

8. FULL APPLICATION – RESIDENTIAL CONVERSION OF STONE BARN AT ASHBOURNE ROAD, WETTON – (NP/SM/0719/0728, ALN)

APPLICANT: MR B GARSTANG – TRUSTEES OF DEVONSHIRE MAINTENANCE FUND

Summary

1. The proposal, as amended, and subject to conditions, accords with Core Strategy policy HC1 in that the proposed change of use of the field barn to an open market dwelling would conserve the character of the heritage asset. All other relevant policy criteria are met. The application is recommended for approval.

Site and Surroundings

2. The barn in question is a two-storey traditional field barn located just beyond the built edge of the named settlement of Wetton, adjacent to the south side of an unclassified road known as 'Ashbourne Road'. The barn sits in the north west corner of a large field parcel.
3. The building lies outside of the Wetton Conservation Area.
4. The barn is orientated at right angles to the road with its gable end abutting the public highway. Approximately 15m to the west of the barn there is a small plantation of deciduous trees. Between the trees and the barn is a small grassed paddock with gated access to the road. To the east and south is open agricultural land. A public right of way (Wetton 6) runs in a north-south orientation across the field approximately 36m to the east. A further public right of way (Wetton 2) runs from a point directly opposite the barn on the north side of Ashbourne Rd, westwards towards the village.
5. The barn is constructed in natural limestone under a clay tiled roof. There are single storey lean-to offshoots on both the east and south facing elevation.

Proposal

6. Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of the barn to a single open market dwelling. The building would be converted within its shell with no extensions proposed. Existing window and door openings would be utilised except for the introduction of three new window openings, two at first floor level on the two-storey barn (one on the west elevation and one on the east), and one on the east elevation of the south facing lean-to. The dwelling would have three bedrooms.
7. The area to the west between the barn and the trees would be separated off from the wider field by the provision of new drystone wall and this area would become the residential curtilage to the property and would include parking space for two vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. **3 year implementation time limit**
2. **Adopt amended plans**

3. Barn to be converted within its shell with no rebuilding.
4. Remove permitted development rights for alterations, extensions, outbuildings, gates, fences, walls, satellite dishes and solar panels.
5. Restrict domestic curtilage to the enclosed area immediately to the west of the barn only.
6. Written Scheme of Investigation for a Level 2 building recording scheme to be submitted, agreed and implemented.
7. Full details of windows and doors including final finish to be submitted and agreed.
8. Hard and soft landscaping scheme to be submitted and agreed including details of any changes to levels within the domestic curtilage and details of screen wall to oil tank.
9. No external lighting to the east elevation of the barn. A scheme of lighting to be submitted and agreed.
11. Details of bin store area to be submitted and agreed.
12. Rainwater goods to be cast iron and painted black.
13. Flue pipe to be painted black at the time of erection and permanently so maintained.
14. Windows and doors to be recessed by 100mm (approx. 4inches) from the front face of the wall.
15. New openings to be provided with natural limestone lintels and cills to match those on the adjacent windows.
16. Doorways to east elevation (to hallway and study) to be fixed closed in the manner shown on the approved plans prior to occupation and shall remain fixed closed in perpetuity.
17. Recommendations in section 5 of the submitted 'Bat and Barn Owl Survey and Report' (dated 11/08/2019) to be fully adhered to.
18. 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 between carriageway edge and site boundary in accordance with the approved plans.
19. Visibility splays to be provided and maintained.
20. Parking and turning areas to be provided and maintained.
21. Submit and agree Scheme of Environmental Management Measures
22. Submit and agreed details of sewage treatment arrangements.

Key Issues

- Whether the principle of conversion to an open market dwelling is acceptable.
- The impact of the development on the significance, character and setting of the barn and the surrounding landscape.
- Impacts on protected species.

History

8. August 2018 – pre-application enquiry submitted with regard to the possible conversion of three barns in Wetton, including the subject barn. Applicant advised that this barn lends itself to residential conversion, being adjacent to the road and having established screening to the immediate west of the site. Recommended that curtilage is restricted to the area to the west of the barn.

Consultations

9. **Highway Authority** – no objections subject to conditions to require the access drive between the carriageway edge and the application site boundary to be surfaced in a bound and porous material; visibility splays to be provided and maintained; and parking and turning areas to be provided and maintained.
10. **District Council** – no response
11. **Parish Council** – *“would like to point out that the property is NOT well related to the built framework of the village. The Parish Council considers that the application should be rejected as it is. It could be resubmitted with a proviso that the property is only for rent/buy for local housing needs.”*
12. **Natural England** – no objections
13. **Authority’s Archaeologist** – *‘The conversion of the barn to a residential dwelling will result in permanent harm to its significance through the loss of historic fabric and features, and impact on the agricultural character of the building, and of the legibility of historic agricultural functions etc. Changes to the historic fabric, including the insertion of for two new window openings into the original part of the building will result in permanent changes to the visible fabric and structure of the building, and harm its legibility and historic interest.*
14. *The domestication of this area of agricultural landscape needs to be considered. The development of the barn into a permanently occupied dwelling house will harm both the agricultural setting of the barn, which positively contributes to its significance, and will harm the area of historic landscape within which the ruined barn is located. With respect to the historic landscape, currently as a historic field barn it has an agricultural use and is integrated within its surrounding agricultural landscape, and it owes its existence and position to the way this landscape, enclosure and farming practice has developed from the medieval period onwards. The introduction of a residential and domestic use into this location within this historical landscape where there are no other dwellings nearby, with everything this entails (domestic curtilage and paraphernalia, parking, provision of services, light pollution, movement of vehicles, provision of a bin store etc.) would introduce elements that are out of place, incongruous and are harmful to this heritage asset.*

15. *Should the proposals be considered acceptable with respect to planning balance and the identified harm is deemed to be outweighed by public benefit, then I advise that the archaeological and historic impacts to the barn that detailed above be addressed through a conditioned scheme of building recording.'*

Representations

16. No letters of presentation were received during the public consultation period.

Main Policies

17. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L3, HC1, CC1
18. Relevant Local Plan policies: DMC3, DMC5, DMC10, DMT3, DMT8
19. National Planning Policy Framework
20. 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 East Midlands Regional Plan 2009, 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.'
21. Paragraph 172 states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing 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 these issues.
22. Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states 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. 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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.
23. Paragraph 190 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

24. Paragraph 197 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly 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.
25. Development Plan
26. 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.
27. Policy HC1 of the Core Strategy sets out the Authority's approach to new housing in the National Park in more detail; policy HC1(C) I and II say that exceptionally new housing will be permitted in accordance with core policies GSP1 and GSP2 if it is required in order to achieve conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings or where it is required in order to achieve conservation or enhancement within designated settlements.
28. 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.
29. Policy L2 states the development must conserve and enhance any sites, features or species of biodiversity importance and where appropriate their setting. Other than in exceptional circumstances development will not be permitted where is likely to have an adverse impact on any site, features or species of biodiversity importance or their setting.
30. Core Strategy policy CC1 requires development to make the most efficient and sustainable use of land and resources, to take account of the energy hierarchy, to achieve the highest standards of carbon reduction and water efficiency, and to be directed away from flood risk areas.
31. 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.

32. 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.
33. 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.
34. Development Management Policy DMT3 states the development will only be permitted where, having regard to the standard, function, nature and use of the road, a safe access that is achievable for all people, can be provided in a way that does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality and where possible enhances it.
35. 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

Issue 1: Whether the principle of conversion to an open market dwelling is acceptable.

36. The starting point for consideration of the current proposals is Core Strategy policy HC1 C which allows for new housing, as an exception, where it is required to achieve the conservation/enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings.
37. In this case the barn in question is a characteristic field barn for the housing of cattle and storage of fodder crops in the loft above. The Peak District National Park 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 enclosure reflecting the development of the historic landscape. Consequently we consider that the barn is a non-designated heritage asset and therefore within the remit of policy HC1.
38. The barn is no longer used for agricultural purposes and is in danger of deterioration and dereliction through long term redundancy. It can therefore be reasonably argued that conversion is required in order to secure its future.
39. It is noted that the Parish Council have objected to the proposals on the basis that the dwelling should be restricted to local occupancy. There is no requirement within policy HC1 C for schemes for conversion to one unit to be restricted to affordable local needs, unless that building is able to accommodate more than one unit, in which case the scheme must address eligible local need. In this case, the barn is not large enough to convert easily to two units, without further internal subdivision and extension, which would harm its character. Also because of the sensitive position of the barn adjacent to open fields, any residential curtilage must be limited and the creation of two distinct garden areas would cause harm to the setting of the barn.

40. In principle therefore the proposals comply with HC1 subject to an assessment of whether the proposals would conserve/and or enhance the building and its setting.

Issue 2: The impact of the development on the significance, character and setting of the barn and the landscape impact.

41. 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.
42. The Authority's Archaeologist has concluded that core significance of this non-designated heritage assets lies in its:
- traditional agricultural character – this demonstrates its agricultural origin and function
 - traditional materials – which are characteristic of the area
 - it surviving historic fabric – particularly parts of the roof structure
 - the location, form and size of historic openings – retains legibility of the historic function
 - landscape setting with the former medieval field system of Wetton.
43. She concludes that the proposals would cause permanent harm to its significance through the loss of historic fabric and features, and impact on the agricultural character of the building, and of the legibility of historic agricultural functions etc. We do not disagree with this assessment but HC1 does support the conversion of heritage assets to dwelling houses in principle and inevitably, with any conversion scheme there will some degree of impact on the building and its setting, which will cause harm to significance. The NPPF states that in weighing applications that directly or indirectly 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.
44. In this case the barn would be converted within its shell. The building does not appear to contain any features internally that particularly contribute to its historic significance. Whilst the subdivision would change the existing character of the inside of the building, this would result in only minor harm in this instance. Externally, there would be two new window openings on the two storey historic core of the barn and the addition of these would result in some harm to the historic character of the barn. However their position, dimensions and frame designs would match existing openings such that the impact of these on the character of the barn would not be significant in this instance. It is accepted that the windows are necessary to facilitate the conversion of the building.
45. The main potential impact of the proposals in this particular case is therefore not with regard to physical changes to the fabric of the building, but more with regard to the potential for the domestication of the agricultural landscape in which it sits. This is the case with many conversion schemes for field barns. In some cases the domestication of the landscape would result in a scheme being unacceptable. In this particular case the barn sits adjacent to the road so there would be no requirement for new and obtrusive access tracks. A further significant consideration is that the barn sits close to a plantation of mature trees to the west. This means that it is possible to create a

domestic curtilage between the barn and the trees that would be relatively unobtrusive and would not detract from the most prominent views of the barn within its farmland setting, i.e. when approaching the village on the road, or on the public footpaths from the east.

46. The garden area would only be visible from a 40m stretch of Ashbourne Road directly in front of the barn, before being obscured from the east by the barn itself and from the west by the curvature of the road and the mature trees. As submitted the plans did show two areas of fenced off hardstanding to the east of the barn and we felt that any domestication in this area would cause harm. Amended plans have now been submitted showing these areas omitted and doorways that would have given access to these areas fixed closed. As amended the pastureland would butt directly up to the east elevation as at present, therefore conserving the barn's setting.
47. Subject to conditions, including to require a Level 2 programme of descriptive building recording; to restrict the residential curtilage to the area to the west of the barn; to ensure the door openings in question remain fixed shut; and to prevent any external lighting on the east elevation, it is considered that the public benefits of securing the future of the building outweigh any harm that has been identified. It is recognised that the trees to the west of the site are not within the control of the applicant and that if they were removed this would open up views of the proposed garden area. However there is no indication that this a likely scenario and therefore despite this, the proposals are considered to be acceptable. The scheme accords with policies DMC3, DMC5 and DMC10.
48. The National Planning Practice Guidance states that conditions restricting the future use of permitted development rights or changes of use will rarely pass the test of necessity and should only be used in exceptional circumstances. In this case, given the sensitive nature of the barn's setting and also the potential for uncontrolled alterations, extensions or outbuildings to impact negatively on its character, we consider that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the removal of permitted development rights.
49. **Issue 3 – Impact upon Protected Species**
50. A bat and barn owl survey report was submitted during the course of the application. Emergence/re-entry surveys revealed that the barn roof is used as a day roost for a single common pipistrelle bat. No other bats were confirmed using the barn for roosting during the surveys. A number of bats were recorded feeding over the site and trees to the north and west. The re-development of the barn has the potential to result in the loss of day roost used by a single individual of a common species of bat, therefore the survey report recommends that mitigation will be needed in order to maintain the favourable conservation status of the species concerned.
51. The suggested mitigation includes the installation of suitable crevice bat boxes mounted on neighbouring mature trees and the installation of ridge and roof tile access points to enable bats to enter underneath in order to gain access to the gap between tiles and roofing felt. Subject to a condition for the development to be carried out in completed accordance with the recommendations of the survey report we consider that any impact upon bats will be adequately mitigated.
52. The predicted impact on local populations of barn owl is deemed to be negligible, as no evidence that barn owls nest or roost within the barn was recorded during the survey. No evidence of any other nesting birds was found.

Other Considerations

53. Access and Parking

54. Two parking spaces would be provided within the curtilage of the property which would be sufficient to meet the needs of a three-bedroomed property. The roadside boundary wall would be slightly re-aligned and reduced to 1m in height in order to provide the necessary visibility splays from the access and along this relatively short stretch of wall this is considered to be acceptable. Subject to the conditions recommended by the Highway Authority the development would be served with a safe and suitable access in accordance with Development Management policies DMT3 and DMT8.

55. Amenity Impacts

56. The nearest residential property to the barn is some 250m to the east and consequently, due to the intervening distances, we consider that the proposed development would not have any adverse impact upon the privacy and amenity of neighbouring properties in accordance with policies GSP3 and DMC3.

57. Environmental Management

58. An Environmental Management and Mitigation statement has been submitted during the course of the application. Unfortunately this is lacking in detail and does not adequately address the policy requirement. 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. It does not investigate whether renewable energy technologies (i.e. ground or air source heat pump) may be appropriate or investigate issues such as grey water recycling, energy conservation measures etc. as set out in the SPD. A condition that requires a scheme of environmental management measures to show how the development will incorporate measures to reduce the contribution to climate change is considered to be necessary and reasonable to ensure that the proposals comply with policy CC1.

59. Foul sewage

60. The submitted plans show the installation of a septic tank in the field to the east of the barn. The National Planning Policy Guidance indicates that if connection to the public sewer is not feasible, then a package treatment plant should be considered. Accordingly a condition to submit and agree details of the foul sewage treatment arrangements is required.

Conclusion

61. The proposals meet within the requirement of the Core Strategy housing policy HC1 C. Subject to conditions, the minor and less than substantial harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset would be outweighed by public benefits of securing the long-term future of the non-designated heritage asset. Issues with regard to ecology, highway safety, and amenity are all adequately addressed in accordance with adopted policies. There are no other material considerations that would indicate that planning permission should be refused. Consequently the application is recommended for approval.

Human Rights

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

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

63. Nil

Report Author: Andrea Needham, Senior Planner (South)