

8. FULL APPLICATION – CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT BUILDING TO A DEPENDENT RELATIVE UNIT AT LOXLEY PARK FARM, DOUSE LANE, ONECOTE (NP/SM/0124/0026/RD)

APPLICANT: MR AND MRS RICH STOKES

Summary

1. The application proposes conversion of an existing barn to a residential annexe, which is adjacent to the main farm house.
2. The barn is closely associated with the established farmhouse, and the conversion would create no separate address, access, garden area, parking, post box, or utility meters. It therefore, would not indicate a separate dwelling. The conversion would work within the existing shell of the building, with no proposed extensions or additions to the building. Existing openings have been utilised to their full extent, with the only new openings proposed being two heritage conservation rooflights inserted into the rear roof slope.
3. Officers have negotiated an amended scheme which would retain the historic character and appearance of the building, whilst proposing a viable and beneficial use, which in turn would contribute to the setting of the building in the wider landscape.
4. The proposed scheme is considered to comply with relevant policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

Site and Surroundings

5. Loxley Park Farm stands off the south side of Douse Lane, approximately 485m to the north-west of Onecote, which is not a named settlement in policy DS1. The nearest point of the designated conservation area is 326m to the south-east of the farmstead. There are no listed buildings on the site, the nearest listed building to the site being the barn at Lane Head Farm, 150m to the west. A public right of way runs in a north to south direction through the farmstead.
6. The site comprises a holding of approximately 25 acres, the farmhouse, and a range of modern portal frame agricultural buildings to the north-west. The subject of the application is the eastern half of an existing portal frame agricultural building within the group.
7. The nearest neighbouring property is Lane Head Farm, 100m to the west, Loxley Cottage 50m to the north-east, and Brownlow End Farm on the opposite side of Douse Lane.

Proposals

8. This application is for the conversion of an existing barn into an annexe, which is adjacent to the main farmhouse, which is an established C3 dwelling.
9. The use of the annexe would be ancillary to the main dwelling with strong links between them. The proposed occupants of the annexe would be the applicants' mother and her partner, who currently all live in the farmhouse.
10. There would be no separate, address, access, garden area, parking, post box, or utility meters, it therefore, does not indicate a separate dwelling.

11. The proposed converted annexe would consist of a two-storey barn, providing a ground floor dining kitchen, with a staircase access to a bedroom, the attached single storey barn extension would be converted into a lounge, with access via steps down to the existing path to the farmhouse. This would also have a new roof to match the pitch and tiles of the existing barn.
12. The ground floor windows would be replaced with hopper style timber windows, with planked barn doors to front and side entrances, the existing pitching hole shutter would also be replaced with a planked shutter, the pitching hole would have a single panel timber top hung escape window. The access door into the dining kitchen would have a level threshold.

RECOMMENDATION:

13. **That the application be APPROVED subject to the following conditions:**
 1. **Statutory time limit**
 2. **In accordance with amended plans**
 3. **Restrict occupancy of the annex ancillary to the existing dwelling house and retained within a single planning unit.**
 4. **Design and materials**
 5. **Flu pipe to be painted a dark recessive colour and maintained**
 6. **Removal of permitted development rights for alterations, extensions walls, fences and other means of enclosure.**
 7. **Bird and bat mitigation and enhancement plan to be implemented in accordance with details to be submitted and approved by the Authority.**
 8. **No works to be undertaken during bird breeding season (March-August inclusive) unless preceded by a nesting bird check by an ecologist.**

Key Issues

- The principle of development
- The potential impact on the character and appearance of the building
- The privacy and amenity of neighbouring dwellings
- Highway safety

History

February 2023 – NP/GDO/0223/0188: GDO Notification - Notification under Class R of Permitted Development - Change of use from agricultural use to Class E Workshop – Prior Approval not Required

August 2008 – NP/SM/0608/0544: Erection of roof over building – Granted Conditionally

Consultations

14. Highway Authority – No response at time of writing
15. District Council – No response at time of writing

16. Parish Council – Objects for the following reasons:

- *The site, in particular area around the farmhouse, has been extended considerably over the last 18 years. This can be seen from Google Earth images for 2006, 2013 and 2022;*
- *The proposed development is for all practical purposes the creation of a new stand-alone dwelling;*
- *The building in question is known locally as the old school and is not just a redundant agricultural building;*
- *The proposed development would change the profile of the structure;*
- *The location of the building and its relationship with the main farmhouse is not clear from the information available on the planning portal;*
- *A bat survey should be conducted to ensure that there is no disturbance.*

The council is not sure of the criteria for a “dependant relative” or of the relevance to a planning application. The council understands that the proposed occupants are neither elderly nor infirm.

For the above reasons the council cannot support this application in its current form.

17. PDNPA Ecologist – Three surveys were undertaken within relevant guidelines with no bats observed emerging. Given this, I am satisfied with the submitted information, but given the high potential of the site for bats and given a couple of bat droppings were found would like to ensure the loss of habitat for bats and birds is mitigated for and to provide net gains for biodiversity in line with NPPF (2023). Therefore, recommend a bird and bat mitigation and enhancement plan to be submitted to the PDNPA for approval.

18. PDNPA Archaeologist – *Given the size and nature of this building I am not going to offer any detailed heritage comments, and leave it to be assessed by you in relation to the conversions guidance and determine in line with policy, other than to say that the half boarded, half window treatment to the doorway openings is not great visually for the character of the building and the elevations. Could it be better to keep them either full boarded or glazed with door retained externally to be closed when building/rooms not in use?*

Representations

19. No letters of representation have been received by the Authority.

Main Policies

20. Relevant Core Strategy policies: GSP1, GSP2, GSP3, DS1, L3, CC1

21. Relevant Local Plan policies: DMC3, DMC5, DMC10, DMT3, DMT8, DMH5 and DMH8

National Planning Policy Framework

22. 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 Local Plan and the NPPF.

23. 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.’
24. Paragraph 200 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. It notes that 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. It advises that as a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

Core Strategy

25. 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.
26. 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.
27. DS1 - *Development Strategy*. States that recreation and tourism development is acceptable in principle in open countryside.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. CC1 - *Climate change mitigation and adaption*. Sets out that development must make the most efficient and sustainable use of land, buildings and natural resources. Development must also achieve the highest possible standards of carbon reductions.

Development Management Policies

31. 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.

32. 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.
33. 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.
34. 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.
35. 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.
36. DMH5 - *Ancillary dwellings in the curtilages of existing dwellings by conversion or new build* states that the conversion of an outbuilding close to a dwelling, to ancillary dwelling use will be permitted provided that:
- (i) it would not result in an over-intensive use of the property, an 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
37. DMH8 - *New outbuildings and alterations and extensions to existing outbuildings in the curtilage of dwelling houses* states that alterations and extensions to existing outbuildings will be permitted provided changes to the mass, form, and appearance of the existing building conserves or enhances the immediate dwelling and curtilage, any valued characteristics of the adjacent built environment and/or the landscape, including Listed Building status and setting, Conservation Area character, important open space, valued landscape character.

Assessment

Principle of Development

38. The provision of ancillary accommodation and outbuildings is supported by planning policy in principle, through both conversion and new build. The proposed conversion of the existing barn to residential accommodation would result in a modest ancillary annexe. The barn would be occupied by family members and remain subordinate to the main

building, would not have a separate access, garden area, parking or utilities, and therefore would not amount to a separate dwelling.

39. The proposal therefore complies with planning policy in principle. If permission were granted an occupancy condition would be recommended to ensure that the development remains ancillary to the existing dwelling.
40. Development Management Policy DMH5 outlines the criteria ancillary residential accommodation development must meet in order for it to be acceptable. Such criteria include the location and scale of the development, access to it, the ownership of the property and its shared utilities. It must conserve and enhance the existing building/building group, and not have a detrimental impact on valued landscape, or any cultural heritage. Development must also comply with adopted design guidance, maintain adequate parking and not negatively impact the amenity of any neighbouring property.
41. The building is known locally as 'The Old School House'. For clarity, this is not considered relevant to the application. Its previous use is contended due to a lack of support from historic mapping, records and local memory. In any case, the barn as existing, is a small agricultural building, which has fallen into disuse, located within an active farm complex. Officers consider that the building would benefit from renewed use and that the application presents an opportunity for conservation and enhancement of the vacant building.

Design and Impact of alterations on Heritage Significance

42. Policy DMC10 states that, 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.
43. The proposed annex would consist of a two-storey barn, providing a ground floor kitchen/dining area, with staircase access to a bedroom. The attached single storey barn extension would be converted to a lounge, with access via steps down to the existing path to the farm house. This would have a new roof to match the pitch and tiles of the existing barn.
44. This layout would be achieved with minimal alterations to the building. The plan layout, as existing, contains one sub-division at ground floor level, which the development proposes to remove. This wall is of modern timber construction and holding no inherent value to the building.
45. No new openings are proposed in the walls of the building. Three of the four windows would remain largely the same, to be repaired and replaced with hopper style timber windows. This would not impact the aesthetic value of the building, and would be considered a minor enhancement with regard to maintenance. A previously blocked up existing pitching hole would be re-opened with a glazed unit and vertical planked hinged shutter. The Authority's adopted guidance given in the Conversion of Historic Buildings SPD states that '*Original openings that have been blocked up in the past should be re-used in preference to the creation of new openings. If they have been blocked up in an unsympathetic manner or using inappropriate materials, an enhancement can be gained by reopening them.*' This alteration is therefore welcomed.
46. A window on the end elevation would be altered to accommodate a planked barn door with guarded steps to ground level. This would be the only change to external openings and utilises an existing one rather than proposing a new one. This is in line with Policies DMC5, DMC10 and the Authority's guidance on conversion of historic building SPD,

which requires that the proportions of the existing layout are followed, respecting the existing distribution of openings. The historic solid to void ratio of the building would be maintained.

47. Two roof lights would be installed in the rear elevation roof slope. These would not be visible from within the farmstead or street scene and are considered to be minimal and therefore acceptable alterations to the building.
48. The original submitted design proposed two half boarded, half window treatment to the doorways on the front elevation. This was considered visually inappropriate for the character of the building. Amended plans have since been submitted which show the addition of vertically planked timber doors adjoined to these openings, to remain closed when the building is not in use, in line with advice from the Authority's Archaeologist.
49. All replacement doors and windows would be constructed in timber, utilizing existing stone cills. Windows and doors would be obtained from a heritage range, following a specification which is typical of a heritage hopper window. This would replicate the traditional style of the barn and be considered an enhancement to the current condition of the fenestration on the barn.
50. The existing sheeted roof would be replaced with Staffordshire blue clay tiles to match those on the existing attached conversion.
51. The conversion would see the introduction of a new double skin flue pipe, this would be stainless steel, necessary for the wood burning stove and painted matt black externally. It would be necessary for this recessive colour to be maintained.
52. Overall, it is considered that the proposed works would lead to an enhancement to the appearance of the building and conserve its long-term future.
53. In conclusion the proposed scheme would represent a minor enhancement to the appearance of the barn, and therefore its landscape setting, in accordance with policies L1, L3, DMR3 and DMC10.

Amenity Impacts

54. The relationship with the host property would not give rise to any amenity concerns given that the use of the converted barn would be for residential annexe use only and occupied by a family member of the parent dwelling occupants.
55. The nearest neighbouring properties are Loxley Cottage, approximately 50m to the north east of the development building, and Brownlow End Farm, approximately 50m to the north of the development building, on the opposite side of the highway.
56. In this case, due to the intervening distances from these neighbouring properties, it is considered the amenity of these dwellings or any other dwellings in the locality would not be significantly harmed by the development. Consequently, the proposal accords with policies GSP3 & DMC3 in respect of the impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Highway impacts

57. In the context of the current use of the site, where all relevant parties currently reside, the proposed use would not result in any intensification of use to give to highway safety or amenity concerns.

58. Space for the parking vehicles would be unaffected by the proposals.
59. Site access would also remain unchanged, and the development would not result in a significant intensification of use on the site that would result in any highway impacts.
60. No special access arrangements would be required. The proposal is confined to a private farm complex and therefore no provision has been made for any disabled or public access. No additional parking is required in respect of the proposed works.
61. The highway impacts arising from the development are therefore considered to be acceptable.

Ecology

62. A bat survey report by Eco 360 Ltd (August 2022) has been submitted. A preliminary roost assessment was completed on the 19th March 2024. Building 1 (B1) was found to have high potential for bats to roost and low potential to support nesting birds. Building 2 (B2) was found to have high potential for bats to roost and is confirmed to support nesting birds. Subsequent activity surveys (3x) were carried out in May and June 2024.
63. All surveys have been undertaken in line with the relevant guidelines. An appropriate impact assessment has been undertaken along with details for appropriate mitigation/compensatory methods for all surveyed species/habitats subject to a single comment raised by PDNPA Ecology.
64. *The report states that no bat droppings were found. However, Plate 4 appears to show a bat dropping, although the photograph is entitled A photograph of the stripped roof on the western aspect. Additional commentary is required regarding this.*
65. Response to this query has been provided.
66. *The upper level had heavy cobwebbing throughout with multiple active spiders with butterfly and moth remains caught in the webs. Two individual droppings were identified as potential bat droppings, these were ruled out as being rodent droppings as they were easily crushed showing the invertebrate remains. Only two droppings were found.*
67. This is considered to sufficiently address the concern.
68. The enhancement of the site is welcomed. Suitable ecological enhancement measures for the loss of any 'potential' roost or nesting features should be incorporated into any development works at the site, such as incorporating raised roof tiles, to allow bats to roost/shelter within the roof.
69. To compensate for the loss of habitat for birds and to provide net gains for biodiversity in line with NPPF (2023), a bird and bat mitigation and enhancement plan to be submitted to the PDNPA for approval. The plan will incorporate recommendations detailed within the Bat survey report by Eco 360 (2024) along with recommendations above to incorporate existing features and show precise location and type of feature (bearing in mind that barn swallows prefer to nest in covered structures).
70. Given the presence of breeding birds, no works to be undertaken during bird breeding season (March-August inclusive) unless preceded by a nesting bird check by an ecologist.

Climate Change Mitigation

71. 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.
72. The application contained a bullet pointed list of areas where environment efficiency would be improved. These would be as follows;
- Using energy more efficiently
 - A rated white goods will be specified for the annexe
 - 100% LED lighting
 - Control mains water use by specifying user units as follows
 - Shower 10 l/min
 - Bath 185 litres capacity
 - Basin taps 6 l/min
 - Sink taps 8 l/min
 - Dishwasher 1.25 l/place setting
 - Washing machine 8.17 l/kilogram
 - WC 6/4 litre for dual flush
 - WC 4.5 litre for single flush
 - Surface water
 - Use water butts where possible
73. Given the scale of the development, these are considered sufficient to comply with Policy CC1.

Conclusion

74. The proposed scheme would help retain the historic character and appearance of the building, whilst proposing a viable and beneficial use, which in turn would contribute to the setting of the building in the wider landscape. Moreover, there would be no adverse impact on any nearby residential amenity.
75. Consequently, the application is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development, in accordance with relevant policies. In the absence of any further material considerations the application is recommended for approval

Human Rights

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

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

77. Nil
78. Report Author: Rachael Doyle, South Area Assistant Planner