



East Staffordshire Borough Council
Local Development Framework

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

RE- USE OF REDUNDANT RURAL BUILDINGS

**At the meeting on 3 December 2007
East Staffordshire Borough Council adopted
this Supplementary Planning Document on
Redundant Rural Buildings**

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1.0 Purpose of the Guidance

- 1.1 This guidance brings together the various planning issues that arise in the consideration of proposals for the re-use of rural buildings. It deals with the conversion and re-use of rural buildings for alternative uses and sets out general design guidance on how to approach conversion work, particularly on older buildings, without destroying the rural character of the building or in a manner unsympathetic to its original setting. Importantly, the guidance also sets out the criteria for determining whether a building is appropriate for conversion and what information the Borough Council will require before a residential use will be considered.
- 1.2 Upon adoption the Document will be used as a material consideration in determining planning applications and applications for listed building consent relating to the re-use of and alteration to any rural building.

2.0 Policy Context

- 2.1 Traditional agricultural buildings are important features within the rural landscape. These buildings were predominantly erected for agricultural purposes. Their age, character form and quality varies, but the changing structure of the visual economy and the demands of agriculture mean that many of these buildings are no longer required for their original use or suited to modern farming practices. The Borough is subject to high pressure for housing and there has been an increasing demand for the re-use of rural buildings for residential purposes.
- 2.2 The Development Plan for the Borough comprised the adopted East Staffordshire Local Plan 2006, together with the Staffordshire County Structure Plan (Saved until 27 September 2007), associated Staffordshire documents on Waste and Minerals and the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 2.3 Planning Policy Statement No. 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas is supportive of the re-use of appropriately located and suitable constructed existing rural buildings where this would achieve sustainable development objectives. Re-use for economic related development is usually preferable, but there may be certain instances where residential use may be more appropriate. Particular support is advocated for the re-use of buildings adjacent to or closely related to existing settlements for economic or community uses. Re-use can reduce the demand for new building within the countryside and avoid leaving existing buildings vacant and prone to vandalism and dereliction.
- 2.4 Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 13 "Transport" advises local authorities to integrate transport and land-use policies and to only allow new development in locations where it is sustainable, thus reducing the need to travel and helping to achieve viable rural communities.
- 2.5 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands highlights the importance of rural regeneration and it is envisaged that this can be contributed to by the

achievement of a healthy rural economy, effective local infrastructure, adequate provision for affordable housing and providing local opportunities for leisure, recreation and tourism. In spite of this pressure, there is a continuing need to restrict new buildings within the open countryside. The re-use of existing rural buildings would contribute to and complement this regeneration strategy.

- 2.6 Within the County of Staffordshire, policies for the protection of the countryside are contained within the adopted Structure Plan. These policies provide the framework within which alternative uses may be considered and states that employment is the preferred use for such buildings, with residential only being considered when all other uses such as employment, recreation and community use, are not practicable or viable. Location and sustainability are important considerations and this guidance stresses the need to restrict new development within the open countryside and to allow only new development where it is sustainable and helps reduce the need to travel by private car.
- 2.7 This approach is also carried forward in the Borough Council's own adopted Rural Strategy. The Council offers strong support for making the best use of appropriate buildings and Brownfield sites where they are in sustainable locations. Local Plan Policies CSP4 and E14 reflect this approach.
- 2.8 A number of other Local Plan policies are relevant to conversions of rural buildings. They are:

CSP2 Locational Strategy for Development and Containment
CSP4 Urban and Rural Regeneration
NE1 Development Outside Development Boundaries
BE1 Design
E14 Rural Employment
E18 Employment and the Environment
E22 Farm Based Tourist Accommodation
H3 Housing: Small Windfall Sites and Conversions
H7 Housing outside Development Boundaries

- 2.9 The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is specifically linked to Policy BE15 of the Local Plan and provides greater detail. The Policy states:

BE15 Proposals to convert an existing building or group of buildings in the countryside to commercial, industrial, residential or recreational uses will be viewed favorably. In assessing such proposals the following factors will be taken into account.

- (a) the visual impact and relevant history of existing buildings;***
- (b) the physical condition of existing buildings and their suitability for conversion without extensive alteration, extension or reconstruction. A structural survey will be required with the application in appropriate cases;***

- (c) *the visual impact of the form, bulk and design of the conversion, its curtilage and any associated new development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area;*
- (d) *the contribution of the development to improvement of the external appearance, retention of existing character and the preservation of any architectural, historic or traditional features of buildings or the surrounding area;*
- (e) *the impact of proposed uses on, and their relationship to, surrounding land uses, nearby settlements, the highway network and public transport facilities;*
- (f) *proposal to convert rural buildings to dwellings will only be permitted where the criteria set out above are met and where:*
 - (i) *every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable economic use for the building, or*
 - (ii) *residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for a business use.”*

3.0 Explanation of Terms in Policy BE15

3.1 The following sections seek to provide future explanation of the issues that arise inevitably in the application of Policy BE15.

(a) What is meant by the term “Permanent and Substantial Construction”?

- (i) To be considered for re-use, buildings should originally have been built with four walls which are substantially complete
- (ii) Generally, to be of substantial construction, a traditional rural building should either have masonry or brick walls or be of half timbered construction, and have a slate, stone, tile roof.
- (iii) Open sided pre fabricated buildings without walls from ground to eaves do not fall within the definition of permanent and substantial construction, nor do buildings with slatted walls.
- (iv) Small, ancillary buildings such as open fronted cart sheds, may be used for ancillary uses, such as car parking or storage in association with larger substantial buildings. Freestanding buildings to this type are not usually considered suitable for re-use in their own right.

(b) Is the building capable of accommodating the proposed use without extensive rebuilding, extension or alteration?

The existing buildings must be large enough to accommodate the proposed use without extensive rebuilding, extension or alteration.

(c) Structural Survey

The Borough Council will require evidence to demonstrate that the building that lies outside of development boundaries is structurally sound and capable of conversion or re-use without excessive rebuilding, extension or alteration. This will usually take the form of a full structural survey of the building and production of a report which can be independently verified by the Borough Council. Structural surveys should be undertaken by a qualified structural engineer.

(d) What is meant by the terms “Extensive rebuilding, extension or alteration?”

(i) The extent to which rebuilding, extension or alteration is considered to be excessive will vary depending on the scale and type of building affected and the relative extent of the works proposed. Proposals for extensions are usually made clear on the submitted drawings. However, applications must include detailed plans which indicate the extent of any rebuilding and alterations, and the extent of demolition which would determine whether a proposal constituted conversion or re-building.

(ii) Extent of Rebuilding

Limited rebuilding is acceptable to effect repairs, but where a significant part of the original building has been removed or falls into disrepair, rebuilding will not be usually acceptable.

A greater degree of rebuilding may exceptionally be allowed where it is desirable in the interests of historic conservation. Where such reconstruction is proposed, there will need to be compelling evidence of what originally existed in physical, photographic or documentary form.

(iii) Extensions

Generally, extensions to a rural building as part of an overall conversion will be unacceptable. If a building merits retention then it must be of a scale which is capable of conversion to a new use in its own right.

Minor extensions which would detract from the essential character and appearance of the original building will be resisted.

In the case of residential conversions, extensions which are proposed to accommodate habitable rooms will usually be unacceptable.

DD14

(iv) **Alteration**

Proposals should make clear the extent of changes proposed to the existing structure in order to accommodate the proposed use. If the proposed use cannot function satisfactorily without extensive alteration, it is unlikely to constitute a suitable re-use of the building. The emphasis in any conversion should be an adaptation rather than alteration, for example using existing openings rather than create new ones.

(e) **Redundancy of Agricultural Use**

In making an application for the re-use of an agricultural building, it is not necessary to demonstrate that a building is redundant to agricultural use. However, if the re-use of a building still in active use would be likely to result in the need for a replacement new modern building, then a proposal is unlikely to be acceptable. Only if a building is proven unfit or unworkable for modern farm methods should this be negated, for example access by or for traffic or modern machinery is largely prohibitive.

4.0 General Principles for Conversion Schemes

4.1 (a) What uses will be encouraged?

There is a wide variety of alternative uses for rural buildings and many may, in certain circumstances, be considered appropriate. The best uses that will lead to the most successful conversion are those that respect the original character and appearance of the building and its individual structure and features, as well as respecting the character of the locality.

The following new uses for rural buildings may be acceptable:

- Proposals for appropriate and well conceived rural diversification that are consistent in their scale with their rural location.
- Commercial and industrial uses: alternative uses such as storage, workshops and offices are examples that may require little alteration to the building. These types of uses can strengthen the number and variety of local jobs within the countryside.
- Leisure and recreation: many outdoor rural activities require some limited facilities; redundant rural buildings provide the ideal opportunity to provide these without having to introduce new buildings into the countryside. These types of uses not only provide for more sustainable forms of development but also widen the variety of employment opportunities in the countryside.
- Tourism/Community Uses: tourism and community facilities can sometimes easily be achieved without the need for extensive

alterations to the original fabric of the building. The types of activities are important to the regeneration of rural areas, with tourism playing an increasing role within the local and regional economy.

Re-use for residential purposes need to be considered carefully. In addition, the creation of a residential curtilage is likely to have a significant effect on the open character of the countryside and consequently residential conversions within rural areas will be treated with similar controls as those applied to new housing in the open countryside. It will be for the applicant in bringing forward a planning application to change an agricultural building for residential purposes, to demonstrate why no other commercial, industrial, leisure, recreation, tourist or community use is appropriate.

4.2 (b) Sustainable Locations

Many rural buildings are situated outside settlement boundaries within open countryside where there are strong restraints on residential development. These types of locations will not be sustainable in terms of reducing the need to travel and will contribute little to sustaining the rural economy and local communities. Furthermore buildings in remote locations away from defined settlements or in isolated positions are unlikely to be suitable for business uses. In most cases, isolated sites are also served by narrow country roads inadequate for heavy traffic serving a business use, and where the provision of links to networked services would be costly. The exceptions would be tourist accommodation or, less frequently, “high-tech” business developments reliant mainly on internet access and which generate little road traffic.

The Council will therefore seek to interpret criterion (e) of Policy BE15 in the following ways.

Applications for conversions of isolated buildings or buildings in remote areas will in general be refused as having an adverse impact on the surrounding countryside. “Isolated buildings” are those buildings in open countryside or associated only with an isolated farmhouse or dwelling, and in small hamlets with no community facilities or public transport.

As an exception, self-catering holiday lets may be allowed under Policy E22. Where applications are made in such locations for residential use, there is a strong likelihood of refusal. In such situations, the Council will not usually require business use under the tests in sub-section (c). Properties permitted for conversion as holiday lets will not normally be permitted for conversion to residential use.

4.3 (c) Economic Tests

When the Borough Council considers a formal planning application for the conversion of a rural building to a residential dwelling, it will be

necessary for the applicant to demonstrate **either** that every reasonable attempt has first been made to secure a suitable employment, tourism or recreational use, **or**, in the case of isolated buildings as described in (b) above, that a conversion for holiday use is not viable. It may also not be necessary to submit marketing information if clear evidence is produced that any commercial use of a building is likely to have overriding adverse effects on a neighbouring residential property.

Subject to the above provisos, there are two broad requirements to fulfil:

- to make every reasonable attempt to secure a suitable employment, tourism or recreation use;
- to demonstrate that such efforts have been made

(i) What is a 'reasonable' attempt?

- (i) property should be marketed for a period not less than 12 months, expiring no more than 3 months prior to the submission of an application
- (ii) be advertised in the local press, trade publications, on the internet, and by an agent's board at the premises
- (iii) be marketed for an appropriate employment, recreational or tourism use
- (iv) it is generally desirable to market the premises with a valid planning permission for the intended use, but it is not essential. Whilst marketing the premises is likely to generate more interest of planning permission has been sought and granted, it will not be acceptable to submit applications in outline form to establish the principle of development

(ii) How do I demonstrate this?

Produce a written statement setting out the efforts made to secure an employment, tourism or recreational use. To include:

- (i) details and evidence of steps to market the buildings, including verifiable records of all enquiries;
- (ii) copy of sales particulars and adverts plus two commercial valuations by professionally qualified commercial valuers to demonstrate that the property has been marketed at a realistic price;
- (iii) evidence that the property has not been marketed on the basis of a too narrowly defined list of potential end users;

Applicants should not assume that demonstrating a lack of interest in the property for commercial use through a marketing campaign will result in a favourable consideration of a subsequent application for residential re-use of the premises;

in some cases, the re-use of rural buildings for employment, tourism or recreation uses may be inappropriate. However, applications for residential conversion, which are submitted without evidence of marketing or a detailed written explanation of why no marketing has been undertaken will usually be refused;

4.4 (d) Wildlife and Biodiversity

Farm and other rural buildings form habitats for a number of wildlife species including those protected by law (Wildlife and Countryside Act). Of particular importance in relation to farms buildings are barn owls and bats, but surveys of buildings may identify other protected species. Barns are used by other protected species such as swallows, house martins, swifts and house sparrows and the walls can provide important habitats for various plants and insects. For birds, protection extends to their nests. The existence of a protected species within a building need not prevent its conversion. However, it is important that time is taken, in advance of seeking planning permission, to ensure that species are identified and measures taken for their protection. It will often be necessary to secure a licence from Natural England to carry out investigations. To ensure that the existence of protected species is not overlooked it is important that surveys are carried out at the correct time of year.

4.5 (e) Redundant Land

On farm complexes there may be, as well as redundant buildings, some redundant land that has hard surfaces or foundations and is unsightly in appearance e.g. compounds for farm stock, slurry pits, areas of disused machinery or tyres etc. The Council will not treat such areas as being brownfield land and will not allow permission for their development for new buildings alongside conversions of rural buildings. However, the Council does recognise that in some cases failure to treat such areas alongside conversions could result in their being retained to the detriment of new developments. The Council will therefore seek the agreement of applicants to the treatment of such land as part of any approved scheme.

The Council recognises that a substantial amount of farmland is going out of use as a result of changes in the agricultural sector. However alternative uses for redundant Greenfield agricultural land are beyond the scope of this guidance.

4.6 (f) Archaeology

In some cases the immediate landscape to a farm building or group of buildings may have significant archaeological interest. The farm buildings to many ancient farmsteads may have occupied their site for centuries. As a consequence these buildings will have a significant archaeological value not only in terms of their built fabric but also the

ground on which they are located, and that which is adjacent to them. There may, in some instances, be the remains of medieval ridge and furrow adjacent or surrounding a farmstead.

Any works to a farm buildings, deemed to have archaeological interest and deposits, for example the excavation works adjacent to the building; excavation works for new footings and service trenching and proposed works for the repair/replacement of historic timbers etc will need careful assessment.

A measured survey of the building(s) and their archaeological interpretation and significance may be required by the Local Planning Authority. In other cases the archaeological recording and drawing of certain elements (architectural details, historic timbers etc) may also be required by the Local Planning Authority. All such recording and assessment work should be overseen by an appropriately qualified archaeologist. The archaeologists report and drawings shall, when completed, be submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

An assessment of any potential archaeological interest to the immediate building and adjacent landscape should be undertaken and this information submitted with any proposal for landscaping works. Archaeological works shall be undertaken in conjunction with the advice as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 – Archaeology and Planning (1990).

4.7 (g) Conversion and Alternative Uses of Modern Farm Buildings

Whilst national policy does not prohibit the conversion of modern or utilitarian farm buildings to residential use, there is likely to be no existing building character worthy of retention, and that even so considerable works would be required to alter such a building so as to create a saleable residential conversion. Modern barn conversions would therefore be the creation of a new dwelling and hence opposed on policy grounds.

4.8 (h) Renewable Energy

The Borough Council recognises that many former agricultural buildings may not be served by main utilities. This provides an opportunity to use renewable sources of energy, including solar power, wind and water. The Borough Council will encourage such renewable energy sources provided that they are in harmony with the character and appearance of the building, its setting and wider landscape, and do not cause harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties.

5.0 Residential Conversions: Design Guidance

5.1 Preserving the Character and Appearance of the Building and its Setting

The following guidance deals ostensibly with the conversion of former agricultural buildings, although many of the principles set out in this SPD can be applied to the re-use or conversion of any traditional building in the countryside.

The emphasis in the design of any scheme for the re-use or conversion of a traditional rural building should be the retention of its architectural integrity and its setting. In the case of traditional buildings, a little innovation and creative design can go a long way to achieving a successful conversion which respects and interprets the history of the building in a sympathetic way.

5.2 External Changes

5.2.1 Removal of Modern Additions

Many rural buildings have been subject to additions in the past which do not respect their original character and appearance. The conversion of such buildings provides an opportunity to secure the removal of such additions and thereby achieve an enhancement. The Borough Council will expect to see such previous additions removed rather than incorporated into any application proposals for conversion. Furthermore, the LPA will not usually support applications which propose the replacement of such structures with new extensions merely to fulfil the demands of future occupiers for additional space.

Developers will be expected to restore traditional buildings to their original appearance and form when putting them to new uses.

5.2.2 Retention of Existing Features

Features of importance, architecturally or historically, such as arches, lintels, ventilation slits and any fixed machinery related to or forming an intrinsic part of the building's original use should be retained in-situ and integrated into the proposed conversion.

5.3 Roofscape

5.3.1 Roof Profile

Traditional farm buildings generally feature long, unbroken roof profiles and it is essential that their appearance and integrity are retained in any conversion scheme.

The roof-line should not be altered or raised. In some cases however, the original roof may have been lost and replaced by a modern roof at a shallower angle of pitch. In such circumstances it may be acceptable to reinstate the

roof profile at its original pitch. Applicants must demonstrate that any such change is informed by compelling physical, documentary, or photographic evidence of the historic profile.

Roof slopes should not be interrupted by introducing dormer windows or chimney stacks.

Additional new “features” such as dovecotes, weather vanes, clock towers, cupolas etc, which are not usually found on agricultural buildings should be avoided. Applicants proposing to add such features will need to demonstrate that there is a historic precedent for them on the subject buildings.

5.3.2 Roof Structure

The roof construction of a traditional rural building is an intrinsic part of its structure and also a means by which it can be dated. Replacement of original trusses by modern versions will not be acceptable unless there is evidence of their substantial deterioration. Original purlins and trusses should be carefully conserved. Roof trusses and other structural elements should not usually be cut through and proposed openings from one bay to another through previously intact framed walls will usually be resisted.

5.3.3 Roof Covering

In some cases, whilst the roof structure may be intact, traditional roof materials may have been replaced. This should not prevent the restoration of the building to its original form.

Where none of the original roof covering survives and there is no point of reference on adjacent contemporary buildings forming part of the group, the advice of The Borough Council’s Planning Control Officer should be sought.

Where it is necessary to remove an original roof covering to repair the supporting roof structure or add insulation, the original tiles or slates should be carefully removed and stored on site. Those which can be salvaged should be re-used.

In instances where it is necessary to utilise new or preferably reclaimed materials, these should match the existing in terms of size, colour and texture as closely as possible.

Where larger areas of repair are required on prominent roof profiles, it may be practical and acceptable to utilise matching tiles from profiles which are less visible. The covering on these less visible profiles can then be treated with new matching materials.

5.3.4 Chimneys and Flues

Chimneys are not a feature of most traditional agricultural buildings and the use of ridge vents or a flue may therefore be required. Any flue should be of

minimal height, in an unobtrusive colour (preferably matt black) and must be discretely located on the building.

Having regard to the requirements of Building Regulations, care should be taken to position flues so that wherever possible, they do not exceed the ridge of the building and are seen against the backdrop of the roof slope.

Flues should be placed as low as possible to the eaves, and to the corners of the building, so that they do not interrupt or detract from the main roof profile.

5.3.5 Rooflights

Rooflights are a useful device for lighting internal spaces where an excess of additional windows would otherwise detract from the character and appearance of a building, but they should not be used where there are suitable existing openings in the walls.

Where there is potential to do so, internal spaces should be lit and ventilated by glazing in the gable end rather than through the insertion of rooflights.

Rooflights should be used sparingly and in locations that would not introduce a conspicuous feature on the building when viewed in the context of the wider landscape setting.

In instances where the Borough Council considers rooflights acceptable, flush fitting 'conservation' style rooflights must be used regardless of whether the building is listed or not. There is a wide range of such rooflights on the market and some are better than others in achieving an unobtrusive effect. The Borough Council will require details of all rooflights to be submitted to it for approval prior to their installation. Rooflights of an inappropriate size or design will be rejected.

5.4 Repair of External Walls

5.4.1 Where brickwork needs cleaning, the advice of the Borough Council's Planning Control Officer should be sought. Sandblasting, for example, is a very abrasive technique and can cause irreversible damage to brickwork.

5.4.2 Re-pointing on a large scale should also be avoided as this will fundamentally affect the character of the building. Re-pointing should be confined to localised areas requiring repair. Any re-pointing should be done manually without the use of mechanical tools. Existing stone or brickwork should be re-pointed using traditional lime based mortars and methods. Achieving the correct mortar mix is as important as the bricks themselves. Advice on the technique and mortar mix to be used for re-pointing works should be sought from the Borough Council's Planning Control Officer before such work is undertaken.

5.4.3 New materials will need to match the manufacture, colour size and texture of the originals as closely as possible. Some buildings will contain brickwork laid

in a consistent pattern or 'bond'. Such patterns should be replicated using bricks of matching colour, size and texture. The abutment of conflicting styles of brickwork, one against another, should be strictly avoided.

- 5.4.4 Proposals for demolishing walls or minor buildings within a group in order to supply materials for the conversion work elsewhere, will generally be resisted as these structures often form an intrinsic and consequently important part of the character of a group.

5.5 Windows and Doors

- 5.5.1 Proposals must make the best use of all existing openings. Existing openings should be retained, particularly where these are original and new openings kept to an absolute minimum.
- 5.5.2 Those openings that do exist are very often asymmetrically located on an elevation and in positions which will require some careful thought when planning the internal configuration of internal spaces.
- 5.5.3 A regular or symmetrical pattern of openings is a characteristic of domestic dwellings, which would be inappropriate in the context of a modest rural building such as a barn.
- 5.5.4 Doors and windows of the neo-Georgian variety and other pseudo-historical details, have no place in the humble farm building. Ledged and braced plank doors should invariably be selected.
- 5.5.5 Rather than being blocked in, surplus door openings could form useful stores, accessed from the outside of the building, or unobtrusive locations for utility meters.
- 5.5.6 Where openings need to be blocked up, a sympathetic material should be used and recessed to emphasise the original opening.
- 5.5.7 Where existing openings are to be closed or glazed, they should be treated in such a manner that the full extent of the original opening retains its identity.
- 5.5.8 Where new glazing is introduced, the existing door or shutters can either be retained and tied back to the wall or retained in working order to provide additional security when the building is empty.
- 5.5.9 Where existing doors are damaged, these should be restored or replaced depending upon their condition. The defects and repairs schedule (accompanying the application) should detail the condition of such features along with the nature and extent of any work required to them.
- 5.5.10 Where existing windows survive, replacements should replicate their form and manner of opening as closely as possible.

- 5.5.11 New windows inserted into existing openings should be purpose made to fit within the full extent of the opening. Standard 'off-the-peg' units which often have prefixed sills will not be appropriate and should be strictly avoided. The use of PVCu will invariably be unacceptable in traditional buildings.
- 5.5.12 Units combining both casement windows and top hung lights should be avoided.
- 5.5.13 Where side hung casements are to be used, these should be balanced so that the visible area of glazing on one half of the window is the same as that on the other half, irrespective of whether the window has a single opening casement and fixed light or two opening casements.
- 5.5.14 'Weatherings' which close over the outside of the frame are a characteristic of modern casement windows and should be avoided. Traditional window should be selected with casements which close flush into the frame.
- 5.5.15 Original openings that have been closed up in the past should be re-utilised in preference to creating new openings, especially where such openings have been blocked in an unsympathetic manner or using an inappropriate material, but only where this would not compromise the structural integrity of the building.
- 5.5.16 Any new openings should reflect the scale and proportions of existing openings, or where none exist, from design cues taken from another contemporary building within the group.
- 5.5.17 The insertion of new openings in otherwise blank elevations or where no physical evidence of former openings remains should be avoided, particularly where these elevations are visible from a public vantage point (including public footpaths).
- 5.5.18 New openings must not interrupt existing architectural features such as 'honeycomb' ventilation holes. Ventilation holes, often in cruciform, diamond or slip pattern, can be used to provide extra light to internal spaces. The contrast between their dark interiors and the light face of the building can be enhanced by blocking such apertures from the rear, or using dark glass recessed within the aperture. Glass blocks can provide interesting patterns of illumination within the building.

5.6 **Privacy/Overlooking**

- 5.6.1 The utilisation of openings in elevations which would compromise the privacy of adjacent (residential) development will be resisted.
- 5.6.2 The utilisation of openings in walls which themselves form an existing boundary with adjacent residential properties should be avoided.
- 5.6.3 Obscure glazing may be used in existing or reinstated openings to safeguard both the privacy of occupiers of neighbouring properties and the converted

building. However, this will not be appropriate in residential conversions where this would involve fitting obscure glazing to the sole or principal window lighting a habitable room.

- 5.6.4 Fitting obscure glazing to windows in habitable rooms is not considered to provide a satisfactory living environment for future occupiers and revisions to the layout should be considered to avoid such scenarios.
- 5.6.5 Where ventilation is required, the window should be top-hung so that it can be opened without compromising privacy.
- 5.6.7 The fitting of obscure glazing to secondary or subordinate windows in existing or re-instated openings lighting habitable rooms will be considered where this would assist in lighting the internal space, but only where it is impractical to obtain borrowed light from another opening and where the window is a purpose made non-opening light.

5.7 Treatment of External Timber

- 5.7.1 Where such treatment is necessary, all external window and door joinery details in elevations which are half timbered or timber clad should be stained rather than painted. Where there is evidence that original joinery has been painted, new joinery should usually be treated in the same manner. The advice of the Borough Council's Planning Control Officer should always be sought on this issue. It will usually be a condition of any planning permission that details of the proposed treatment of external timber are submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before development commences.

5.8 Principal Openings

- 5.8.1 Large barn doorways are often the main feature of agricultural barns and should be incorporated in any conversion to ensure that the essential character and appearance of the building is retained. Developers should avoid filling in such openings with masonry or timber cladding and then inserting standard "off-the-peg" windows and/or doors.
- 5.8.2 Instead, proposals should allow the original opening to be fully exposed and visible without conflicting details within, particularly the intervention of a first floor which interrupts the vertical emphasis of the opening with a broad horizontal line. The area behind the main openings should be kept open from the floor to the rafters.
- 5.8.3 Full height glazing with a strong vertical emphasis is the most appropriate method of treatment for these large openings.
- 5.8.4 An important consideration in glazing these openings will be to avoid installing glazing flush with the outside face of the building. Glazing should be set back thereby ensuring that any reflection is minimised and light into the room is maximised.

- 5.8.5 If full height glazing is proposed to the main opening, it will be important to avoid the use of solid doors within this area as they would appear as discordant, free standing features, floating in space.
- 5.8.6 The internal spaces behind these principal openings should be kept open and not subdivided. This will ensure that the maximum use can be made from “borrowed light” to light those spaces at both ground and first floor where there are no other existing openings, opportunities to reinstate former openings, or where the introduction of further openings would be undesirable.

6.0 New Services

- 6.1 Any conversion scheme will require the supply and installation of new services such as cables, wiring, pipework and meters. Where these installations may have an undesirable impact on the external character or appearance of the building they shall be concealed or designed-out.
- The prolific use or installation of externally fixed pipes, cables and wires will be resisted
 - Pipework (for drainage and disposal) shall be located internally wherever possible. Where, with justification, pipework may need to be externally located this should be positioned, by design, on *hidden* elevations
 - Meter boxes (for gas & electricity) should generally be located internally and not be positioned on any external elevation of the building. However, if this is not feasible any external positioning should be enclosed in a well designed wooden covering or other materials to be agreed.
 - On listed and curtilage listed farm buildings the introduction of a satellite dish would normally constitute an alien and inappropriate addition to the character and appearance of the farm building and would, therefore, be resisted. A similar view would be taken with regard to the introduction of security alarms boxes.

7.0 Interiors

7.1 Listed and Curtilage Listed

The interior spaces of most farm buildings generally consist of large open spaces, sometimes open to the roof, together with other examples of the surviving paraphernalia of their agricultural use, for example feeders, stall dividers, harness and hay racks. Interiors to listed and curtilage listed farm buildings, and their associated fixtures and fittings, are protected under the statutory listing. Interior walls were generally lime-washed (not plastered), as were, on occasions, roof timbers and floor joists. Original ground floors may be stone flagged, stone setted or brick paved, however some have been replaced, over time, with concrete. In some cases, original lime-ash floors survive (generally to first floors). A fundamental characteristic of lime-ash floors is their undulation – this is considered an important natural feature of such floors. Roof structures were seldom, if ever, ceiled and the roof trusses (usually king-post or queen-post trusses) were on view. Internal divisions were generally created by way of stone or brick walls or in some cases timber

framed and plaster in-fill walls. Farm buildings rarely had fireplaces, and consequently, rarely had chimneystacks.

- Retention, by design, of the interior spatial quality of farm buildings shall be expected in any conversion scheme
- As few new sub-divisions as possible shall be introduced as part of a conversion proposal in order to retain that spatial quality and reduce the requirement for additional new windows and door openings
- Proposed new internal divisions should always respect the interior architectural features of a farm building (and be aligned with roof trusses and bays)
- The removal of, or the cutting through of, structural timbers (to floors, roofs and roof trusses) will not be acceptable. First floors to many farm buildings have low headroom particularly under the tie beam of trusses. Accurate, vertical, dimensions to assess the available headroom available should be undertaken to inform the feasibility of introducing habitable use within such spaces.
- Original interior fixtures and fittings shall be retained wherever possible in any conversion scheme. Their imaginative re-use can usually enhance the interior spaces of converted farm buildings. Full justification must be provided if their removal is being proposed.
- The removal of original or existing floor surfaces (i.e. those considered by the Council to be of historic, architectural and archaeological importance) will be strongly resisted. (Proposals for the lifting and re-laying of historic ground floor surfaces, with an integral damp proof membrane, *may* be considered an acceptable method of repair).
- The removal of lime-ash floors will be strongly resisted. Proposals for their retention and repair should be submitted with any scheme for conversion. Any proposals for their removal would need to be fully justified on structural engineering grounds (confirmed by a conservation engineer's report). Removal, because of their undulating character or cracking will not be considered sufficient justification.
- The positioning, and design, of new elements such as staircases will require careful consideration. Over decorative or 'period-type' staircases will be resisted.
- The introduction of chimneybreasts, fireplaces and ingle-nooks shall, generally, be resisted as being wholly inappropriate to the character of farm buildings.
- Metal flue terminals (for free-standing stoves, ranges or boilers) should always be painted out matt-black. Where such terminals project through roof coverings they should be located on 'hidden' roof elevations.
- Where evidence of the, historic, introduction of chimneystacks can be clearly justified (and its dimensions extrapolated from existing evidence), lost or decayed chimneystacks may be reconstructed.
- It is desirable to locate flue terminals so that they do not project / protrude above the existing roof ridgeline, however, such elements must comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations and their location and height must be clearly indicated in any proposals.

7.2 Unlisted Farm Buildings

On unlisted farm buildings it is desirable to respect and retain the internal character of the farm building. The Council would welcome early discussions about the internal proposals for such buildings in order to ensure a sensitive and appropriate scheme is put forward.

8.0 Extensions and Additions

8.1 Farm buildings, by their nature, are simple, functional structures that were generally built for specific agricultural uses. This is an important and significant element of their character and appearance. The open spaces or gaps between farm buildings are considered to be important elements to the character and context of a farmstead. To this end, the retention of this visible separation and independence of individual or groups of farm buildings is considered to be a vital attribute to their character and should be respected in any proposals for conversion and extension. In any conversion proposal the existing size, form and shape of the farm building will be retained and the proposed conversion use will suit the existing space available without recourse to additions or extensions

8.2 However where, through sound justification and prior discussion with the Local Planning Authority, the principle of extending the farm building may be considered acceptable, the following will be expected:

- Extensions or additions shall be designed to respect and harmonise with the existing building in terms of its size, scale, form and massing
- Extensions or additions shall be subservient in their size, scale, form and massing to the original, principal, farm building. The original, principal farm building must always remain the dominant element. Extensions or additions shall, generally, always be set back to respect the corners of the principal farm building.
- Proposals to construct 'link' buildings or structures within the open spaces or gaps between separate and historically independent farm buildings will, generally, be resisted.
- The proposed location of any extension or addition shall be given careful consideration so as to reduce its visual impact on the principal building
- Proposals for multiple extensions or additions will be resisted
- The building materials of any extension or addition shall, generally, match those of the principal building. Where materials diverge from those of the principle building sound justification for their use would need to be given in every circumstance.
- The extent and type of fenestration to an extension or addition shall be informed by the character of the principal building. The ratio of walling to new window/door openings should be informed by the character of the principal building
- Continual, and future, extensions or additions to a farm building will, generally, be resisted as a dilution of the principal building
- Chimneystacks to extensions or additions will, generally, be resisted

8.3 Conservatories, Sun-Lounges, Porches and Porch Canopies

- Conservatories, sun-lounges, porches or porch canopies are considered to be alien and inappropriate to the traditional character and appearance of (most) farm buildings. Their form, materials and details are in strong opposition to the agricultural theme.
- The proposed addition of conservatories, sun-lounges, porches or porch canopies to any external elevation to a principal farm building, or its extensions/additions, will be strongly resisted as such additions are deemed harmful and detrimental to the character and appearance of traditional farm buildings

8.4 Garaging

Proposals for car parking will need to be given serious consideration at the out-set of any conversion scheme.

- Garaging of cars may be able to be accommodated within the existing buildings where previous cart sheds survive or form part of the farm building group. Utilisation of such structures for the garaging of cars, rather than the structure being included as part of any residential conversion, will be expected
- Proposals to construct a new, *attached*, garage (single or double) to a farm building will require very careful design consideration in terms of its appearance, form and detailing in order to minimise its visual impact on the existing building.
- Proposals to construct a new, *detached*, garage (single or double) will generally be resisted unless its design, form, detailing and location does not impede or affect the character and setting of the farm building(s)
- Up-and-over metal or timber garage doors will be resisted as being wholly inappropriate to the agricultural tradition. Double, vertically boarded painted doors are considered to be more appropriate to the agricultural tradition.

9.0 Outbuildings and Curtilage

9.1 The setting of a farm building or group of farm buildings has its own distinctive character and appearance. Associated with many principal farm buildings are ranges or examples of small, often subsidiary buildings that served the agricultural operation of the farm. These are considered to be very important elements of the overall setting of farm buildings and their retention, repair and re-use is desirable. Some such buildings may be listed in their own right or may be curtilage listed buildings. In association with outbuildings are the boundaries to the farmyard itself. These may be dry stone walls, brickwork walls, hedges or metal fencing. In many cases these may mark ancient boundaries and/or clearly define the farmyard from its surrounding fields and landscape. Farmyards may also retain original and historic surface treatments such as stone setts, paved areas or brick pavements. These surfaces are a fundamental and important characteristic of the agricultural setting and should be retained.

- Outbuildings shall be retained, repaired and re-used wherever possible. Their demolition will be resisted in most cases.
- The over domestication of the setting of a converted farm building (in terms of patios, timber-fencing, extensive garden landscaping, ornamental ponds, lampposts and pergolas) will be resisted • The formation of ornamental water features, fountains, fish ponds and larger bodies of water will generally be resisted
- Existing boundary treatments (walls, hedges) shall be retained and repaired/re-planted
- Where new boundaries need to be created their form, type, height and material shall be informed by the existing type, character and appearance within the immediate environs of the farm buildings/farmyard
- The entrance or approach to a converted farm building or group of buildings should retain its original rural and agricultural character. Over prestigious entrances with gateposts and gates, extensive block paving, setts or tarmac will be resisted
- Gates, to entrances or other accessways associated with a farmstead, shall be of the agricultural type and form (i.e. a traditional five-bar timber gate) or, if appropriate, solid vertically boarded and framed gates (with a painted finish) of a plain and simple character.
- Decorative and fussy metal, or timber, gates will be resisted
- The widening of existing gateways (vehicular or pedestrian) will generally be resisted
- Original gates (and gate posts) and railings should be retained in-situ and re-furbished where necessary
- Proposals to sub-divide an original, or historic, farmyard with new walls (or the heightening of existing walls), fences or hedges will generally be resisted. Careful planning and design will be required to ensure that the original farmyard character, and the historic relationship between the farmhouse and farm buildings, is retained following any conversion scheme. Where *sufficient* physical evidence survives for the historic sub-division of a farmyard, its reinstatement may be considered acceptable
- The provision of additional areas for 'domestic' curtilage may be considered acceptable only where these areas do not impede or affect the character and setting of the farm building(s) and farmstead. Their extent, location and boundary treatment will require careful design consideration
- Un-enclosed swimming pools and tennis courts are considered to be detrimental to the character, setting and grouping of a farmstead and their introduction will, therefore, be resisted

In order to retain and protect the character and setting of the buildings any grant of planning permission would normally remove residential permitted development rights.