

13. FULL APPLICATION – CONVERSION OF OUTFARM TO DWELLING AT HILLCREST BARN, PITS LANE, PARWICH (NP/DDD/0224/0143) (RD)

APPLICANT: MR TOM SLATER

Summary

1. The application seeks planning permission for the conversion of a traditional agricultural building to an open market dwelling at Hillcrest Barn, Pits Lane, Parwich.
2. The application proposes the conversion of the existing outfarm and the creation of a new, defined residential curtilage to more closely reflect the outfarm's original yard area.
3. The report concludes that the proposed conversion would cause significant harm to the landscape on account of the buildings isolated location in open countryside.
4. The application is recommended for refusal.

Site and Surroundings

5. The application relates to a redundant agricultural building located in a field some 300m due south of Parwich.
6. The building lies in an elevated position within an open and undomesticated agricultural landscape.
7. The building is mostly two-storey in height but contains a part one and a half storey section. The building is of limestone construction with a plain clay tile roof.
8. Access is via a rough track from Pitts Lane. There are public footpaths through nearby fields.
9. There are no nearby residential properties within 300m of the site.

Proposal

10. The application proposes the conversion of the existing outfarm and the creation of a new, defined residential curtilage.
11. Parking would be provided for two vehicles.

RECOMMENDATION:

12. **That the application is REFUSED for the following reason:**

The proposal development would harm the significance of the barn which is a non-designated heritage, its setting and surrounding landscape contrary to Core Strategy policies GSP3, L1, L3 and HC1, Development Management policies DMC3, DMC5 and DMC10, the Conservation of Historic Building Supplementary Planning Document and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Key Issues

13. The principle of the conversion to an open market dwelling; the impact upon character, appearance and significance of heritage asset; the impact upon landscape character; the impact upon residential amenities; the impact upon protected species, the impact upon highway safety and climate change mitigation.

History

14. April 2022 – NP/GDO/0322/0439: GDO Notification - Alteration of an existing road or highway – Application extended.
15. July 2008 – 2079230: Appeal against refusal of NP/DDD/1107/1036 – Appeal dismissed
16. February 2008 – NP/DDD/1107/1036: Conversion of barn to form local needs dwelling – Refused
17. December 2006 – 2032172: Appeal against non-determination of NP/DDD/0306/0237 – Withdrawn
18. May 2006 – NP/DDD/0306/0237: Conversion of barn to one residential unit for occupation by the applicants or other related farm worker – Withdrawn

Consultations

19. PDNPA Archaeology – This application triggered an archaeology consultation because the site and building are recorded in the Derbyshire HER and PDNPA HBSMR. I have reviewed the application, your photos and the site history, and based on the amount of recent change to building I do not have any specific comments to make, and recommend that you follow to the principles and guidance of conversions SPD.
20. Highway Authority (Derbyshire County Council) – No objections
21. Parwich Parish Council – Support the application. *A concern was raised about the possible risk of an increase in light pollution. Resolved: To support this application on the grounds that it would be beneficial to both the farming economy and housing stock in the village. The conversion represented a sympathetic treatment of a historic asset and the high standard of the design presentation was appreciated. Passed by three votes to one.*

Representations

22. Two letters of representation have been received by the Authority.
23. One of support on the grounds that the conversion of disused farm buildings has National Planning Framework support outside of National Parks, and that, in the view of the representation, that this should be the case with this application.
24. The second letter raises an objection from the Ramblers Derbyshire Dales Group, providing that Parwich FP 29 remains unaffected at all times, that consideration is given to the safety of public users of the right of way, and advising that any encroachment of the path would need consultation from the DCC Rights of Way Team.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

25. 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. These 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 park authorities 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.
26. In the National Park, the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and the 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.
27. Para 182 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to conserving 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 landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.

Main Development Plan Policies

Core Strategy

28. 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 conservation and enhancement of the National Park's landscape and its natural and heritage assets.
29. GSP3 sets out development management principles and 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.
30. Policy DS1 details the development strategy for the National Park, and is permissive of householder development in principle.
31. L1 identifies that 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.
32. 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.
33. Policy HC1 says that provision will not be made for housing solely to meet open market demand. New housing can be accepted where it would meet eligible local need for affordable housing, provides for key rural workers or
C. In accordance with core policies GSP1 and GSP2:

- it is required in order to achieve conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings; or
- it is required in order to achieve conservation or enhancement in settlements listed in core policy DS1.

34. 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.

Development Management Policies

35. 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.

36. 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. 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.

Supplementary Planning Documents

40. Peak District National Park Authority Design Guide (2007): The Design Guide states that, when considering a conversion, the building in question should be of sufficient historic or architectural merit to warrant its conversion. Factors such as location, size and character of the building and its means of access will all be assessed. The guiding principle behind the design of any conversion should be that the character of the original building and its setting should be respected and retained.

41. Peak District National Park Conversion of Traditional Buildings SPD (2022): The SPD provides detailed guidance on the principles to be considered when proposing the conversion of traditional buildings. This is set out as 6 key principles:
- a. Understanding the building and its setting
 - b. Working with the existing form and character
 - c. Following a conservation approach
 - d. Creating responsive new design
 - e. Using appropriate materials and detailing.
 - f. Conserving and enhancing the setting.

Assessment

Principle of the development

42. Core Strategy policy DS1 (the development strategy) allows in principle the conversion of buildings for housing in countryside outside of the natural zone, preferably by re-use of traditional buildings. The proposal therefore accords with policy DS1. Core Strategy policy HC1 part C allows for the creation of open market housing if *“it is required in order to achieve conservation and/or enhancement of valued vernacular or listed buildings”*.

43. Paragraph 12.18 of the Core Strategy provides context on policy HC1 part C:

“Occasionally, new housing (whether newly built or from re-use of an existing building) may be the best way to achieve conservation and enhancement (for example of a valued building) or the treatment of a despoiled site. Sometimes this requires the impetus provided by open market values, but wherever possible and financially viable such developments should add to the stock of affordable housing, either on the site itself or elsewhere in the National Park. It is accepted that for small schemes capable of providing only one dwelling (whether new-build or changing the use of a building such as a barn) this is unlikely to be viable.”

44. The barn is a traditional farm building of vernacular design and appearance, a historic element of a historic farmstead which appears on the Derbyshire Historic Environment Record and is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset of local significance.
45. Therefore the conversion of the building to one market dwelling would in principle be in accordance with policies DS1 and HC1. The key issue therefore is the impact of the proposed development upon the barn, its setting and the and the landscape. proposed development has to conserve and enhance the heritage asset and its setting.

Design

46. The outfarm is constructed in rubble limestone with gritstone detailing around doors and windows. Some elevations of the barn have tooled gritstone quoins. The roof is clad in Staffordshire blue clay tiles. At present, door and window openings are boarded in ply. The barn is effectively split into two separate sections to accommodate the site topography – a lower section traditionally used for cattle, and a slightly higher level, single bay loose box element with first floor door openings into a hay loft.
47. The building’s main elevation faces south east and features three ground floor door openings, plus a ground floor pitching hole, and a first floor door opening. All of these openings have gritstone lintels, and the doors have gritstone quoins. All rainwater goods have recently been renewed on new rise and fall brackets.

48. The north east facing gable elevation has a first floor pitching hole with untooled gritstone sill and lintel and tooled gritstone quoins. The north west facing elevation is largely blank aside from a first floor door opening into the hay loft in the building's higher section with tooled gritstone sill, lintel and quoins.
49. The south west facing gable has a first floor pitching hole to mirror that in the opposite gable end. This pitching hole has no quoins but plain gritstone sill, lintel and jambs. This gable elevation has some projecting stones. A wooden owl box has been added just under the roof apex.
50. Proposals largely work within the shell of the existing building utilising available openings. New glazing would be introduced to existing openings and new timber doors and shutters. Four new rooflights would be installed, two to each roof slope.
51. The proposed design of the conversion broadly accords with relevant policy and the Conversion of historic buildings SPD.

Impact upon Landscape Character

52. The barn occupies a prominent and elevated valley location in an open, undomesticated and attractive agricultural landscape. The site is located outside the village of Parwich and stands well adrift from any other built development including farm buildings. The unpretentious utilitarian character of the existing stone building is an intrinsic part of a largely natural and somewhat remote landscape.
53. During a previous appeal decision (2079230) the Inspector considered the building to be *'of significant value to the character of the countryside'*.
54. In comparison to other permitted schemes which are either set in a village or farm context, or even those beside roadside walls this development would stand in an isolated and highly visible location where the readability of the traditional building in its historic landscape setting would be harmed leading to a loss of a key special quality of this National Park. The Development Management Policies document echoes guidance from our adopted Landscape Strategy which states at para 3.103 that *"The traditional field barns of the Peak District represent a valued feature of the historic landscape and where these are more remote from existing building groups and roadside walls they represent the biggest challenge for conversion schemes. This is because when they lie deep in historic field systems, the buildings and setting are more susceptible to harmful change and loss of character."*
55. The existing barn has a robust form and a clear functional relationship with the surrounding agricultural use. The guiding principle behind any conversion must be that it conserves the building and looks like a converted barn rather than a new dwelling, which remains appropriate to its landscape setting.
56. Hillcrest Barn is an isolated Farm building in open countryside, located some distance from the built up part of the settlement of Parwich and from other dwellings and buildings. The conversion of which to a dwelling would include the introduction of domestic elements into the landscape, such as bin stores, cars, garden furniture, washing lines, lighting/security measures etc.
57. The proposed site plan includes the creation of a domestic curtilage, including a meadow lawn, a large area of hard landscaped driveway, parking and turning space for two cars, all enclosed by a traditional style stone wall. These alterations to the site would result in significant domestication of the land which would be conspicuous in what is a generally open and uninhabited landscape.

58. Given the hillside location the garden area would be visible, in part, from the public footpaths nearby and beyond, and the presence of any vehicles and domestic paraphernalia / lighting would be apparent. Furthermore, this is a landscape where drystone walls are scarce, and adding the vertical elements to the landscape of drystone walls and steps increases the visual impact of the building.
59. The D&AS states ‘The proposals to convert the outfarm into a dwelling will have little impact on the significance of the building itself as a local landscape feature, and have the potential to offer some enhancement.’ As described above, this is considered unlikely to be the case.
60. The possible removal of permitted development rights would not adequately restrict the domestication of the site as many changes can occur outside of planning control.
61. In determining the previous appeal the Inspector concluded that *“given its hillside location the garden area would be visible, in part, from the public footpaths nearby and beyond, and the presence of any vehicles and domestic paraphernalia would be apparent. I also note that the Appellants indicate that they have no intention to over domesticate this curtilage area and for it to remain primarily functional, but I remain concerned that future occupiers of the appeal property may wish to create a garden area. I am, therefore, concerned that the domestication of this area could create a manicured effect, including the reconstructed dry stone wall, presenting a stark contrast to the agricultural landscape beyond. To my mind this would harm the character and appearance of the locality.”*
62. In view of the remote position of the barn, it is considered that the alterations to the building and its surroundings would detract from the relationship between the building and its landscape setting. The domestication of the site would irreversibly elevate the appearance of the building from a simple vernacular barn sitting ‘quietly’ in the landscape into a prominent residential dwelling in the open countryside. It would be highly visible from the nearby public footpaths.
63. The previous Inspectors decision is a material consideration. There has been no change in the character of the building or its setting within the landscape. The Inspectors conclusions in regard to the impact of the scheme therefore should be given significant weight.
64. The proposed curtilage in this visible hillside location would be unduly obtrusive and as such would detrimentally affect the character of the countryside. This would be contrary to Core Strategy Policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, L3, HC1 and Development Management Policies DMC3, DMC5, DMC10.

Impact upon Residential Amenities

65. Outlook, amenity, privacy and daylight are fundamental considerations when altering or extending a property. This is to ensure that habitable rooms achieve a satisfactory level of outlook and natural daylight, there is adequate privacy and outdoor private amenity space and that no overbearing or harmful overshadowing of neighbouring property results.
66. The nearest residential properties are approximately 300m away in the settlement area of Parwich.

67. Due to the intervening distances from these neighbouring properties, in this case, it is considered the amenity of these dwellings or any other dwellings in the locality would not be unduly compromised by the development.
68. Consequently, the proposal accords with policies GSP3 & DMC3 in respect of the impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Impact upon Highway Safety

69. The Highway Authority has raised no objection to the proposal. The vehicular access to the proposed dwelling would be along a hard-core surfaced single track, which has a steep gradient in parts.
70. It is not considered that the proposal would generate a considerable amount of additional traffic which would require the significant upgrading of the track so as to require changes to the gradient or appearance.
71. Therefore, the proposal would not conflict with Policies DMT3 and DMT8.
72. The access is longstanding but has in recent years been widened and improved. The highway authority does note that the visibility from the access onto the highway is restricted. Therefore, a condition requiring visibility from the access to be maximised in accordance with a plan submitted to and approved, is considered to be reasonable and necessary in this instance.
73. Two off road parking spaces to serve the proposed dwelling and a space to turn within the curtilage of the dwelling to allow vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear, are to be provided.
74. The proposal is in accordance with policy DMT3.

Climate Change Mitigation

75. Policy CC1 requires that new development makes the most efficient and sustainable use of land, building and natural resources and achieves the highest possible standards of carbon reductions and water efficiency.
76. A comprehensive sustainability statement has been submitted in support of this application outlining, the proposals intentions to maximise benefits from natural ventilation and reduce excess solar gains in the summer, as well as noting high levels of thermal insulation, low energy light fittings and the use of natural daylight and natural ventilation will help to reduce the energy usage.
77. With regard to the above, the proposals are considered acceptable in meeting the climate change mitigation and adaption requirements of policy CC1 in these respects.

Conclusion

78. In view of the remote position of the barn, it is considered that the alterations to the building and its surroundings would detract from the relationship between the building and its landscape setting. The domestication of the site would irreversibly elevate the appearance of the building from a simple vernacular barn sitting 'quietly' in the landscape into a prominent residential dwelling in the open countryside.
79. The proposals would be contrary to Core Strategy Policies GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, L1, L3, HC1 and Development Management Policies DMC3, DMC5, DMC10.

80. There would be no residential amenity or highways issues arising from the proposed scheme.

81. The proposals are recommended for refusal on landscape impact resulting from the domestication of the site.

Human Rights

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

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

83. Nil

84. Report Author: Rachael Doyle – Assistant Planner: South Area.