

**8. FULL APPLICATION - CHANGE OF USE OF A STONE BARN TO A HOLIDAY LET AT THE BARN, ELKSTONES, LONGNOR, (NP/SM/0517/0452, 405527/35913, 05/05/2017/TS)**

**APPLICANT: MR LEE COOPER**

**Site and Surroundings**

The Barn is a detached stone built traditional field barn that is located in open countryside. The site is located immediately to the north of the unclassified road that connects Upper and Lower Elkstone. The site lies approximately 150 metres to the south east of Hob Hay Farm and approximately 200 metres to the north west of Manor Farm.

The building is constructed with limestone walls and has a blue tile roof which is not original and appears to be a relatively recent alteration. There is a small lean-to extension to the southern side of the building. The supporting information states that the building was historically used as a cow shelter and for hay storage. It appears that the upper floor is still in use as a hay loft in connection with the agricultural land in which the barn sits.

**Proposal**

Planning permission is sought for change of use of the building to a self-catering holiday let.

To facilitate the proposed change of use, the roof of the single storey lean to extension would be replaced with a blue tiled roof. The existing openings to the barn would be utilised and it is not proposed to create any new door or window openings with the exception of one roof light to the south facing elevation roof slope.

Access would be taken to the south of the building and a gravel drive and two parking spaces would be provided to the southern side. Garden would be provided to the rear and western side of the host building.

The proposed holiday let would have a kitchen and lounge at ground floor level and two bedrooms and a shower room to the first floor.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the application be REFUSED for the following reason:**

- 1. The conversion of the barn to a holiday let would result in domestication of the site that would have an unacceptable landscape impact on the open countryside. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies RT2, LC3, LC4 and LC8.**
- 2. Insufficient information has been provided to enable an assessment of the likely impacts on protected bats and birds. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy LC18 and the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.**
- 3. Insufficient information has been provided to identify and mitigate the potential to harm archaeological heritage assets. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy L3 and the guidance provided at paragraph 128 of the NPPF.**

**Key Issues**

1. Principle of the development
2. Impact on the landscape and character of the locality

3. Amenity issues
4. Access and Parking
5. Ecology
6. Impact on Archaeology

### **History**

There is no planning history for the site.

### **Consultations**

Staffordshire County Council Highway Authority – No objections subject to conditions for parking and turning details to be agreed and for the drive to be surfaced in a bound and porous material.

Warslow and Elkstones Parish Council – support the application as it would preserve a good barn building and would bring it up to a condition such that it can be used for a valid economic purpose.

PDNPA Archaeology – object to the application as it will result in harm to the significance of the traditional farm building and could potentially harm nearby earthworks that are associated with historic lead mining. The application has failed to acknowledge this heritage value and significance.

### **Representations**

Councillor Gill Heath has submitted a letter in support of the application. The letter states:

*“This is to convert a small redundant barn into a Holiday cottage*

*There are no exterior alterations to be made*

*The existing entrance is suitable and the curtilage can be addressed to officers acceptable levels*

*The business would be a financial benefit to help the viability of the farm and help with the rural economy in the area.*

*We promote tourism in the Peak Park and this is offering opportunities for visitors to stay in the area not just visit daily, we need diverse offers so a small secluded cottage would be very desirable for many people*

*The officer says it is finely balanced, I hope that the committee can sway the balance slightly and approve the application.”*

### **Main Policies**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

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 Government's intention is that the document should be considered to be 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 saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001. 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 with regard to the issues that are raised.

## Local Planning Policies

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, RT2, HC1

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC3, LC4, LC8, LC16, LC18, LC19, LT18

Policy HC1 of the Core Strategy only allows the conversion of a traditional building to an open market house in exceptional circumstances whereas policy RT2 states that the change of use of a traditional building of historic or vernacular merit to holiday accommodation will be permitted, except where it would create unacceptable landscape impact in open countryside. Policy DS1 of the Core Strategy also supports conversion or change of use of buildings to visitor accommodation, preferably by re use of traditional buildings but LR6 states that where self-catering accommodation is acceptable, its use will be restricted to holiday accommodation by way of a planning condition.

Saved Local Plan policy LC8 states that conversion of a building of historic or vernacular merit to a use other than that for which it was designed will be permitted provided that it can accommodate the new use without changes that would adversely affect its character. Policy L3 of the Core strategy is also relevant and says that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance or reveal the significance of historic assets and their setting.

Policies GSP1, GSP2 and GSP3 of the Core Strategy 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 assets. GSP3 and saved Local Plan policy LC4 also seek to ensure that where development is permitted its detailed treatment is to a high standard that respects, conserves and, where possible, enhances the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area.

LT18 includes a requirement for the provision of a safe means of access in association any development.

LC18 states that where development which could affect a site, feature, or species of nature conservation importance or its setting is acceptable, appropriate safeguards and enhancement will be required to minimise adverse impacts. These should ensure conservation of the features of importance in their original location. Provision must be made for the beneficial future management of the nature conservation interests and a satisfactory record must be provided of any features which could be lost or concealed. If the likely success of these measures is uncertain, development will not be permitted.

These policies are consistent with national planning policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) because core planning principles in the Framework require local planning authorities to seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings; and to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

## **Assessment**

### **Issues 1 and 2: Principle and Landscape Impact**

Core Strategy policy RT2 supports proposals for the change of use of a traditional building of historic or vernacular merit to serviced or self-catering holiday accommodation except where it would create an unacceptable landscape impact in open countryside.

The small barn building is constructed in local natural materials, and is a good example of a traditional field barn. The building is therefore considered to be a traditional building of some merit. Consequently, in principle, its use as a separate unit of holiday accommodation would accord with the requirements of RT2.

However, it is necessary to consider whether or not the proposal would have an unacceptable landscape impact in open countryside.

Whilst the physical works to the barn itself would result in a sympathetic conversion that would preserve its existing appearance, the proposed change of use from an agricultural building to a holiday let would also include the creation of a domestic curtilage to provide parking, driveway and garden areas. This would therefore result in domestication of the site and would significantly alter the existing character of the immediate setting of the building.

The site is located within the Southwest Peak upland pastures landscape character type area as defined by the Landscape Character Assessment. The Landscape Character Assessment notes that this area has a traditional dispersed pattern of gritstone farmsteads of probable ancient origins. The key characteristics are:

- Undulating slopes with gentler summits and incised cloughs
- Dispersed gritstone farmsteads and loose clusters of dwellings, with stone slates or clay tile roofs
- Permanent pasture enclosed by gritstone walls and some thorn hedgerows
- Scattered trees along cloughs and around farmsteads
- Fields of rushy pasture and occasional patches of bracken, bilberry and heather
- Narrow winding lanes which are sunken on slopes
- Various shaped small to medium fields of various dates

The site occupies a prominent road side location and is surrounded by undulating pastures that are typical of the area. Significantly, the site is isolated from other existing buildings, particularly domestic buildings. There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity at the site as a result of this. It is notable that there is an absence of domestic properties in the locality. The nearest buildings to the site are part of farmsteads so are of agricultural character. At present, the simple and traditional field barn building is considered to be entirely in keeping with the pastoral landscape and makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.

As a result of the isolated but prominent nature of the site, it is considered that the domestication of the site and the subsequent introduction of parked cars, domestic curtilage and domestic paraphernalia would be at odds with the character of site and the surrounding area and this would lead to a form of development that would appear incongruous in the landscape. It is noted that the site is clearly visible from highway that runs adjacent to the site but also from the higher ground to the north of the site. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would have quite a far-reaching visual impact in this instance despite the small-scale nature of the development itself. It is acknowledged that the use of the building for holiday let purposes would be likely to comprise a less intensive use of the site than if it was to be a permanent dwelling so the harm caused by domestication would be less than would be the case for a dwelling occupied on a permanent basis. However, it is considered in this instance that because of the very isolated and prominent nature of the site the visual impact of domestication of the site for holiday accommodation use would still result in unacceptable harm.

The Authorities Senior Archaeologist has raised concerns with the principle of the change of use of the barn building, noting:

*“The conversion of the barn into a holiday let will result in harm to the significance of a traditional farm building and none designated heritage asset; historic fabric will be lost or altered (creation*

*of access in to the lean to, changes to internal divisions, removal of features related to the building's use as a cow house); the agricultural character of the building changed; the creation of car parking, yard area, new access etc. will introduce domestic clutter in to its rural and agricultural setting. This will result in harm to the significance of this traditional farm building.”*

Given that the principle of conversion of traditional buildings to holiday accommodation is broadly acceptable under policy RT2, it is considered that only limited weight can be given to concerns relating to the loss of the agricultural use of the building and to the loss of any internal historic fabric. However, the concerns relating to domestic clutter in the rural and agricultural setting are highly relevant and give further weight to the concerns relating to landscape impact identified above.

It is acknowledged that the proposed conversion to holiday use would represent a small scale rural diversification project and would deliver some economic benefits. Furthermore, the proposal would promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park and as such achieves the second statutory purpose. However, the proposal would conflict with the first statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the national park. The Sandford principle makes it clear that where there is conflict between the two statutory purposes, conservation will be given greater weight.

It is considered therefore that, on balance, the visual harm arising from the domestication of this prominent site in a very isolated position within open countryside would cause unacceptable harm to the landscape and character of the area and this outweighs the economic and recreation benefits of the proposal. The proposal therefore fails to accord with policies RT2, LC3, LC4 and LC8.

### **Issue 3: Amenity**

Core Strategy policy GSP3 states that impact on living conditions of communities must be taken into account in decision making and saved Local Plan policy LC4 states that attention must be given to the amenity, privacy and security of the development and of nearby properties.

Given that the site is located approximately 150 metres away from the nearest third party property, it is considered that the proposed holiday use of the barn would not result in any harm to amenity in this instance. The proposal is considered to accord with policies GSP3 and LC4 in this respect.

### **Issue 4: Access**

Saved Local Plan policy LT18 states that the provision of safe access arrangements will be a prerequisite of any development. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework which states at para 27 that decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved by all people. It further states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts are severe.

Access would be taken directly from the adjacent highway via the existing field gate. Parking for two vehicles would be provided and there would also be sufficient room for a vehicle to turn so that it can enter and exit the site in a forward gear.

The Highway Authority has not raised any objections to the scheme but has noted that the parking layout as shown on the submitted plan is not acceptable due to insufficient manoeuvring space. A condition for a revised parking and turning layout is therefore recommended to be attached to any approval.

Given the lack of objection from the Highway Authority, it is considered that the proposed development would not be detrimental to highway safety and efficiency and is in accordance with policy LT18 and the guidance contained within the NPPF in this respect.

### **Issue 5: Ecology**

No protected species surveys or reports have been submitted with the application. The applicant has stated that the development is not of a type that has a possible impact on bats or barn owls. However, the Authorities protected species advice identifies that changes to barns built before 1939 is a development type with potential to affect these protected species. It is acknowledged that the roof of the building is modern and it has clearly been re-roofed in recent years, but this is not considered to mitigate the need for proper considerations of protected species. Evidence of nesting birds within the building was noted at the time of the officer's site visit. As such, relevant protected species are required in order to properly assess the potential impacts on bats and birds.

As the development is not considered to be acceptable in principle, the applicant has not been requested to provide this information due to the potentially abortive time and costs that this would incur. However, if members were to take a different view to officers and consider that the development is in fact acceptable in principle then the applicant should be requested to engage in further work in respect of protected species in order to properly consider the impact and to identify any necessary mitigation measures.

As submitted, the application is considered to be contrary to policy LC18 and the relevant guidance contained within the NPPF as insufficient information has been provided to enable consideration of the potential impact on protected species.

### **Issue 6: Potential Impacts on Archaeology**

The Authority's Senior Archaeologist has objected to the application, noting the following:

*There is a large area of earthwork remains of lead mining identified in the Peak District National Park Authority's Historic Building, Site and Monuments Record (MPD7114) survives in the field on the opposite side of lane to the barn. Aerial photographs indicate that these remains also extend into the field in which the barn is located, and one circular earthwork is located less than 5m from the barn. The nature, date or significance of these features is currently unknown.*

The consultation response goes on to state that:

*It is also probably that the circular earthwork identified on aerial photographs, likely associated with the nearby lead mining remains recorded in the HBSMR, will be damaged or destroyed in the creation of the car parking area, landscaping etc.*

*However, the current application does not acknowledge the heritage value or significance of the barn itself, nor its setting, nor the potential lead mining earthworks. It is therefore contrary to para.128 of the NPPF. The proposed development will result in harm to a non-designated heritage asset and its setting, which is contrary to Policy L3 of the PDNPA Local Development Framework. Furthermore, the barn itself is in good condition and is well maintained, is not at risk, so the conversion of this barn is not required in order to achieve the public benefit of saving the barn and ensuring its continued survival and does not meet the 'exceptional circumstances' within Part B of Policy L3.*

*On this basis I object to the positive determination of this application.*

It is therefore considered that the development proposal has the potential to harm archaeological heritage assets and no information has been provided within the application to address these matters. As such, the application as submitted is contrary to policy L3 and the guidance provided at paragraph 128 of the NPPF. Again, if members were to take a different view to officers and consider that the principle of development is acceptable, it is recommended that the applicant should be required to engage in further work to properly identify and if necessary mitigate the harm to archaeological heritage assets.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed use of the barn would result in unacceptable harm to the landscape. Furthermore, insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate whether or not the development would have an unacceptable impact on protected species and archaeological heritage assets.

### **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