

## **7. FULL APPLICATION – CONVERSION OF STONE BARN INTO TWO HOLIDAY LETS – BIG HILLSDALE FARM, GRINDON (NP/SM/1018/0925, P2949 & 1135)**

**APPLICANT: MRS SPINK**

### **Site and Surroundings**

1. Big Hillsdale Farm is located in open countryside approximately half a mile south east of the village of Butterton. The complex consists of large modern portal framed sheds alongside a farmhouse and is accessed via a road known as 'Hillsdale Lane' which descends from Grindon Moor.
2. The majority of the application site is located within a field parcel located approximately a fifth of a mile to the east of the main group of buildings, where the ground slopes steeply away towards the north east. A well maintained isolated outfarm building is located here, its recent repair having been part funded by the Authority's Environmental Enhancement Scheme back in 2012.
3. The remainder of the application site encloses a long strip of land providing access to the site from the main farm, where there is evidence of an existing track. On site this appears to be a very muddy track which comprises of scattered stones that starts at the field gateway, following field boundaries and the surrounding trees and hedges and gradually disappears naturally into the fields. The track has no evidence of a hard base but there is evidence of vehicular use.
4. For the purposes of the Landscape Character Assessment, the application site is located within the Upland Pastures character type of the South West Peaks. There are also views into the site from the opposite hillside, including from farmsteads including Broad Meadows Farm approximately half a mile to the north and Ossams Hill Farm approximately a third of a mile to the east.
5. The nearest neighbouring properties to the site are Oxclose Farm, west of Big Hillsdale itself and Ossams Hill Farm to the east.
6. Public footpaths are located to the north, east, south and west of the site but are all at least 250 metres or more away from the site.
7. The site is outside of any designated conservation area.

### **Proposal**

8. To convert the existing outfarm building to two holiday let units, including new track and parking area.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

9. **That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:**
  - I. **The use of the building as holiday accommodation and proposed alterations to the building would fail to conserve the character and appearance of the landscape, contrary to Development Plan policies RT2, L1 and LC4, and paragraph 172 of the NPPF.**
  - II. **The application does not include a sufficient heritage assessment to allow the historic and archaeological significance of the building to be fully understood, contrary to Development Plan policy LC16 and paragraph 189 of the NPPF.**

- III. The development would result in harm to the archaeological and historic significance of the building and landscape, contrary to Development Plan policies L3 and LC16, and paragraphs 192 and 197 of the NPPF.**

### **Key Issues**

10. Whether the conversion of the building to holiday accommodation is acceptable in principle
11. The landscape impacts of the development
12. Impacts of the development on the heritage interest of the building and landscape

### **Relevant Planning History**

13. 2014 – Prior approval refused for surfaced farm track from main holding to the current application site.
14. 2012 – Planning permission granted for erection of agricultural building to provide a covered manure and slurry storage area
15. 2010 – Planning permission granted for erection of agricultural building to cover yard
16. 2007 – Planning permission granted for extension to existing building covering existing concrete pad

### **Consultations**

17. Highway Authority – No objections as traffic unlikely to increase by any significant level given the buildings previous use and existing operations on site
18. District Council – No response at time of writing.
19. Parish Council – Support the application stating that the property is a barn, and that if this application is considered the best way for the farm to support its self then the councillors wish to support it. They note that minimal changes to the outward appearance of the building would be made, that services would be routed underground to the barn, and that it should have little impact upon their neighbours.
20. PDNPA – Archaeology – Detailed comments provided. Advise that the development is likely to result in harm to the archaeological significance of both the building and historic landscape character, and that there is insufficient information within the application to fully assess the degree of harm. Therefore object on the grounds of a lack of information, but advise that it is unlikely such information would allow then to support the proposal given the harm that it has been possible to identify. Further comments are included in the report below where relevant and the full response can be read on the Authority's website.

### **Representations**

21. None received at time of writing.

### **Policies**

22. 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

23. 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

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. It was revised and republished in July 2018. 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 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.
25. Paragraph 172 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.'*
26. Part 16 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
27. Paragraph 189 advises that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. It states that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance, but that as a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. It also states that where a site includes heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
28. Paragraph 192 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
29. Paragraph 197 goes on to address non-designated heritage assets, stating that the effect of an application on the significance of a such an asset should be taken into account in determining the application, and that in weighing applications that affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

#### Development Plan policies

30. Policy GSP1 sets out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives having regard to the Sandford Principle, (that is, where there are conflicting desired outcomes in achieving national park purposes, greater priority must be given to the conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, even at the cost of socio-economic benefits). GPS1 also sets out the need for sustainable development and to avoid major

development unless it is essential, and the need to mitigate localised harm where essential major development is allowed.

31. Policy 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.
32. Policy 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.
33. Policy L3 requires that development must conserve and where appropriate enhance heritage assets.
34. Policy RT2 says that proposals for hotels, bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation must conform to the following principles:
  - a. The change of use of a traditional building of historic or vernacular merit to serviced or self-catering holiday accommodation will be permitted, except where it would create unacceptable landscape impact in open countryside. The change of use of entire farmsteads to holiday accommodation will not be permitted.
  - b. Appropriate minor developments which extend or make quality improvements to existing holiday accommodation will be permitted.
  - c. New build holiday accommodation will not be permitted, except for a new hotel in Bakewell.
35. Policy LC4 of the Local Plan states 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 enhances the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area.
36. Policy LC16 addresses archaeological sites and features, stating that when considering development proposals that could affect archaeological sites or features, the following will be taken into account:
  - their national and local significance by reference to the Schedule of Ancient Monuments and to the County Sites and Monuments Records and other relevant information;
  - the protection, enhancement and preservation of the sites or features and their settings;
  - the need for the development to be on the site in question;
  - the need for an appropriate archaeological assessment of the nature and importance of the remains;
37. Policy LT18 states that safe access arrangements will be a prerequisite to any development.
38. The Authority's adopted design guidance documents 'Design Guide' and 'Building Design Guide' are further materials considerations.
39. Relevant Core Strategy (CS) policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, L3, RT2

40. Relevant Local Plan (LP) policies:

LC4, LC16, LT18

### **Assessment**

#### Principle of the development

41. This building is a traditional building of historic and vernacular merit and so its conversion to serviced or self-catering holiday accommodation is acceptable in principle under the terms of policy RT2 providing that it would not create unacceptable landscape impact in open countryside.
42. Whether the development is acceptable in principle therefore depends upon whether or not the development would result in any adverse landscape impacts. This is discussed in detail below.

#### Landscape and visual impacts

43. The application site is located within an area of special qualities that reflect the character of the Upland Pastures of the South West Peaks which should be conserved and enhanced because they positively contribute to the scenic beauty of the National Park. This landscape is described by the Authority's Landscape Strategy as comprising "permanent pasture enclosed by gritstone walls and some thorn hedgerows" with "dispersed gritstone farmsteads and loose clusters of dwellings. It is also noted as "a very peaceful rural landscape".
44. Neither the proposed use of the building nor the proposed track and hardstanding to serve it would reflect these characteristics or achieve conservation of this landscape type, as detailed further below.

#### *Impacts of proposed use and changes to building*

45. The building would be fitted out as two holiday let units, each including full residential facilities and being reasonably spacious. As a result, it is highly likely that guests would not be only sleeping here, but would spend much of their leisure time in and around the buildings. As a result, the use of space around the building raises significant landscape and heritage concerns.
46. As proposed, enclosed amenity spaces in front of the building would be provided. These would domesticate the building's agricultural appearance. Given the very isolated position of the building, well away from any existing domestic buildings this would result in harm to its character and the character of the landscape. Even if they were omitted it is anticipated that the field surrounding the building would be used as amenity space by guests – this may include anything from siting of outdoor chairs and tables to playing games and sports, to pitching of play tents or small gazebos. All of these would be open to view in the wider landscape and would appear wholly out of keeping with the isolated setting of the building and with the character of a peaceful rural landscape.
47. Due to the transient nature of these uses, the Authority could not reasonably prevent or control the use of the field around the building with planning conditions; enforcement action against unauthorised use would be ineffective as each occupier of the building would be there only a short time before being replaced by another.
48. In terms of physical external alterations to the building itself, the proposal would mostly re-use existing openings around the building. Whilst the elevation plans show these to remain boarded, it is clear from the floor plans that each opening would be glazed behind to afford light in to the building.

49. This is not uncommon practice and does help to conserve the appearance of the building itself when not in use, but raises significant landscape concerns in this isolated rural location. There are four full height openings to the front of the building, and three further openings to the rear. The Authority could not reasonably control when the timber doors and shutters are used, and given the privacy afforded to the building in terms of its distance from other properties it is entirely possible that guests may choose to not utilise these at all.
50. As well as the fully glazed openings domesticating the appearance of the site, this also leads to concerns of light pollution. An illuminated barn in an otherwise unsettled part of the landscape would be entirely out of keeping with the rural landscape character of the area, which is characterised by dark skies and very little light pollution.
51. In summary, due to the isolated location of the building the proposed use is concluded to be harmful to landscape character and is unacceptable in principle, failing to comply with the provisions of policy RT2. Impacts of the use and the proposed alterations to the building would also result in landscape harm contrary to policies L1 and LC4.

*Impacts of alterations to track and new parking area*

52. It is acknowledged that there is some evidence of an existing track in the fields adjacent to the applicant site and linking back to the main group of farm buildings, but this is mostly muddy and apparently unsurfaced with some scattered stone/rubble embedded in the ground in places to improve access over it. The existing track would only be passable with farm or four wheel drive vehicles however, particularly when the ground is wet.
53. The application refers to the development utilising the existing track, but describes this as being a gravel track with grassed central strip. This is not the existing situation however and the track would certainly require upgrading if it were to carry guest vehicles to the proposed parking area.
54. The track is located within the highest points of the fields and open to view in the wider landscape. Upgrading the track with stone surfacing would significantly increase its prominence and by virtue of its length and overall area the upgraded track and new area of hardstanding would appear out of context with its surroundings. This would result in an adverse visual impact that would be detrimental to the landscape character of the area and the wider scenic beauty of the National Park.
55. Parked cars associated with the development would appear even more incongruous than the surfacing itself, introducing a modern and urban element in an isolated location within an otherwise rural landscape.
56. In summary, the upgraded track and new parking area would be harmful to landscape character in this isolated location, contrary to policies L1 and LC4.
57. The applicant's agent has advised that they would be prepared to omit the parking area from the development, and for guests to instead park at the main farm and for the applicant to shuttle them from the farmstead by farm vehicle. In practical terms this is unlikely to work as it would require the applicant to be available at all times to collect the guests from the accommodation whenever they wanted to go out, assuming that guests have sufficient mobile phone coverage at the outfarm to contact the applicant.
58. In any case, the omission of the track and parking area would not overcome the landscape impacts associated with the use of the building that are identified above, nor the heritage impacts that are considered below.

### Heritage impacts

59. The building is recorded in the County Historic Environment Record and the Peak District National Park Historic Building Sites and Monuments Record as an outfarm. It is also located within an area of known Ancient Enclosure, as identified in the PDNP Historic Landscape Character Assessment, and likely formed part of the medieval open field system associated with Grindon or Butterton. The building and the landscape both therefore represent non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest.
60. The Authority's Archaeologist advises that Ancient Enclosure are the most important, and rarest, historic landscape feature type within the National Park and that they have intrinsic landscape value, providing the area with a distinct character, and a 'time depth' to the landscape.
61. The Archaeologist advises that they have concerns about the changes proposed to the physical structure and fabric of the building itself, and resulting harm to its historic and archaeological interest. They also raise concerns about the proposed change of use in terms of its impact on the setting of the barn and on the historic landscape character because it would introduce domestic elements such as parking spaces, amenity space, parking, provision of services, light pollution, and sewerage, which they consider out of place, incongruous and harmful to the historic landscape.
62. This assessment is supported by Planning officers. The proposed enclosed amenity spaces in front of the building would harm its historic significance by changing its character. In addition, light from the glazed openings and the potential use of the surrounding field in association with holiday let properties – as discussed earlier in the report - would appear wholly out of keeping with the historic setting of the building.
63. In addition to the landscape harm previously identified as arising from this part of the scheme, the track and parking area would also cause harm by detracting from the setting of the isolated outfarm, which would not historically be served by such development. Parked cars would also result in significant harm to the setting of what is an isolated historic building, being a modern and incongruous addition.
64. The proposed use and alterations would therefore result in harm to the heritage interest of the site, contrary to policies L3 and LC16.
65. The Authority's Senior Archaeologist advises that the current application currently contains insufficient information to allow the significance of the affected heritage asset to be fully understood however – the application makes no attempt to understand the significance of the existing building, its historic use and development, or the extent of surviving historic fabric, features, fixtures and fittings. As a result, they advise that the scale of harm and loss cannot be properly understood or assessed and they therefore they object due to lack of information.
66. However, they note that taking into account the harm identified they would still be unlikely be in position to support the application even with the required additional information as it would likely be contrary to policy L3.
67. On this basis it is concluded that harm to the heritage interests of the area would arise from the development, but that the extent of this harm cannot be fully assessed at this stage. The application is therefore contrary to policies L3 and LC16 of the Development Plan and to the policies of the NPPF.

### Amenity

68. Due to its separation from other properties the development would not result in a loss of amenity for any other nearby residence.

### Highway impacts

69. The site is located away from the highway network, includes sufficient parking provision, and the likely increase in traffic using the lane leading to the site would not result in substantial harm to highway safety.
70. Overall it is therefore concluded that the development would have no significant impacts on the safe use of the highway.

### Other matters

71. The application does not include details of how services to and foul drainage from the new building would be dealt with. Given the isolated location of the building it is likely that waste water would need to be managed with a septic tank. If the application was to be approved then details of services and foul drainage would need to be reserved to ensure that any scheme minimised ground water pollution and adverse landscape impacts.

### **Conclusion**

72. The NPPF advocates the need to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets by putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, and the Authority's recreation and tourism policies also encourage and support such uses.
73. However, in this case the proposed re-use of the building would not be consistent with its conservation, or with that of the landscape character of the area, due to its isolated location and the lack of consideration the proposal affords to its heritage interest.
74. As a result the development is contrary to Development Plan policies RT2, L1, L3, LC4 and LC16, as well as to the policies of the NPPF.
75. The public benefits provided by the development would be slight, and would not outweigh the identified harm or policy conflicts. There are no further policy or material considerations that would otherwise outweigh the policy conflicts and adverse impacts to indicate that planning permission should be granted.
76. Accordingly, the application is recommended for refusal.

### **Human Rights**

77. None arising.

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

78. None

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

79. Mark Nuttall, Senior Planner