

6. FULL APPLICATION – CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL BARN TO 3 NO. LETTING ROOMS – BLEAKLOW FARM, BRAMLEY LANE, HASSOP (NP/DDD/0519/0462 TS)

APPLICANT: MR P HUNT

Summary

1. The application is for the conversion of a traditional agricultural barn to holiday accommodation. The development would conserve the heritage interest of the building, would provide holiday accommodation in accordance with the Authority's adopted planning policies, and would not result in adverse planning impacts. The application is recommended for approval.

Site and surroundings

2. Bleaklow Farm is a vacant farmstead situated in an isolated hilltop position close to the ridge of Longstone Edge, 900m north of Rowland hamlet. The farmstead is situated in a slight hollow and is bounded to its north, east and west sides by mature tree plantations. Although it is situated in a remote and isolated position it is not unduly prominent in the wider landscape, but is visible from a public footpath which passes directly through the farmstead.
3. The farmstead originally comprised a derelict farmhouse with adjacent outbuildings to the west and north sides, forming a courtyard. There is a further detached traditional outbuilding to the north of the farmhouse (subject to the current application) and formerly to the north of the courtyard buildings was a dilapidated range of modern farm buildings.
4. The former farmhouse was vacant and in a poor structural condition and appearance and had been the subject of inappropriate additions, including a 16.7m long x 4.5m wide single-storey extension attached to its western side.
5. Consent was granted in June 2014 for the demolition of the existing farmhouse and erection of a larger replacement farmhouse of a similar character to the original farmhouse. The approved scheme included the replacement of the single-storey extension with a contemporary extension, part rebuilding of the stable building at the western end of the courtyard, and the erection of a secondary courtyard of buildings behind the main building courtyard to accommodate stabling and garaging.
6. The applicant then began constructing the replacement dwelling, which has been constructed up to first floor level. However, following an officer site inspection it was subsequently discovered that the replacement dwelling was being constructed to significantly larger dimensions than that given approval, and other unauthorised design changes had been made to the scheme.
7. Rather than revert to the originally approved scheme, the applicant chose to submit a retrospective planning application to build the replacement dwelling to the larger dimensions and amended design, as presently constructed. This application was refused by Planning Committee on 11 December 2015. A subsequent appeal against the Authority's decision to refuse planning permission was dismissed on 19 May 2016. An amended scheme was subsequently applied for in November 2016 under application reference NP/DDD/1116/1095 which was approved in January 2017. A material amendment was made to this permission. That permission has now been implemented and construction work is ongoing.

8. Under the approved scheme, the traditional barn to the northern side of the courtyard, which is the subject of this application, is to remain in agricultural use. However, the site is no longer a working farm.

Proposal

9. To change the use of the agricultural building that lies to the northern side of the courtyard to 3 letting rooms.
10. The proposed letting rooms each comprise of a double bedroom with ensuite bathroom. There would be a shared hall and kitchenette area. The existing openings would be re-used and the external alterations are minimal, comprising only of replacement windows and doors.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. **3 year implementation period.**
2. **Development to be carried out in accordance with specified plans.**
3. **Conversion to be carried out within the shell of the existing structure without rebuilding.**
4. **Holiday occupancy restriction and the holiday accommodation to remain under the ownership of the wider Bleaklow Farm site.**
5. **All services to be undergrounded.**
6. **Windows and doors to be timber.**
7. **Parking to be provided prior to the approved use commencing.**

11. **Key Issues**

- Whether the development is suitable for conversion under the Authority's recreation and tourism policies
- The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the building
- The landscape impacts of the development
- The ecological impacts of the development
- Archaeological impacts of the development

12. **History**

June 2014 – Full planning consent granted for the replacement farmhouse, demolition and rebuilding of stables to form additional living accommodation, erection of stable buildings and garaging.

December 2015 – Full planning application to regularise unauthorised amendments to the previously approved scheme. The application was refused by Planning Committee. A subsequent appeal was dismissed.

January 2017 – Application for an amended scheme for the replacement dwelling approved.

October 2017 – Application approved for a variation to the approved plans for the replacement dwelling. This approval has been implemented.

Several applications to make non-material amendments to the approved scheme and to discharge conditions have also been approved.

Consultations

1. Rowland Parish Meeting – Object to the proposal because of the impact on access and traffic levels in the village. Note that Rowland comprises a single-track road (no passing places) with no safe pedestrian pavement or verge. There are two blind bends that make the road unsuitable for increased traffic use. Also raise concerns that the size of the property has increased considerably since the replacement farm house was first approved. Concerns also remain regarding light pollution and increased noise.
2. Great Longstone Parish Council – no objections.
3. Derbyshire County Council Highways – no objections, stating the following “As you will be aware, the application site is remote and the roads surrounding the site are in a poor constructional state, as well as being narrow with limited passing places.

However, in accordance with current government guidance the Highway Authority can only object to a planning application if the proposals are likely to lead to severe highway safety concerns. Given the extremely low vehicle volumes and speeds on the surrounding roads, it's not considered the additional traffic from the 3 letting rooms will lead to any severe highway safety concerns. Also, it's likely some reduction in agricultural traffic will occur as the building in question has an existing agricultural use. Therefore the traffic increase (if any) is likely to be minimal.

Therefore, the Highway Authority does not consider there to be sufficient grounds to object to the proposal from a highway safety viewpoint. Should your Authority be minded to permit the application, it's recommended the 3 proposed parking spaces are provided prior to the letting rooms being taken into use and retained throughout the life of the development designated to the letting rooms only.”

4. Authority's Archaeologist – No objections. Notes that the building has historic interest due to its agricultural character and use of traditional materials. Internal features relating to agricultural use appear to have already been lost.

Representations

5. Six letters of objection have been received which raise the following concerns:
 - The application represents 'scope creep',
 - The access to the site and through the village is not adequate and cannot accommodate the additional traffic.
 - Light Pollution.
 - Increased noise.
 - Increase size of the property since the original approval would lead to a significant increase in vehicle movements.
 - There are no farming activities at Bleaklow so the holiday accommodation isn't farm diversification.
 - Contrary to the policies which states that the conversion of entire farmsteads to holiday accommodation will not be permitted.

Main policies

13. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L2, L3, and RT2.
14. Relevant Development Management Plan policies: DMC3, DMC5, DMC10, DMT8.

National planning policy framework

15. 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 which are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of national parks by the public. When National Parks carry out these purposes they also have the duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Parks.
16. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been revised (2019). This replaces the previous document (2012) with immediate effect. 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 particular Paragraph 172 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
17. In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and the Adopted Development Management Policies. 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 government guidance in the NPPF with regard to the issues that are raised.

Development plan

18. Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2 and GSP3 together say that all development in the National Park must be consistent with the National Park's legal purposes and duty and that the Sandford Principle will be applied where there is conflict. Opportunities for enhancing the valued characteristics of the National Park will be identified and acted upon and development which would enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park will be permitted. Particular attention will be paid to impact on the character and setting of buildings, siting, landscaping and building materials, design in accordance with the Design Guide and the impact upon living conditions of local communities. Core Strategy policy GSP4 highlights that the National Park Authority will consider using planning conditions or obligations to secure the achievement of its spatial outcomes.
19. Core Strategy policy DS1 outlines the Authority's Development Strategy, and in principle permits the conversion of buildings to provide visitor accommodation.

20. Core Strategy 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.
21. Core Strategy policy L2 states that development must conserve and enhance any sites,
22. Core Strategy policy 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.
23. Development Management Policy 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.
24. Development Management Policy DMC5 provides detailed advice relating to proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings, requiring new development to demonstrate how valued features will be conserved, as well as detailing the types and levels of information required to support such proposals. It also requires development to avoid harm to the significance, character, and appearance of heritage assets and details the exceptional circumstances in which development resulting in such harm may be supported.
25. Development Management Policy 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 tranquility, dark skies, or other valued characteristics.
26. Development Management Policy DMT8 states that off-street parking for residential development should be provided unless it can be demonstrated that on-street parking meets highways standards and does not negatively impact on the visual and other amenity of the local community. It notes that the design and number of parking spaces must respect the valued characteristics of the area, particularly in conservation areas.

Assessment

Principle and impact on the character of the building

27. Policy RT2 supports the conversion of buildings to holiday accommodation where they are traditional buildings of historic or vernacular merit.
28. The existing barn is a traditional building of historic and vernacular merit. It is the last surviving part of the historic farmstead and is built out of traditional materials in the

local vernacular. Some of the significance of the building has been lost through the addition of windows and the removal of internal features. However, it does still possess a degree of significance in heritage terms. The building is therefore considered to be a heritage asset.

29. Policy DMC10 makes it clear that conversions of heritage assets will only be permitted when the conversion would not adversely affect its character, such as when major rebuilding is required.
30. The building would be converted within its existing shell without the need for any rebuilding. The only external alterations are the replacement of the existing windows and doors with new timber windows and doors. The proposed conversion would conserve the character and appearance of the exterior of the building.
31. Internally, subdivision of the existing open space is proposed to create individual rooms. Subdivision of historic agricultural buildings can often cause harm to the significance of the building as open spaces are often an important historic feature. However, in this case the interior of the building lacks any historic interest and any historic agricultural features have already been lost. As such, in this instance, the internal subdivision would have very little impact on the overall significance and character of the building.
32. Subject to such a condition, conversion of the building to holiday accommodation would therefore comply with policy RT2 and policy DMC10.
33. Letters of objection have raised concerns that the proposal is contrary to policy RT2 as it would result in the entire former farm stead becoming holiday accommodation. However, the rest of the site already benefits from residential use. This is not a working farm and there is no agricultural restriction on the approved main farm house. That requirement of policy RT2 is not relevant to this situation.
34. Letters of objection have also raised concerns about the increase in the scale of the property since the original application was approved. However, it is essential to consider the current application on its own merits. Whilst there have been amendments to the previously approved scheme, these have all been considered and deemed to be acceptable.

Impacts on the character and appearance of the landscape

35. The building lies within the defined curtilage of Bleaklow Farm and is positioned in very close proximity to other buildings. The site has existing parking and outdoor areas. Parking for the proposed letting rooms can be accommodated within the existing yard. The holiday let does not require any additional outdoor amenity space beyond the existing defined area. As such, the proposed change of use would have a minimal impact on the character of the site as a whole and would have no impact on the character of the wider landscape.
36. Letters of objection have raised concerns about light pollution. However, the small scale of the site is unlikely to generate any significant additional light pollution over and above that generated by the main host dwelling.
37. The development would conserve the landscape character of the area as required by policies L1, DMC3, and DMC10.

Ecological impacts

38. The site has previously been surveyed for protected species on 2016, 2015 and 2013 as part of the previous applications. No evidence of nesting bird or bat activity around the barn was found during these surveys. Since 2013 the roof of the barn has been replaced, it has been repointed and all openings have been secured. The building has been used as a builder's rest area during the redevelopment of the wider site so has been in regular active use. Given this, the potential for the building to be used by roosting bats or nesting birds is very low.
39. The development would not be harmful to protected species or ecological interests and accords with policy LC2.

Archaeological impacts

40. The Authority's archaeologist has advised that whilst the building is of some historic significance, its archaeological interest has been reduced by recent alterations. As such, no further archaeological investigation or building recording is required in this instance.

Amenity impacts

41. Letters of objection have raised concerns about noise. However, due to the position of the building away from any other residential property the proposed development would not result in any loss of privacy, any additional disturbance, or otherwise affect the amenity of any other residential property, complying with policy DMC3. It is however important that the letting rooms remain under the control of the wider Bleaklow Farm site. If the letting rooms were in separate ownership to the main house then amenity issues could arise because of the close relationship between the two. A condition requiring the site to remain as a single planning unit is therefore reasonable and necessary.

Highway impacts

42. The objections from the Parish Meeting and local residents are fully acknowledged.
43. The objections raise concerns that the proposed use would increase traffic and that the single width road through Rowland is unsuitable to accommodate it. These concerns are appreciated.
44. However, the Highway Authority has raised no objections to the scheme, noting that the traffic generated from three letting rooms would not cause severe highways impacts. The Highway Authority have noted the low vehicle volumes and speeds on surrounding roads.
45. Given the assessment of the Highway Authority, it would not be possible to sustain a reason for refusal on highways grounds because the extra traffic generated by the letting rooms is unlikely to cause harmful highways impacts. The development accords with policy DMT8.

Conclusion

46. The proposal will conserve character and appearance of the building and those of the landscape, and would conserve the ecological interests of the site in accordance with policies L2, L3, DMC3, DMC5, and DMC10.

47. There are no other policy or material considerations that would indicate that planning permission should be refused.

48. We therefore recommend the application for conditional approval.

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

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