

**11. FULL APPLICATION - CONVERSION OF A REDUNDANT STONE AGRICULTURAL BUILDING INTO A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING TO FULFILL AN AFFORDABLE LOCAL NEEDS HOUSING REQUIREMENT AT GOLLIN GATE FARM, QUARNFORD (NP/SM/1114/1132, P11059, 404597/367193, 22/12/2014/ALN)**

**APPLICANT: MR LEE HUNTER**

**Site and Surroundings**

The building in question is a small, 1½ storey detached barn situated in an isolated and prominent position on the northern side of the unclassified road that leads from Quarnford towards Hollinsclough. The barn is constructed in roughly coursed natural gritstone under a clay tiled roof. The barn is a simple building with only a single opening at first floor level on the rear elevation. The barn sits on a valley side above a small stream and is particularly prominent when approaching the site on the road from the east.

The ground around the barn has been artificially raised at some point to provide a level area around the building, which is enclosed by drystone walls and fencing. There is a vehicular access onto the highway some 42m to the west of the barn. A public right of way runs some 52m to the west of the site in a north south direction and a further footpath runs in the same orientation some 50m to the east. The barn is prominent from both of these footpaths. There is a network of other public rights of way to the south and north of the site.

The Colshaw Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest is situated 52m to the west of the application site.

**Proposal**

The application proposes the conversion of the barn to a local needs dwelling for the applicant. The applicant currently lives with his grandparents at Gollin Gate Farm, which is situated approximately 450m to the west of the barn.

The submitted scheme proposes the conversion of the barn to a 2-bedroom dwelling. The accommodation would be provided over two floors, with part of the first floor extending into the roofspace in order to achieve appropriate headroom. The overall floor area would be 58 square metres, which equates to a 2-3 person local needs dwelling.

The scheme proposes the insertion of two new windows at first floor level in the gable ends of the building. A rooflight is proposed on the front (south facing) roofslope and a flue pipe is proposed on the rear roofslope.

The submitted plans do not show the extent of the proposed residential curtilage but the area edged red on the site plan shows a significant area in ownership from the road, extending eastwards beyond the levelled, enclosed area towards the stream.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

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

- 1. The barn occupies a prominent and exposed position and presently contributes positively to the character and setting of the wider landscape of this part of the National Park. The proposed residential conversion of the barn would spoil the character and setting of the barn by the introduction of a domestic use and associated developments in this sensitive location. The proposals would therefore be contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3 and L1, saved Local Plan policies LC4 and LC8, and national planning policies in the Framework.**

## **Key Issues**

1. whether the principle of the proposed development meets the terms of the Authority's Core Strategy and saved Local Plan policies in relation to the provision of affordable local needs dwellings; and
2. the potential impact of the proposed dwelling conversion on the character and setting of the barn and the surrounding landscape.

## **History**

- April 2004      Prior notification approved for repairs to barn (NP/GDO/0304/0358)
- August 2014    Application for conversion of barn to open market dwelling withdrawn prior to determination. (NP/SM/0814/0923)

## **Consultations**

County Council (Highway Authority) – no objections subject to a condition that requires the access to be surfaced in an appropriate hard material for a minimum distance of 5m rear of the carriageway edge.

District Council – no response

Parish Council – support the proposals for the following reasons:

- the application relates to a well-constructed redundant barn lying close to a little-used country lane;
- the applicant is a third generation member of the family that have farmed the area for many years – he currently lives with his grandparents and helps out on the farm;
- there would no change to the footprint of the building and minimal penetration of the walls for windows and doors;
- houses in the parish are not affordable to local people and young people need to be retained, and the accommodation would be a much needed addition to the local housing stock and allow a traditional extended family pattern to continue;
- in recent years many young local people have had to move to nearby towns and few people have been able to return;
- young children are needed to secure the long-term continuity of the school;
- the design and appearance of the building would be in keeping with many existing isolated agricultural dwellings, and there is not likely to be any visual noise or unacceptable light pollution as a result of the proposals; and
- some trees have already been planted around the building and these will help to screen it in future years.

The Parish Council therefore urge the National Park Authority to approve the application for physical, social, economic, and cultural reasons.

## **Representations**

Two letters of support have been received from local residents on the grounds that:

- the building and its surroundings would not impinge upon or denigrate the local area in any way;
- it is common sense to bring into use a building that has been refurbished at great expense;
- trees have already been planted to provide screening from the road; and
- young local families need homes that they can afford.

### **Main Policies**

Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP3, GSP4, DS1, L1, L3, HC1, T1 & T7

Relevant Local Plan policies: LC4, LH1, LH2, LT11 & LT18

In this case, it is considered Policy LH1 of the Local Plan and Policy HC1 of the Core Strategy provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application. This is because policies HC1 and LH1 set out the relevant criteria for assessing proposals for the re-use of existing buildings to meet local need.

It is considered that in this case there is no significant conflict between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent policies in the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') with regard to the issues that are raised. This is because the Framework continues support the re-use of existing buildings specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities that would not normally be made available for the provision of open market housing subject to normal planning considerations.

Notwithstanding this general support for principle of the provision of affordable local needs housing, the Framework also states that the conservation of heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance forms one of the 12 core planning principles within the Framework. Paragraph 132 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and that the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Paragraph 115 in the Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks along with the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage

### **Assessment**

#### **Background**

Photographs held on the Authority's planning history files show that prior to the notification being approved in 2004 for 'repairs' to the building, the barn was in a state of complete collapse. There was no roof and only the lower parts of three of the walls remained. As such the barn has been almost completely re-built and the ground levels around the barn altered at the same time. The barn is therefore essentially a new building and by virtue of this fact it is not considered that it can be classed as a valued vernacular building in terms of the interpretation of HC1 C.

Due to these concerns, and because officers considered that the introduction of a domestic use would harm the character and setting of the barn, an application to convert the barn to an open market dwelling earlier in 2014 was withdrawn.

#### **Issue 1 - Whether principle of the proposed development meets the terms of the Authority's Core Strategy and Local Plan policies in relation to the provision of affordable local needs dwellings.**

Core Strategy policy HC1 says that exceptionally, new housing (whether newly built or from re-use of an existing building) can be accepted where the proposals would address eligible local needs and would be for homes that remain affordable with occupation restricted to local people in perpetuity. The provisions of HC1 are supported by policy LH1 of the Local Plan, which gives more detailed criteria to assess an application for a newly-built house, which is intended to be affordable and meet local need.

LH1 states exceptionally residential development will be permitted either as a newly built dwelling in or on the edge of Local Plan settlements or as the conversion of an existing building of traditional design and materials in the countryside provided that:

- i. there is a proven need for the dwelling;
- ii. the need cannot be met within the existing housing stock;
- iii. the intended occupants meet the requirements of the National Park Authority's local occupancy criteria (policy LH2);
- iv. the dwelling will be affordable by size and type to local people on low or moderate incomes and will remain so in perpetuity; and
- v. the requirements of Policy LC4 are complied with.

#### Need and affordability

Whilst the building is not considered to be a valued vernacular building in terms of the requirements of Local Plan policy HC1(c) where it relates to open market housing, the building does nonetheless have a traditional appearance despite the fact that it was substantially rebuilt in around 2004. As such the application proposes the conversion of a traditional building in the countryside to an affordable house. It is therefore considered that the proposal could be acceptable in principle and could warrant approval if the application meets the requirements of the five criteria set out in LH1 first taking account of whether there is a proof of need. The application proposes conversion to a single dwelling. Therefore, the need for the new dwelling should be judged with reference to the current circumstances of the applicant.

The accompanying supporting information states that the applicant was born and grew up in the parish and currently resides with his grandparents at nearby Gollin Gate Farm, where aside from his main source of employment, he helps with the care of livestock on their smallholding. He also looks after his elderly grandparent's welfare. The applicant does not own a property of his own. The existing farmhouse is small with no private or separate reception rooms where the applicant could have privacy. As such the applicant complies with Criteria (ii) of Local Plan policy LH2 – 'a person who has a minimum of 10 years permanent residence in the parish or adjoining parish and is forming a household for the first time' and probably with criteria (i) – 'a person with 10 years residence who is currently living in accommodation that is overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory.' It follows therefore that the applicant meets criteria (i) and (iii) of policy LH1.

In terms of criteria (ii) of LH1, the agent has submitted details of properties for sale and rent in the local area. In terms of properties to buy, there are 2-bed properties for sale in Hulme End and Sheen starting at around £230,000. This is clearly far in excess of the £80-90,000 estimated conversion costs for the barn. There are 1 and 2 bed properties to rent in Longnor (adjacent parish) for £460 - £525 per month which amount to a similar monthly cost to repayments on a £90,000 mortgage. Therefore criteria (ii) is not strictly complied with, although it is clear that to convert the barn as proposed would be more convenient in terms of proximity to the farm and elderly relatives and is also clearly financially preferable to the applicant.

It is considered therefore that the applicant has demonstrated that he has a proven local need, and that this need cannot be easily met within the existing housing stock. Furthermore, his

circumstances comply with the Authority's local qualification criteria, and the dwelling will be affordable by size and type to a local person on low or moderate incomes and would remain so, subject to the applicant completing a Section 106 Agreement relating to local occupancy/affordability. With a 58 square metres floor area the property is of a size that is likely to remain affordable to local people in perpetuity in accordance with criteria (iv) of LH1.

In addition to the above considerations, criterion (v) of policy LH1 states that the proposal must also comply with the requirements of policy LC4. Policy LC4 requires that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, conserves and where possible it enhances the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area. These issues are addressed under the Issue 2 section of this report.

## **Issue 2 - The impact of the proposed dwelling conversion on the character and setting of the barn and the surrounding landscape.**

In addition to the principle of the provision of the proposed affordable local needs dwelling conversion, a further important policy consideration concerns the physical impacts of the proposed introduction of the dwelling use on the character and setting of the barn and the surrounding landscape and consequently, the established landscape character of the National Park. Whilst the Authority's Core Strategy policies permit the principle of the conversion of barns in the open countryside for affordable local needs dwellings on an exceptional basis, the impact upon the landscape character of the area and the character and setting of the National Park is an important consideration. Core Strategy policy L1 A is of particular relevance to this aspect of the proposal. This states that development must conserve and enhance landscape character, as identified in the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, and other valued characteristics.

In terms of the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, the application site is situated within the South West Peak, an area of upland and associated foothills. It is specifically located within the Upland Pastures which is characterised as an upland pastoral landscape with a traditional dispersed pattern of gritstone farmsteads of probable ancient origins. Permanent pasture is enclosed by drystone walls and some hedgerows. Trees are scattered along incised cloughs and around dispersed gritstone farmsteads. It is a very peaceful rural landscape with open views to surrounding higher ground. The overall strategy for this area is to protect historic field boundaries and historic settlement patterns whilst protecting or managing the diversity of the pastoral farmland.

Core Strategy policy GSP3 also states that development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and building that are subject to the development proposals. Local Plan policy LC4 sets out further guidance on design, siting and landscaping whilst policy LC8 and L3 set out guidance relating to any new use of a traditional building with vernacular merit. L2 and LC17 promote and encourage biodiversity within the National Park and seek to safeguard nature conservation interests. LT11 and LT18 otherwise require development to be provided with appropriate access and parking provision that would not harm the environmental quality of the National Park. Further detailed advice on the conversion of buildings to other uses is provided in the Authority's supplementary planning documents: the Design Guide and its appendix, the Building Design Guide.

These policies and the Authority's adopted supplementary planning documents are considered to be consistent with the Framework because they promote and encourage development proposals that would be of a high standard of design and sensitive to the valued characteristics of the National Park.

In this case, the barn sits in a prominent and exposed position on the valley side next to the road and occupies a prominent position in the landscape, particularly when approaching the site on the road from the east. From these viewpoints the barn presents a pleasing composition in the landscape and consequently, makes a significant contribution to the pastoral character of the

surrounding landscape.

A structural survey was submitted with the application and this demonstrates that the building is generally structurally sound and can be converted without any rebuilding. The proposed new openings in the barn are not wholly sensitive to its character. Whilst the two windows have a plain 'picking hole' style, which is reflective of the agricultural character of the building, the window on the east facing gable end is off-set from the centre, which appears incongruous. This could be addressed by condition however. Otherwise the physical conversion scheme is sympathetic to the simple character of the barn. However, it is considered that the building is in such an exposed and prominent position that that the changes to the barn through the introduction of a residential use into the building, such as the glazing of openings and the activities generated around the barn including domestic curtilage and parking between the barn and the road would significantly and adversely impact upon the character and setting of the barn and the surrounding landscape.

This impact would be further exacerbated by the extent of the residential curtilage which appears to extend beyond the area that has already been enclosed by walls and fencing. The domestication of this open area leading down to the stream would be prominent and significantly harmful to the open, upland character of the area. The extent of the domestic curtilage could be controlled by condition but even if it were restricted to within the enclosed area, the activities and changes to the physical appearance of the area around the barn as a result would adversely affect its setting when viewed from the road and nearby public rights of way.

### **Other Matters**

A protected species survey was not required in this case because the building has been re-roofed within the last 10 years. Therefore, there are no concerns that the proposed conversion would affect bats or any other protected species. Visibility from the existing access is acceptable and there is adequate space for parking on the levelled area around the barn. Therefore, the proposals do not give rise to any highway safety concerns.

### **Alternatives**

Finally it appears that there is another barn within the family's ownership at Gollin Gate Farm that would be a more suitable candidate for conversion to a dwelling. The barn is situated within the main group of buildings at the farm. It is a prominent traditional barn, situated adjacent to the road. It is considered that it is a valued vernacular building and, due to its position within a building group, the landscape impact of introducing a residential use would not be as significant. There would be an added advantage in that this barn is directly adjacent to the livestock sheds where the applicant works.

The agent states that the applicant does not wish to consider this barn because unlike the barn currently proposed for development, it has not been renovated already so the conversion costs would be more. However, no estimate of conversion costs has been received and officers are not convinced that a scheme for its conversion would not be feasible. It is therefore considered that there is a case for the local needs dwelling proposed in this application but this need could be met through a less damaging alternative than through the current proposals

### **Conclusion**

In this case, taking into account the prominent and exposed location of the barn to be converted, the proposed residential use of this barn would conflict with landscape conservation objectives and detract from the scenic beauty of the National Park. Therefore, the current proposals are open to strong landscape objections and conflict with Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP3 and L1, saved Local Plan policies LC4 and LC8, and national planning policies in the Framework, which say that great weight should be afforded to the conservation and enhancement of the National Park.

Accordingly, the current application is recommended for refusal because the proposals do not comply with the relevant policies in the Development Plan or national planning policies in the Framework.

### **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