impacts are likely to have limited ecological significance and are very unlikely to affect the conservation status of the local bat population. The scheme would also result in the permanent loss of a swallow nest site which would contribute to overall decline in swallow populations.
65. By way of mitigation it is proposed that a dedicated bat roosting area is provided in the adjoining single storey barn to the east. Three artificial swallow cups would also be provided in the adjacent barn with birds able to fly into the building via the open doorway.
66. The proposal is in accordance with policies L2 and DMC11.

Impact upon Highway Safety

67. The highway authority has raised no objection to the proposal. The vehicular access to the proposed dwelling is longstanding but has in recent years been widened and improved. The highway authority does note that the visibility from the access onto the highway is restricted. Therefore, a condition requiring visibility from the access to be maximised in accordance with a plan submitted to and approved by the local planning authority, is considered to be reasonable and necessary in this instance.
68. Two off road parking spaces to serve the proposed dwelling and a space to turn within the curtilage of the dwelling to allow vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear, are to be provided.
69. The proposal is in accordance with policy DMT3.

Climate Change Mitigation

70. A detailed climate change mitigation statement has been submitted with the application. This notes that high levels of thermal insulation, low energy light fittings and the use of natural daylight and natural ventilation will help to reduce the energy usage.
71. Additionally, an air source heat pump is proposed to be installed to serve the dwelling.
72. The proposals set out are considered to work towards climate change mitigation and accord with policy CC1.

Conclusion

73. The principle of an open market dwelling is accepted. Whilst the proposed conversion would cause less than substantial harm to the significance and setting of the non-designated heritage asset, this harm is at the lower end and is deemed to be outweighed by the public benefit of securing a long-term future use for the building.
74. The proposal, subject to the use of conditions, is acceptable in terms of landscape impact, residential amenity, protected species, highway safety and climate change mitigation.
75. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the policies of the development plan and the NPPF and are recommended for approval.
76. There are no further material considerations that would indicate that planning permission should be refused.

Human Rights

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

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

78. Nil
79. Report Author: Peter Mansbridge - Planner - South Area.