

## CONVERSION AND/OR CHANGE OF USE OF BUILDINGS IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

- 3.47 In Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 7(February 1997) the government sets out its advice on the re-use and adaptation of rural buildings. In this guidance the Government is seeking to protect the open countryside from development yet release opportunities for economic development to boost and sustain the economy in rural areas.
- 3.48 In this Local Plan the open countryside policies for residential and industrial/commercial development set out the basic policies seeking to encourage commercial uses whilst restricting residential development in the open countryside.
- 3.49 Changes in agricultural practices and the need to produce less foodstuffs from farms will have serious effect on the economy of rural areas where job losses will occur. The District Council supports the Government in creating opportunities for the replacement of lost jobs and economic activity by allowing the re-use of rural buildings for uses suitable to their size, nature and location.
- 3.50 The following policies are designed to ensure that the character of the traditional buildings are retained and that development does not harm the countryside in terms of its general nature and appearance.
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### POLICY EN19

**PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR THE CONVERSION OR THE ADAPTATION OF RURAL BUILDINGS PROVIDED THAT:**

- A THEY ARE OF PERMANENT AND SUBSTANTIAL CONSTRUCTION AND ARE IN A SOUND CONDITION.**
- B THEY ARE PHYSICALLY CAPABLE OF CONVERSION WITHOUT MAJOR REPAIRS OR ALTERATIONS TO THEIR EXISTING STRUCTURES AND IN THE CASE OF RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS, WITHOUT EXTENSIVE EXTENSION AND BE CAPABLE OF COMPLYING WITH THE BUILDING REGULATIONS WITHOUT MAJOR ALTERATIONS OR OTHER MAJOR WORKS.**
- C THEIR FORM, BULK AND GENERAL DESIGN ARE IN KEEPING WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS**
- D A STRUCTURAL SURVEY RELATING TO THE CONDITION OF THE BUILDINGS IS SUBMITTED WITH THE APPLICATION.**
- E ACCESS TO THE SITE IS OF A SAFE STANDARD WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE AREA.**
- F SATISFACTORY STANDARDS OF ACCOMMODATION AND AMENITY ARE ACHIEVABLE.**

- 3.51 Rural buildings which are so derelict that they could be brought back into use only by a complete or substantial reconstruction should normally be demolished except where such buildings are listed as being of architectural or historic merit.
- 3.52 In many cases the conversion or adaptation of the building may require the virtual demolition and rebuilding of the structure, which will amount to a newly built property. In this case, the development will be considered as a new building and the relevant policies of this Local Plan will apply.
- 3.53 **Attention is drawn to the provisions of Policy HS24 which permits the residential conversion of a rural building in the open countryside only if it is justified as accommodation for agricultural workers.**
- 3.54 In the case of a "traditional" farm building one of the major concerns is to retain the building in its setting. This is particularly relevant in Special Landscape Areas. The Council is also concerned to ensure that every opportunity is taken to use the existing space within the building rather than adding to it. In rural areas the general policy of the District Council is to resist development in the open countryside, and therefore extensions are regarded as new build space.
- 3.55 To avoid inappropriate extensions to the building, the District Council will exercise their power to remove Permitted Development Rights if it is considered appropriate.
- 3.56 The access from any building onto the public highway should be capable of use by the size of vehicle which will be used to service the building in its proposed use. If works are required to improve the access then these should be carried out without removing large sections of a wall or hedge, native trees or large numbers of trees. If any trees or hedges are removed to enable safety improvements to be carried out, then the District Council will require suitable replacement. All services from the nearest public highway to the converted building should be underground to retain the rural appearance of the area.
- 3.57 Where conversions take place on working agricultural units it is important that the new use is not adversely affected by the operation of the farm unit. This will be particularly important where the new use is residential. Care should be taken to avoid juxtaposing residential uses with livestock units, silage clamps, grain dryers or other such agricultural operations.
- 3.58 The space and layout problems inherent in conversion schemes will not be accepted as reasons for reducing the normally required standards of accommodation in residential development. These are set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance.
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