

10.FULL APPLICATION - FOR THE CONVERSION OF AN AGRICULTURAL BUILDING INTO A SINGLE DWELLING, AT HOPE FARM, ALSTONEFIELD (NP/SM/0823/0928, DH)

APPLICANT: MR & MRS HAMBLING

Summary

1. The application is for the conversion of redundant farm buildings to a single dwellinghouse.
2. The buildings the application pertains to are not historic or traditional in their massing and materials, nor are they considered to have any special architectural interest or be of vernacular merit.
3. The applicants have not demonstrated an eligible local need for new housing within the National Park. The information provided states that the dwelling would be ancillary to the farmhouse, however, the scale of the proposed dwelling is not justified and could not be seen as ancillary accommodation.
4. The application is recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

5. Hope Farm stands in open countryside off the south side of Hopedale Road, opposite the junction of Furlong Lane, approximately 680m to the south-west of Alstonefield, which is the nearest named settlement in policy DS1.
6. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity. Neither does the site lie within a designated conservation area, the nearest point of the Alstonefield Conservation Area is 266m to the north-east.
7. The site comprises two distinct yard areas, largely separated by a drystone wall. In the yard to the north, by the road, there is a holiday cottage, which is a conversion of a small traditional stone building, the farmhouse itself, and small stone outbuilding. In the yard area to the south there is a small range of more modern agricultural buildings, two profile sheeted buildings, small timber buildings, plus the building which it is proposed to convert. A pole barn and a lean-to off the larger of the portal frame buildings stand in the field to the west, to the rear of the yards. A further two fields extend the entire holding, including the yard areas, to a total of approximately 1.58 hectares (3.91 acres).
8. The building the application pertains to is a long, narrow single storey former cattle building and dairy which spans both yards, though mainly being in the southern yard. The building was clearly used for cattle housing, the concrete boskins, water bowls and feed troughs remain in place in the linear part.
9. The building appears to have been built over three stages, a red brick single storey building being the first stage. This was extended with approval gained in 1959, the extension was in concrete blockwork with a render finish; at some point a lean-to addition was added to the newer part, also rendered, with timber windows and a domestic door. All elements have profile sheet roofs.
10. The nearest neighbouring property is Hope Farm House, approximately 40m to the west of the building which is the subject of the application.

Proposal

11. The proposal is for the conversion of the single storey linear building, formerly an agricultural building, to a single dwelling.
12. Although the Design and Access Statement says that the dwelling would be for the parents of the occupiers of the farmhouse, the development description is not for ancillary accommodation.

RECOMMENDATION:

13. That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

- **The building is not historic or traditional in terms of its massing and materials, therefore there is no justification for conversion to provide a viable use to ensure its longevity.**
- **The applicant does not have an eligible local need for new housing within the National Park and the current application is therefore contrary to policy HC1(A) of the Core Strategy.**
- **In this instance, there are no exceptional circumstances or any other material planning consideration that would justify a departure from the Authority's adopted housing policies.**
- **By virtue of the proposed development's scale, it is considered that the proposal would not constitute an ancillary dwellinghouse. In the absence of a clear and robust justification for its size, it would not be subordinate to the farmhouse and would instead constitute a separate planning unit. It is therefore contrary to policy DMH5 and the Residential Annexes Supplementary Planning Document.**

Key Issues

14. The key issues are:

- Whether an exception to policy HC1 is justified; or
- Whether the proposal could be considered to be ancillary to the farmhouse; and
- Whether the proposals would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the site and its setting, or the wider landscape setting within which it sits; and
- Whether the proposals would harm the amenities of nearby neighbouring properties.

History

15. 1959 - A cow-house was granted by NP/LKR/559/2, this was the concrete black half of the building which is the subject of this application, the lean-to addition was not shown on the approved plans.
16. 1990 - The restoration of a disused farmhouse to a dwelling was granted subject to conditions by NP/SM/0590/075 – Condition 14 imposed an agricultural occupancy condition.
17. 2002 - The conversion of a small stone traditional building in the yard to a holiday cottage was granted subject to conditions under NP/SM/0702/041.
18. 2018 - Extensions to the farmhouse were refused under NP/SM/0818/0742, an appeal was dismissed, and a resubmission was made, NP/SM/1018/0968, for a

reduced scheme, which was granted.

19. 2023 – During the course of the application it has been established that the occupation of the farmhouse is in breach of condition 14 of NP/SM/0590/075. A Section 73 application for the removal of condition 14 (NP/SM/1023/1281) has been received.

Consultations

20. Staffordshire County Council (Highway Authority) – No highway objections subject to a condition requiring the site access to have a bound surface for a minimum of 5m.
21. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – No response to date.
22. Alstonefield Parish Council – No objections.
23. Natural England - No response to date.
24. PDNPA Ecology - No objections subject to recommended conditions.
25. PDNPA Built Environment - The building cannot be considered a non-designated heritage asset, and therefore capable of conversion under Core strategy policy HC1CI and development management policy DCM10.

Representations

26. During the publicity period, the Authority received 4 representations, all of which are supportive of the proposed development. The following reasons are given:
- *The conversion would rescue a deteriorating farm building from dereliction.*
 - *The applicants would be an asset to the village, and with their financial expertise, are willing to take on important roles in the community.*
 - *The change of use makes good use of the building and ensures it isn't left to fall into disrepair.*
 - *The added proposition of the dog boarding would be of benefit to the village.*
 - *It is an unobtrusive development providing parental support for a young family wishing to continue their professional careers whilst enjoying the benefits this location provides.*
 - *The conversion to a permanent residence would bring many benefits to the wider community.*

Main Policies

27. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, CC1, DS1, HC1 & L1
28. Relevant Local Plan policies: DMC3, DMC10 & DMH5
29. National Planning Policy Framework

Wider Policy Context

30. 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

- 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

31. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced a significant proportion of central government planning policy with immediate effect. A revised NPPF was published in July 2021. 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 policies in the Peak District National Park Development Management Policies document 2019. 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.
32. Paragraph 176 of the NPPF 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. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.*'
33. The NPPF is supportive of development which brings back into residential use empty housing, redundant or disused existing buildings. However, paragraph 80 states that planning policies and decisions should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:
- (a) meeting an essential need;
 - (b) ensuring the longevity of a heritage asset by allowing a viable use;
 - (c) the development would re-use redundant buildings and enhance its setting;
 - (d) the development would involve the subdivision of an existing residential building; or
 - (e) the design is of exceptional quality.

Peak District National Park Core Strategy

34. GSP1 & GSP2 - *Securing National Park Purposes and sustainable development & Enhancing the National Park.* These policies set out the broad strategy for achieving the National Park's objectives, and 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
35. GSP3 - *Development Management Principles.* GSP3 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.
36. CC1 – *Climate change mitigation and adaptation.* CC1 requires all development to make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources to achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions.
37. DS1 - *Development Strategy.* This sets out what forms of development are acceptable in principle within the National Park.

38. L1 - *Landscape character and valued characteristics*. L1 states that all 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.
39. HC1 – *New housing*. Policy HC1 states that provision will not be made for housing solely to meet an open market demand, and sets out the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside.

Local Plan Development Management Policies

40. DMC3 - *Siting, design, layout and landscaping*. DMC3 states that where development is acceptable in principle, it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is 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.
41. DMC10 – *Conversion of a heritage asset*. Under DMC10 (B) (ii) proposals under HC1C1 will only be permitted where, based on the evidence, the National Park Authority has identified the building as a non-designated heritage asset.
42. DMH5 – *Ancillary dwellings in the curtilage of existing dwellings*. DMH5 states that the conversion of an outbuilding within the curtilage of an existing dwelling to an ancillary dwelling use will be permitted provided that: (i) it would not result in an over-intensive use of the property, and inadequate standard of accommodation or amenity space, or create a planning need for over intensive development of the property at a later date through demand for further outbuildings; and (ii) the site can meet the parking and access requirements of the proposed development; and (iii) the new accommodation provided would remain within the curtilage of the main house, accessed via the same access route, sharing services and utilities, and remain under the control of the occupier of the main dwelling.

Assessment

Principle of the development

43. Core Strategy policy DS1 (C) states that the conversion or change of use, preferably by the re-use of traditional buildings, to housing, community facilities or business use in the countryside outside the Natural Zone is acceptable in principle.
44. Policy HC1 sets out the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside. DMC10 permits the conversion of non-listed buildings to dwellinghouses in accordance with HC1 in principle, but only where they have been demonstrated to be non-designated heritage assets.
45. In this instance, the buildings which are proposed for conversion are not traditional, or of any architectural merit.
46. Policy DMH5 allows for the conversion of outbuildings to ancillary accommodation in principle.

Whether the proposal meets the criteria for new housing

47. The development description is for, “Conversion of an agricultural building into a single dwelling” Therefore the first assessment is whether the existing building meets the

criteria set out in policy HC1 as the exceptional circumstances where new housing can be accepted in open countryside.

48. The Design and Access Statement says that the dwelling would be for the parents of the owner of the farm who currently live in the south of England. Further information which was requested, states that the proposed occupiers want to retire and move closer to their daughter and her family. It adds that the applicant currently runs a dog breeding, boarding, day care and walking service, and would like to continue this on a smaller scale. It should be noted that the proposal is for the conversion of the building to a dwelling, a new business in open countryside is not part of this application. However, from this information, it can be concluded that the proposed dwelling would not address eligible local needs, nor is it for aged persons' assisted accommodation, as required by HC1 (A). Neither would the dwelling be a provision for key workers in agriculture, forestry or other rural enterprises, as set out in HC1 (B).
49. The final exceptional circumstance set out in HC1(C) is where it is required in order to achieve conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings, or conservation or enhancements in settlements. As noted, the site is not within the boundaries of a named settlement.
50. Paragraph 3.30 of the Local Plan (supporting text to Policy DMC3) states that, "*A traditional building is defined as a property built prior to 1919 with solid walls constructed of moisture permeable materials. In the National Park, traditional buildings usually have pitched roofs covered in slate or other natural roofing material, typically stone.*"
51. The building proposed for conversion has been assessed by the Authority's Conservation Officer, and the older part is thought to date from the 1930's, the roof is profile sheet. The newer part was granted planning permission in 1959, the roof is also profile sheet. The lean-to addition to the newer part does not appear to have had the benefit of planning permission, but is of the same materials as the newer part of the building. Therefore, no part of the building can be considered to be traditional or a valued vernacular building. Conservation Officers have also confirmed that the building cannot be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset for the purposes of policies HC1 and DMC10.
52. Therefore, it is concluded that the proposal is contrary to Core Strategy policy HC1, and in any event, fails to meet the requirements of Development Management policy DMC10.

Whether the proposal meets the criteria for an ancillary dwelling

53. The Authority's Supplementary Planning Document on Residential Annexes contains criteria for ancillary accommodation and states at paragraph 5.2 that in determining an application for ancillary residential accommodation the Authority will expect the proposed to, amongst other things:
 - be subordinate in scale to the main dwelling
 - be located within the residential curtilage or building group associated with the main house
 - have a functional connection/degree of dependence on the main house (e.g. the occupant should be a dependent relative of the residents of the house, a carer, or be employed at the main house as an au pair, servant, nanny etc)
 - contain a level and scale of accommodation that can be justified for its intended occupants
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54. Due to the location of the building in the southern yard, albeit a small part is close to the farmhouse, it is debatable whether it can be considered to be in the curtilage of the existing dwelling.
55. Although the intended occupants would provide baby-sitting duties for the occupiers of the farmhouse, there would not appear to be a functional connection or degree of dependence on the main dwelling.
56. The scale of the proposed accommodation is excessive having two en-suite bedrooms, a lounge, a substantial kitchen/diner, a utility, and a 'dog room'
57. On the basis of the above, it is concluded that the proposed dwelling would not represent accommodation ancillary to the main dwellinghouse as it fails to comply with the criteria set out above.
58. As such, primarily by virtue of the scale of the proposed residential accommodation provided by the proposal, and in the absence of adequate justification, the proposal fails to comply with the requirements of DMH5 and would not represent accommodation ancillary to the house on site.

Visual Impacts

59. The guiding principle behind the design of any conversion is that the character of the original building should be retained and conserved for the future. The Authority has a detailed design guide on conversions. It states that conversion is often the only feasible way of securing a viable future for some buildings. The building in question must be of sufficient historic or architectural merit to warrant conversion to a new use, and the design must be appropriate.
60. As noted, in this instance the existing building is not considered to be of historic or architectural merit.
61. The conversion is within the shell of the existing building and utilises existing openings. The only new openings proposed are three rooflights, however, the scheme alters the proportions of some of the existing openings, albeit where there is evidence that some may have been doors which are now blocked up.
62. The detailed treatment includes some overly domestic features. Therefore, the proposed scheme fails to preserve the character and appearance of this simple, functional building.

Amenity Impacts

63. The intervening distance between the site and the nearest neighbouring property other than the farmhouse is such that there would be no neighbourliness concerns.
64. The site is large enough that there would be no concerns regarding parking provision, amenity space etcetera.

Sustainability

65. A statement was provided with the application, and the proposals include the provision of solar panels. Had the conversion been acceptable in principle, it is considered that it would comply with the requirements of CC1.

Conclusion

66. The building cannot be considered a non-designated heritage asset, and therefore capable of conversion; nor is it of sufficient architectural merit to justify its conversion to provide a viable use, thereby ensuring its longevity.
67. The applicant has not demonstrated any eligible local need or functional need for housing in this location.
68. In terms of scale, the proposal far exceeds that which could be considered to be ancillary to the farmhouse at Hope Farm.
69. As such, it is concluded that the proposal is contrary to the Core Strategy Policy HC1 and national planning policy.

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

Report Author and Job Title

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