

**5. FULL APPLICATION - CONVERSION OF FIELD BARN TO DWELLING AT TWIN DALES BARN, FIELD TO WEST OF OVER HADDON, (NP/DDD/0821/0866), ALN**

**APPLICANT: MR NEIL MYCOCK**

**Background**

1. The application site is an isolated field barn located in open countryside 1.3km to the west of Over Haddon and approximately 700m from the nearest other building. The barn is a non-designated heritage asset and is highly prominent in the landscape.
2. It is proposed to convert and extend the barn to create a single open market dwelling.
3. The application was presented to Members of the planning committee by officers on 5 November 2021 (report attached as Appendix 1). The officer recommendation was one of refusal on the grounds that:
  - I. **The development would cause harm to the significance of the field barn as a heritage asset and its setting. Consequently, it would not deliver conservation or enhancement of a valued vernacular building. The proposals are therefore contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, L3 and HC1; Development Management policies DMC3, DMC5 and DMC10 and the National Planning Policy Framework.**
  - II. **The creation of a new dwelling in this isolated location within the open countryside and the domestication of the site would result in harm to the landscape character and scenic beauty of the National Park. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2 and L1, Development Management policies DMC1 and DMC3 and the National Planning Policy Framework.**
4. Despite this recommendation, following the debate members were minded to approve the application. The reason given by members was that the long term preservation of the barn would be of advantage to the landscape and result in the conservation of a building of heritage significance.

**Standing Orders**

5. Because approval of the application would represent a departure from policy, Standing Order 1.48 requires that final determination to be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee and the Officers will prepare a further report. The Officers' report must cover:
  - the policy implications e.g. whether the decision is a major departure from the development plan or other key policy
  - the budget implications
  - a risk assessment
  - an assessment of the robustness of the provisional reasons, including recommendations on any conditions
6. It was also agreed at the meeting that this report would outline in more detail the contribution of setting to the heritage significance of the barn and the impacts of the development upon it; and also discuss the broader picture of other barn conversions that have been dealt with by the Authority recently.

## **Policy Assessment**

7. The primary purpose of National Park designation is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. In accordance with the NPPF the Development Plan (policy DS1) gives clear direction that to achieve this aim, development, including new housing must generally be steered into sustainable locations within or on the edge of settlements. One of the few exceptions to this principle is in relation to the housing policy HC1 which allows, exceptionally housing that secures the conservation or enhancement of valued vernacular buildings. Running alongside this is the Authority's landscape policy (L1), which requires all development to conserve and enhance valued landscape character as identified in the Landscape Strategy.
8. The key policy issues are whether the proposed conversion to an open market dwelling would conserve and enhance the heritage significance of the field barn (Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2, HC1 and L3) and whether it would conserve and enhance the valued landscape character of the area (Core Strategy policies GSP1, GSP2 and L1). Some members felt that as the scheme would result in a new and sustainable use for the fabric of the building, which is a heritage asset falling into disrepair, that this would be an inherently positive outcome for the National Park. The paragraphs below explain why this would not be the case.
9. Historic farmsteads and their associated buildings and barns are an integrated part of the rural landscape of the National Park. Most barns are physically associated with a farmstead, either within villages and settlements or in the countryside. The Authority's policies recognise the importance of these buildings and that sometimes the best way to achieve their conservation and enhancement is to allow for conversion to a residential use. Planning decisions have consistently delivered this aim. For example, since 1 January 2021, 20 units of holiday accommodation, 11 dwellings and 8 units of ancillary accommodation have been approved through the conversion of barns and traditional buildings, mostly under delegated powers. These have been buildings that are within building groups, on farmsteads or within settlements.
10. The key difference however with the barn that is subject to this application is that it is a remote and very isolated field barn, completely unrelated to any other built development and intrinsically linked through its form and function to the historic landscape in which it sits. Therefore it is highly sensitive to change and unlike the barns referred to above, where a residential use would conserve and enhance the building, in this case such a use would cause significant harm to its special qualities.
11. The Authority's Farmstead Character Statement describes field barns as single buildings set within or on the edge of a field away from the main farmstead. They are a highly significant feature of the Peak District, and combine with the intricate patterns of dry-stone walling and hay meadows to form an integral and distinctive part of its landscape. These buildings enabled land to be managed remotely and avoided the bringing of stock and produce to the main farm. In this case the barn has agricultural origins but was also likely related to historic lead mining activity around Over Haddon, reflecting a dual economy where 'miner-farmers' worked the veins into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
12. The barn is located in a fieldscape of post-1650 parliamentary enclosure, not enclosed until the early 19th century. Prior to this the area formed part of Over Haddon Common, an area of common pasture for the village. The existing fieldscape of drystone wall represents a good example of this kind of enclosure. The edge of Over Haddon's medieval field system is c.148m to the east of the site, with view across both fieldscapes and historic landscape character areas from the site. Views to and from the site are extensive across the woods of Lathkill Dale, the White Peak Plateau beyond, and across to over Haddon.

13. The site falls within the 'Limestone Plateau Pastures' landscape character type within the Authority's Landscape Strategy. In this area isolated field barns are identified as 'special cultural features' in the White Peak, especially in the Plateau Pastures. The document states that where they can no longer be maintained in agricultural use, careful consideration needs to be given to appropriate alternatives, but that conversion to residential use would be 'particularly inappropriate in a region where settlement is strongly nucleated in small villages.'
14. The main concern with the proposals is the impact of domestication on the character and setting of the field barn. The barn sits at the southern edge of a medium sized field. On its south eastern side is a small enclosed area probably used for stock handling/collection. The way the agricultural land butts right up to the walls of the building very clearly reflects the historic function of the barn and results in the barn being completely integrated within the landscape. This close physical relationship between barn and land is clearly visible from the surrounding area. In particular the walled enclosure, in which the proposed domestic curtilage would be located is visible from the road to the north east as are the openings within the walls of the building. It may be possible to better screen this area by building up the walls, but this in itself could have a detrimental impact on the fieldscape. The area where the cars would be parked, is also visible from the road to the north west. We have seen the harmful impacts of this in other similar locations in the National Park whereby cumulatively the special qualities of the historic landscape are being eroded by domestication from fencing, parked cars, garden areas, garden furniture, bin stores and artificial lighting, both external and internal. Whilst some elements of domestication can be reduced, by for example a restriction on garden sizes, many elements are intrinsic to residential use (particularly parked cars, artificial lighting, the introduction of curtains and blinds and bin storage) cannot reasonably be mitigated or controlled by planning conditions to any meaningful extent.
15. Clearly as outlined above, the setting of the building makes a positive contribution to its significance. The Heritage Statement that was submitted with the application agrees. In fact it assesses the fabric of the barn as being of **low significance** overall, being of late 19<sup>th</sup> century origins and of no more than local significance. On the other hand it assesses the setting of the barn as being of **high/medium** significance, sitting as it does within a well preserved historic landscape. It is important to stress that barn makes a positive contribution to the landscape as a field barn and there is a clear link between the history and use of the building and the surrounding land. The introduction of a domestic dwelling here would have the opposite impact on landscape character; it would be wholly inappropriate for this historic agricultural landscape.
16. The introduction of domestic curtilage into the enclosed walled area would change and cause harm to the setting of the barn as described above. Whilst conditions could be appended to remove permitted development rights for outbuildings and boundary features, there are many other visible signs of domestication that could not be controlled. For example items such as garden furniture and bin storage would be visible across the fields, from the road to the north east. Other paraphernalia such as external lighting, hanging baskets, lawns, flower beds, washing lines, would all cumulatively result in a building that is clearly a dwelling and no longer understood as a historic barn. Parked cars and the movement of vehicles up down the access track would add to the visual impacts when viewed from the road, as well as changes to the building itself such as interior lighting, curtains etc.
17. The Planning Inspectorate has supported officers' view on this issue. In a recent appeal decision (dismissed) for an isolated barn conversion near Lathkill Grove Farm, Monyash the Inspector concluded, (in discussing the impacts of domestic paraphernalia) that '*Such operations and uses would also physically and visually sever the building's connection with the adjacent agricultural land, thus further eroding its rural character*' and that '*The building would appear as a dwelling, albeit one with agricultural origins, rather than as a barn.*'

18. In conclusion we recognise that the fabric of the barn is a heritage asset, albeit at a fairly low level, due to the fact that it is in common with many other barns in the National Park. The setting of the building however is much rarer and more special and so the protection of the landscape in this case is of greater importance. Whilst the proposed scheme would provide the building with a long term use and ensure the survival of the physical fabric of the barn, this benefit would not outweigh the harm to the wider landscape and setting of the barn. It is acknowledged that the roof of the building has collapsed and there may be uncertainty about the retention of the building in the long term. However, the total loss of the building would be much less harmful to the character of the National Park landscape compared to the significant harm to the landscape that would be caused by the wholly inappropriate introduction of a domestic dwelling at this site. As such, the possibility that the existing building could be lost at some point in the future provides no justification for a new development that would be harmful for the reasons set out above.
19. Approval of the development would be directly contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP1, L1, L3, GSP1, GSP2, L1, L3 and HC1; Development Management policies DMC1, DMC3, DMC5 and DMC10 and the National Planning Policy Framework. A decision to refuse permission for the current application would uphold the adopted development plan and the landscape strategy and action plan. Furthermore, it would represent a position that demonstrates application of policy fairly and consistently and would demonstrate a commitment to the conservation of National Park landscapes in line with adopted plans and strategies.

### **Budget Implications**

20. There are no budget implications other than the resource cost of contesting an appeal, were Members minded to refuse the application and the applicant appeals against such a refusal. Officers advise that a refusal would be in line with its own development plan and national policy and that therefore an appeal would be highly unlikely to incur costs over and above the officer time, even in the event that the Authority lost the appeal.
21. It is not considered that a decision to approve this application would have any significant budget implications as the only costs arising would be officer time processing the decision notice.

### **Risk Assessment**

22. The main risk in this case is that proposed development would be likely to result in a significant harmful impact upon the valued characteristics of the National Park. In the absence of any clear and convincing overriding justification this is a type of development which could be replicated in similar circumstances.

### **Robustness of Provisional Reasons for Approval and Suggested Conditions**

23. The suggested reason for approval is that the development would conserve a building of heritage significance. For this reason to be robust then the Authority must be satisfied that the development would conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park and that the development will not undermine the core policies within the development plan.
24. As outlined above the imposition of planning conditions could not make the development acceptable. However should members be minded to approve this application, the following planning conditions are recommended:
- I. Statutory time limit for implementation.

- II. Development to be carried out in accordance with specified amended plans.
- III. Conversion of main two storey barn to be within the shell with no demolition and re-build.
- IV. Written scheme of investigation of a programme of historic building recording to be submitted and approved.
- V. Remove permitted development rights for alterations, extensions, solar pv panels, outbuildings, fences, gates, walls, satellite dishes.
- VI. New stonework for single storey element to be natural limestone coursed, layed and pointed to match the existing barn.
- VII. Hard landscaping scheme to be submitted and agreed.
- VIII. External lighting scheme to be submitted and agreed
- IX. No external meter boxes.
- X. Details of air source heat pump to be submitted and agreed.
- XI. Minor design details.

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## Conclusion

Experience has shown that by taking proper regard to the development plan, long term spatial objectives can be achieved for landscape, special qualities and sustainability, in furtherance of National Park purposes and duty. This proposal is directly contrary to the development plan and to the NPPF because it would result in harm to the special qualities of the National Park. Furthermore, the proposal would be directly contrary to the aims of our adopted Landscape Strategy, which states that changes to the appearance of either the building or its surroundings should be avoided, especially where these are not in keeping with the rural character of the landscape. Conversion to residential use would be particularly inappropriate in a region where settlement is strongly nucleated in small villages

The applicant's local credentials were referred to in the committee debate, however it must be emphasised again that this is not a proposal for a local needs affordable dwelling and the site could be sold on the open market to a person with no connection to the National Park. To make a departure from policies based on the applicant's personal circumstances would carry a significant risk to the Authority's reputation and undermine past and future decision making.

**The Planning Committee is respectfully urged to reconsider its previous position of being minded to approve the application. It is recommended that the application be REFUSED**