

9. FULL APPLICATION – CONVERSION OF TRADITIONAL STONE BARN TO SHORT TERM HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION, FIELD BARN, ASHBOURNE ROAD, WETTON. (NP/SM//0719/0730)

APPLICANT: MR B GARSTANG (Trustees of Devonshire Maintenance Trust).

Summary

1. The application seeks permission to convert a traditional stone barn to short-term holiday accommodation. The key planning considerations are the potential effect on the agricultural character and setting of the barn and consequently the wider landscape impact of the development. In this case, by introducing a domestic use in this open landscape setting, the proposed development would spoil the agricultural character and setting of the barn, whilst failing to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the wider landscape in this part of the National Park. The proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

2. The field barn subject of this application is sited in open countryside approximately 800m east of the village of Wetton. The barn sits adjacent to the road on the north side of the highway (Ashbourne Road) and has no curtilage other than a field access gate close to the west gable end of the barn. The nearest buildings are agricultural and sited around 120m to the north-east on the eastern side of Lodge Lane. The closest residential dwellings are located close to the junction of Lodge Lane and Furlong Lane, some 260m to the north of the development site. Within the Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan, the landscape character type of the area is classed as 'Limestone Village Farmlands'. A small-scale settled agricultural landscape, characterised by limestone villages, set within a repeating pattern of narrow strip fields and bounded by drystone walls.

Proposal

3. Planning permission is being sought to convert a traditional roadside barn to short-term holiday accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

1. The development would result in domestication of the landscape in this location, harming its agricultural character, contrary to policies L1 and DMC3, and to paragraph 172 of the NPPF.
2. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate the significance of the building and how any identified features of value will be conserved and where possible enhanced, contrary to policy DMC5 and the guidance within the NPPF.

Key Issues

4. The impact on the valued character and appearance of the barn and its setting within the surrounding landscape.

History

5. Pre application advice established that the barn to be of sufficient vernacular and historic merit to warrant conversion to short-term holiday accommodation in principle. There is no other relevant planning history for the site.

Consultations

6. Highway Authority - There are no objections on Highway grounds, subject to the following conditions being included on any approval:
 - *The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the access drive rear of the public highway has been surfaced and thereafter maintained in a bound and porous material for a minimum distance of 5m back from the site boundary in accordance with the approved plans.*
 - *The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the visibility splays including wall realignment shown on plan ref. no 2187-303 have been provided. The visibility splay shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility over a height of 900 mm above the adjacent carriageway level.*
 - *The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the existing site access made redundant as a consequence of the development hereby permitted is permanently closed and the access crossing reinstated as verge.*
7. Parish Council - *'The Parish Council voted to support this application. However, serious concerns were raised about the safety issues with the restricted vision for drivers of vehicles, which would be turning, parking and reversing in or out of the small parking area. The Parish Council agrees with the report made by Staffordshire Highways and hopes that these issues can be revisited to improve the application in terms of road safety'.*
8. PDNPA Archaeology - Objects - *'The application currently contains insufficient information to allow the significance of the affected heritage asset to be understood (e.g. to understand the extent of surviving historic fabric, features, fixtures and fittings; to understand the historical development of the building, where the core significance lies and the impact of the proposed development etc.). It is likely that a residential conversion will harm the significance of this heritage asset through the loss of historic fabric and features, changes to the agricultural character of the building, and loss of legibility of historic agricultural functions etc. However, with the information available at this stage proper assessment of the level of harm cannot be made. Therefore, on initial assessment we would object due to lack of information, and would seek that any development proposals be supported by an appropriate assessment of the significance of the historic farmstead and traditional farm building. If this information is provided then it will be possible to consider the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage asset, and advise accordingly on harm to the significance, acceptability, appropriate mitigation etc.'*
9. PDNPA landscape - Objects - *'The current barn appears to be intact and maintained, but is an isolated structure in an undulating pastoral landscape. The landscape is generally open and outside of the nucleated settlements is relatively unsettled, with a prominent field pattern, which gives a strong sense of scale and visual unity. My concern is that this application would introduce an incongruous sense of domestic settlement into the landscape, which would conflict with a key landscape guideline for this LCA (to protect the strongly nucleated settlement pattern of villages and scattered farms) and its*

perceptual characteristics. From a landscape point of view, I therefore do not support this application’.

10. Natural England - *‘Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes’.*

Representations

11. No third party responses at the time of writing the report.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

12. 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.
13. 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 Para: 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.
14. Section 16 of the revised NPPF sets out guidance for conserving the historic environment, Paragraph 189 states “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. 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.”
15. Whilst Paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
16. In the National Park, the development plan comprises the Authority’s Core Strategy 2011 and the new Development Management Policies (DMP), adopted May 2019. These Development Plan Policies provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park’s statutory purposes for the determination of this application. In this case, it is considered there are no significant conflicts between prevailing policies in the Development Plan and government guidance in the NPPF.

Main Development Plan Policies

Core Strategy

17. 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 conversion and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage assets.

18. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles*. Requires that particular attention is paid to the impact on the character and setting of buildings and that the design is in accord with the Authority's Design Guide and development is appropriate to the character and appearance of the National Park.
19. DS1 - *Development Strategy*. States, that recreation and tourism development is acceptable in principle in open countryside.
20. L3 - *Cultural Heritage assets or archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic significance*. Explains that development must conserve and where appropriately enhance or reveal the significance of historic assets and their setting. Other than in exceptional circumstances, development will not be permitted where it is likely to cause harm to the significance of any cultural heritage asset or its setting.
21. RT2 - *Hotels, bed & breakfast & holiday accommodation*. States, that the change of use of a traditional building of historic or vernacular merit will be permitted.
22. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. Seeks to ensure that all development conserves and enhances valued landscape character and sites, features and species of biodiversity importance.

Development Management Policies

23. DMC3 - *Siting, Design, layout and landscaping*. Reiterates, that where developments are acceptable in principle, Policy requires that design is to high standards and where possible enhances the natural beauty, quality and visual amenity of the landscape. The siting, mass, scale, height, design, building materials should all be appropriate to the context. Accessibility of the development should also be a key consideration.
24. DMC5 - *Assessing the impact of development on designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting*. The policy 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. DMC10 - *Conversion of a heritage asset*. Conversion will be permitted provided it can accommodate the new use without changes that adversely affect its character, including enlargement, subdivision, or other alterations to form and mass, inappropriate new window openings or doorways and major rebuilding, and that any changes conserves or enhances the heritage significance and its setting in accord with policy DMC5.
26. DMC11 - *Safeguarding, recording and enhancing nature conservation interests*. Proposals should aim to achieve net gains to biodiversity or geodiversity as a result of development and that 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 site, feature and species development proposals must consider amongst other things, the setting of the development in relation to other features of importance, historical and cultural.

27. DMR3 - *Holiday occupancy of self-catering accommodation*. States that where self-catering accommodation is acceptable, its use will be restricted to holiday accommodation for no more than 28 days per calendar year by any one person.
28. DMT3 - *Access and design criteria*. States amongst other things, that a safe access should be provided in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality and where possible enhances it. Whilst DMT8 - *Residential off street parking*. Says, that off-street parking for residential development should be provided and the design and numbers of parking spaces associated with the residential development respects the valued characteristics of the area.
29. The Authority has adopted three separate supplementary planning documents (SPD's) that offers design guidance on householder development namely the Design Guide, the Building Design Guide and the Detailed Design Guide on Alterations and Extensions.

Assessment

Principle of Development

30. DS1 allows for the creation of holiday accommodation preferably by re-use of traditional buildings. Policy RT2 specifically allows for the change of use of a traditional building of historic or vernacular merit, except where it would create unacceptable landscape impact in open countryside. The NPPF also supports the provision of sustainable tourist facilities in rural areas. The building subject to the application is a good example of a historic field barn and is clearly a traditional building. We consider it to be a non-designated heritage asset. The broad principle of the conversion to holiday accommodation is therefore acceptable. However, policy DMC10 makes it clear that applications for conversions of non-designated heritage assets must be achievable without changes that adversely affect its character, including enlargement, subdivision, or other alterations to form and mass, inappropriate new window openings or doorways and major rebuilding, and that any changes conserves or enhances the heritage significance and its setting.

Impacts of the development on the character, appearance and significance of the building, its setting, and the landscape

31. The Authority's Senior Archaeologist has raised concerns that insufficient information has been provided to allow a proper assessment of the impact of the conversion on the significance of the barn to take place. This concern is fully acknowledged. Policy DMC5 requires that an appropriate level of information is submitted to inform an assessment of how the development will affect the heritage asset.
32. Whilst the conversion would occur entirely within the shell of the building, with only minimal external alterations, it is impossible to know from the information provided whether there are any features within the building that contribute to its significance and how the proposed conversion would affect any such features. For example, we do not know the level to which the plan form of the building contributes to its historic significance and how the proposed internal alterations that are required would affect this. As such, the application fails to provide the level of information that is necessary to allow an informed assessment of the impact on the character and significance of the building, contrary to policy DMC5.
33. As well as the physical impacts on the buildings itself, the impact on the setting of the building and the surrounding landscape is also a key consideration.

34. A parking space with a small amount of amenity space is proposed immediately to the west of the building and enclosed with drystone walling. To create this amenity space, the existing field gate would be blocked up and the entrance re-aligned to form a new access, which according to the agent would improve visibility particularly to the east when exiting the site. Flagstones and grasscrete are proposed for the surface of the parking/amenity space. An oil tank is also proposed and would be concealed beneath the amenity area, closest to the west gable of the barn.
35. By introducing these domestic elements they would significantly alter the character of the barn and its setting, which is surrounded on three sides with open pastureland.
36. The Authority's '*Historic Farmstead Character Statement*' identifies, that field barns are an important part of the Peak District's landscape, they are highly characteristic and strongly contribute to local distinctiveness, even more so when combined with the distinctive pattern of dry stone wall enclosures, reflecting the development of this historic landscape. The Statement also identifies that farm buildings that are detached and remote from a main farmstead have been subject to high levels of change both within the Peak District and nationally, with a 57% loss of such features from the Peak District landscape. This makes those that survive even more precious. With respect to this historic landscape, the field barn has an agricultural use and is well integrated within the surrounding agricultural landscape.
37. Whilst acknowledging the development for conversion of an existing traditional building is supported in principle, it is considered that the domestication of this area of agricultural landscape needs to be carefully considered. In this case, the introduction of a residential and domestic use into this open landscape setting, where there are no other dwellings nearby and with everything this type of development brings about (domestic curtilage and paraphernalia, parking, provision of services, light pollution, movement of vehicles, provision of bin store etc.), would introduce elements that are out of place, incongruous and harmful to this heritage asset and its open countryside setting. Because of the very open nature of the site, the outdoor spaces cannot be provided in a location that are well-screened.
38. It is therefore considered that development into a residential property, would harm the agricultural setting of the barn, therefore, this element of the scheme is considered unacceptable in its siting and design, contrary to policies L3, DMC5 & DMC10 respectively and would conflict with policies GSP3, L1 and RT2 in these respects.

Amenity Impact

39. The nearest neighbouring properties are sited around 260m to the north of the development. Due to the distance and orientation of the scheme, it is considered the amenity of the residents of these properties would not be unduly compromised by the proposed use. In this regard the amenity of the occupiers of the nearest residential dwellings would not be adversely affected by the proposal, in accordance with policies GSP3 in particular.

Highway Impact

40. One parking space is proposed, on the western side of the barn. In this case, the Highway Authority have raised no objections to the proposal, subject to the access drive being surfaced in a bound and porous material, the wall re-alignment and visibility splays being provided and that prior to the development being brought into use, the existing field gate access is permanently closed. However, as stated previously in the report, it is considered the impact of the domestic parking and amenity area detracts from the

surrounding landscape and setting of the barn, as well as adversely affecting the character and appearance of the wider landscape setting, therefore considered contrary to policy DMT3 and DMT8 respectively.

Other Issues

41. A Protected Species appraisal had been carried out to establish the likelihood of the building being used for potential owl and bat roosting sites. In this case, the predicted impact on local bat species was deemed to be negligible, as no bats were recorded roosting within the barn. In addition, the predicted impact on local populations of barn owl or little owl was also deemed to be negligible, as no evidence that these species nest or roost within the barn were recorded during this survey either.
42. In this case, the barn was deemed to be of negligible ecological value and according to the report's author; *'provided works are undertaken within the next 12 months, it is not considered that further surveys are necessary, should 12 months elapse before works are undertaken an updated survey should be carried out to establish any recent bat usage'*. In this case, whilst the development has offered to incorporate bat access tiles to the ridge, additional bat boxes could be conditioned to be fitted externally to the building. Subsequently, and subject to the scheme being approved, the above matters would be considered in accordance with policy DMC11 in particular.
43. A structural report has not been submitted with the application, however, the barn looks in a reasonable condition, having been recently re-roofed albeit there is a pronounced bowing in the roadside elevation wall of the building. Therefore, should members be minded to approve, a structural survey could be conditioned to be submitted prior to any works commencing. This should provide assurances, that the conversion is capable of being carried out within the shell of the building, without any major structural work being required.

Environmental Management

44. An Environmental Management and Mitigation statement has been submitted during the course of the application, However this is inadequate and does not properly address the requirements of policy CC1, it simply states, *'...that as the scheme is for the conversion of an existing building, that it is inherently more sustainable than a new build property'*. No investigation has been carried out as to whether renewable energy technologies (i.e. ground or air source heat pump) may be appropriate, nor considered issues such as grey water recycling or other energy conservation measures. The scheme would provide an opportunity to incorporate energy efficiency measures as required by policy CC1, therefore, a condition requiring a scheme to be approved and then implemented is recommended should the application be approved.

Conclusion

45. The proposed development would have a negative impact on the barn neither preserving nor enhancing its historic character and appearance and resulting in harm to the significance of the barn (which is a designated heritage asset) and the adverse impact of the development as a whole on the wider landscape setting of the National Park.

Human Rights

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

47. List of Background Papers (not previously published)

48. Nil

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