



**Conversion of redundant barn to
dwelling
on land adjacent to
Shepherds Fold,
Finwood Road,
Rowington,
Warwick CV35 7DF**

**PLANNING and DESIGN STATEMENT
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application seeks planning permission for the conversion of a redundant former agricultural building into a part one- and part two-storey dwelling. The barn is located on land located adjacent to Shepherds Fold, Rowington, Warwick CV35 7DF.
- 1.2 The site lies to the north of Finwood Road. A private drive provides access to the application site and to Shepherds Fold, a substantial detached dwelling. The application site lies to the east of Shepherds Fold. To the south of and outside the application site is a disused stable building.
- 1.3 This statement will demonstrate that the proposed conversion accords with both national and local planning policy and that there are no material considerations that would indicate otherwise.
- 1.4 The current proposal has been designed by Intelligent Residential Design. Drawing Nos. PA/01 - PA/05 inclusive and specialist ecological documentation support the application. The proposal is fully informed by the Council's Historic Buildings Guidance: Agricultural Buildings and Conversion – Barns.
- 1.5 In 2020 two applications were submitted for the conversion and extension of the barn and stables, accompanied by a multiplicity of other alterations and changes. The proposals (W/20/0022 and W/20/1487) were rightly found to be insensitive and not compliant with national and local policy. One application was withdrawn and the other refused for five reasons.
- 1.6 The current scheme represents a sensitive approach, fully compliant with national policy, the Development Plan and guidance.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site is located within the parish of Rowington. Rowington Parish a rural part of the District with a low population typically living in villages or hamlets and in a gently undulating landscape where agriculture dominates. It is very well located, being only 5 miles north-west of Warwick and 5 miles south-west of Kenilworth. The M40 is nearby. The nearest train station is at Lapworth which can be accessed on foot along the Grand Union Canal. The Heart of England Way, a long-distance footpath, runs through the village of Rowington.
- 2.2 The village of Rowington, really two separate clusters of buildings, had a population of 944 in the 2011 Census. The village, comprising Rowington Green and Rowington Church, is loosely formed and without a village core. There may not be a school any longer but there are public houses, a village hall and the Rowington Club as well as a cricket ground. The village has a wide and active range of groups and associations. contains a wide range and number of facilities and services. The village has medieval origins, and the Parish Church of St. Laurence has existed since at least medieval times, possibly the 12th Century. There are historic associations with Catherine Parr in Tudor times and with William Shakespeare's family. It is an attractive place to visit with National Trust properties within reach and two canals (Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and Grand Union Canal) for residents and visitors to enjoy. Local employment is very limited, though many work from home, even pre-covid this was a strong feature of the local employment picture. It is a popular place to live and commuting by train or car is significant given the good linkages to the national and local road and rail network.
- 2.3 The application site is located to the west of Rowington Green on the opposite side of Old Warwick Road. The barn is positioned towards the end of a private drive which runs north-west from Finwood Road

and serves Shepherds Fold as well as the application site. Shepherds Fold is a substantial and attractive dwelling set in extensive landscaped grounds with swimming pool, lawns, and mature trees as well as agricultural land.

2.4 The site is not visible from the public domain. It may be seen only at close quarters from private land. Trees, hedges, and roadside vegetation screen the group of buildings from the public highway. Access is from a single point by way of high wrought iron gates which provide a secure access. Apart from Shepherds Fold and the barn to which this application relates, there are other buildings nearby including a stable building and garaging, both of which lie outside the application site. A former games room is located to the rear of the barn and is located within the application site.

2.5 The application site is elongate with vehicular access at the southern end. To the west of Shepherds Fold is another dwelling, set in very substantial grounds. To the east and north as well as to the opposite side of Finwood Road is agricultural land laid to grass. Large fields of grazing land are characteristic of the locality.

2.6 The application site includes the driveway from the public road and further areas of hardstanding to the south and north of the barn. Beyond the hardstanding is the former games room building referred to above.

2.7 The redundant red brick barn is largely a simple tall rectangular form with a pitched roof. The original tiles have been removed and concrete tiles replace the original clay ones. Attached to the western end of the barn is a single storey irregularly shaped element also in red brick and clad with concrete roof tiles. The building as a whole is of single-skin brick construction. There is no corbelling at the eaves, though this is seen on the stable building outside the application site. There is a dentil course on the gables of the main barn immediately

beneath the clipped verge. There are several areas of patterns in the brickwork to provide air vents.

2.8 Openings in the barn are limited. There are timber wagon doors on the north and south elevations. The north elevation has no further openings. The south elevation has two further doors, one providing access into the single storey part of the building and the other modest door with arched lintel to the west of the wagon opening. The interior space is not sub-divided though there is a stair to a partial upper level to the east. There is no internal access between the main barn and the low single storey element. All the doors are solid timber and painted white. A high brick wall links the stables and the barn forming a small hard surfaced courtyard.

2.9 It is understood that in the past the barn was used for the storage of apples, as the original farm was an apple farm. The large number of ventilation holes in the walls may reflect this particular use. The applicant has, over many recent years, used the barn as ancillary domestic storage, however this is no longer required and it is currently redundant. A games room is located to the north of the barn but has not been used for some years and is in declining condition as it has not been a priority for the applicant. Aerial photos shown that its flat roof is being slowly colonised by shrubs. Garaging is located opposite closer to the dwelling.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The application proposes the complete removal of the games room building. It is proposed to convert the existing disused barn to form a modest dwelling with two bedrooms, an open full height living space and a study area. One bedroom and the study area would be formed at upper level. No extensions are proposed. The area of hardstanding to the rear of the barn is to be removed.
- 3.2 The proposed dwelling would be part single storey and part two-storey. The brickwork would be unaltered in terms of openings. Openings would be retained with the wagon doors fully glazed and the door to the single-storey element also glazed to provide light to the bedroom inside. The provision of an upper level would be achieved by providing two separate floors within the brick walls thereby avoiding cutting across the wagon doors. The study would be served by a straight staircase while the master bedroom would be accessed by a spiral stair. The roof would remain tile clad without interruption apart from two modest rooflights on the rear elevation (north) providing necessary and limited ventilation and light to the bedroom and study. Access to the ground floor would be via an entrance hallway using the timber door which would be retained. Access to the rear garden area would be through glass doors part of the wagon door infill arrangement.
- 3.3 The dwelling would be provided with open vehicular parking for two cars on the opposite side of the driveway. A car charging point would be provided there as well as waste and recycling bin storage. Bins would be moved to the public road for emptying.
- 3.4 In 2020 two planning applications were submitted for the conversion of the barn and a multiplicity of other alterations and changes. The proposals (W/20/0022 and W/20/1487) were rightly found to be both insensitive and non-complaint with both national and local policy.

One application was withdrawn and the other refused for five reasons.

- 3.5 The current application is not based on what was previously submitted and found wanting. The current application has been developed from first principles and demonstrably takes on board adopted policy, Warwick Council's guidance and the NPPF, both in terms of the barn and all other planning issues.

4. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The principle of development is set out in national and local planning policy. Government policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012 confirms the primacy of the development plan and states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Framework requires Local Planning Authorities to have development plans in place which are up to date, and which comply with national policy. That position has not changed throughout the periodic updates the NPPF, its latest iteration being dated July 2021.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that the starting point for considering development proposals is the Development Plan and goes on to say that "*the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*" Central Government advice is a material planning consideration.
- 4.3 The Development Plan for Warwick is now the Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029, adopted in September 2017. Relevant policies are set out below.
- 4.4 Strategic Policy DS2 (Providing the Homes the District Needs) identifies the need for homes that provide quality and a mix. A mix of homes is specifically identified to meet needs including homes that are suitable for the various groups and needs within the community. There is a need for choice.
- 4.5 Strategic Policy DS3 (Supporting Sustainable Communities) sets out the key issues for achieving and promoting high quality development, including

- delivering high quality layout and design that relates to existing landscape or urban form
- caring for the built, cultural, and natural heritage
- protecting areas of significance including high-quality landscapes, heritage assets and ecological assets
- delivering a low carbon economy and lifestyles and environmental sustainability.

4.6 Strategic Policy DS5 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) this is overtly linked to the NPPF and says that the Council “will work proactively with applicants to find solutions that mean proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area”. It also confirms that planning proposals that accord with the Local Plan will be approved without delay.

4.7 Policy DS18 (Green Belt) restates that a large part of the District is designated Green Belt. The intention is, amongst other things, to prevent urban sprawl. The policy wording is short and states that national policies will apply. There is clear direction to the NPPF and a clear statement that national policy identifies exceptions to what is deemed inappropriate.

4.8 Policy H1 (Directing New Housing) sets out where housing will be permitted. Limited infill is allowed at Rowington and Rowington Green. Policy H1 supports proposals in the open countryside where *‘the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings in accordance with Policy BE4 and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting’*.

4.9 Policy BE1 (Layout and Design) states that new development will be permitted where it positively contributes to the character and quality of its environment through good layout and design.

- 4.10 Policy BE3 (Amenity Development) seeks to prevent unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of nearby uses and residents. It also seeks to secure the provision of acceptable standards of amenity for future users and occupiers.
- 4.11 Policy BE4 (Converting Rural Buildings) sets out a presumption in favour of the conversion and adaptation of rural buildings provided that certain conditions apply, as follows
- the building is of permanent and substantial construction
 - the condition of the building, its nature and location, makes it suitable for re-use or adaptation
 - the proposed use or adaptation can be accommodated without extensive rebuilding or alteration to the external appearance of the building
 - the appearance and setting of the building following conversion protects, and where possible enhances, the character and appearance of the countryside.
- 4.12 The supporting text to Policy BE4 says that rural buildings are an important element of local character of the rural area. The Council is said to be keen to support measures to bring vacant or redundant rural buildings back into productive use. Policy seeks to ensure that original qualities and features are preserved without extensive rebuilding and alteration.
- 4.13 Policy TR1 (Access and Choice) sets out that safe and suitable access is a vital part of delivering high quality development. All developments must include safe and convenient access for all modes of transport.

- 4.14 Policy TR3 (Parking) sets out the need to strike a balance taking into account location, accessibility (other than by private car), parking provision, the needs of the disabled, cyclists and other users.
- 4.15 Policy NE2 (Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets) sets out the Council's commitment to protect designated areas of national or local importance for biodiversity. Proposals that will destroy or adversely affect, amongst other things, protected, rare, endangered or priority species will not be permitted. Proposals that might affect such assets must be the subject of an ecological assessment which should include an assessment of likely harm and means of mitigation where possible.
- 4.16 In addition to the Local Plan the Council has produced relevant guidance on the conversion of agricultural buildings.

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- 4.17 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) is directly relevant, and it is evident that the Local Plan policies most relevant to this case spring directly from the NPPF. The NPPF aims amongst other things to boost housing that comprises sustainable development whilst at the same time attaching great importance to the design of the built environment and advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 4.18 Key parts of the NPPF in this case relate to Green Belt policy, the conversion of rural buildings and the emphasis on sustainable development.
- 4.19 In the Green Belt the construction of new buildings is inappropriate unless the scheme falls into a specific exception. The exceptions are set out at paragraph 149. They include 'c) *the extension or alteration*

of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.'

- 4.20 At paragraph 150 it states that '*certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it*'. These include '*the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent or substantial construction*'.

5. PLANNING ISSUES

5.1 The newly adopted Local Plan (LP) and the NPPF support applications for sustainable development. They should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the national or local policies.

5.2 The issues that this proposal raises include:

- Green Belt
- Design
- Housing Need
- Ecology
- Other matters including amenity

5.3 The starting point in considering this proposal is factual. The barn is redundant, disused and unrelated to any farming operation. It is located within and is an integral part of a residential curtilage set in an agricultural landscape.

5.4 Green Belt

Most development is inappropriate in the Green Belt. For development to be considered as 'not inappropriate' it must fall into a group of exceptions. In this case what is being proposed is the alteration of the barn **without extension**. It is proposed to convert what is an original building. That is not to say that the building has not been altered. It has. The wagon doors and other doors would not originally have been white painted timber and the roof would have been clad with clay tiles but apart from these modifications (which

can be reversed) the building in terms of policy must be considered to be original.

- 5.5 The proposal is fully compliant with the NPPF, particularly with reference to paragraph 149 c). The submitted scheme comprises 'not inappropriate' development and accords with the NPPF and Policy DS18. Even if it was considered that was not the case, the proposal complies with paragraph 150 d) in that the barn is of permanent and substantial construction, and conversion would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with any of the five purposes of the Green Belt (as set out at paragraph 138).
- 5.6 Openness is not defined anywhere. It was not defined in PPG3 that preceded the NPPF and the NPPF provides no guidance. What is implied is an absence of development. The need in terms of paragraph 150 is that openness would be preserved. In the case of the Shepherds Fold barn conversion, openness would not only be preserved but would be enhanced because a large building is to be removed. The games room building has a footprint a volume and those considerations, proxies for development, would lead to more openness rather than less.
- 5.7 By any measure in terms of judgement, the conversion and alteration of the Shepherds Fold barn complies with Green Belt policy. It should also be remembered that the reason why building conversion and adaptation became a part of Green Belt policy is that conversion is a sustainable option. Sustainability is at the heart of national policy, the golden thread linking the aims. It is not sustainable to allow redundant and disused buildings to fall into disrepair or to demolish them. That would be a waste of embedded carbon.

5.8 Design

Both national and local policy aim to ensure a high standard of design. In delivering the submitted scheme great care has been taken to avoid altering the barn. Changes reflect policy considerations set out in Policies BE1, BE3 and BE4. The recommendations of the Historic Buildings Guidance: Agricultural Buildings and Conversions - Barns was also carefully considered and advice taken on board.

5.9 The result is a scheme that would transform the disused barn at Shepherds Fold into a dwelling without significant or harmful alterations. All the changes – and they are few – would allow the origins, appearance and embedded rural character of the barn to be retained and would provide a dwelling. The barn would be transformed without adverse effect.

5.10 Policy BE4 seeks, like paragraph 150 of the NPPF, that buildings for conversion are of permanent and substantial construction. There is nothing in its location or nature that makes conversion an unsuitable option. There is not to be substantial rebuilding (none is proposed) and alterations firmly align with Council guidance. The proposed conversion respects the special qualities of this rural unlisted and unprotected building. The setting would be enhanced as the games building would be removed as well as hardstanding. The proposal is fully compliant with Policy BE4.

5.11 Policy BE3 addresses amenity. There would be no harm to amenity and the amenity of future residents of the resulting two-bedroom dwelling would fully accord with prevailing standards.

5.12 Policy BE1 would not be offended given the low-key nature of the scheme and the fact that at its heart it is a conversion and is not new build in any manner.

5.13 In terms of detailed changes to the building, these are set out in the table below and clearly demonstrate that the guidance on barn conversions has been adhered to. While there is Parish Council design guidance it does not relate to conversions, being wholly silent on this matter.

Guidance	Response
Roofs	
Retain the roof profile and form as far as possible – breaks in roof line should be avoided.	The roof profiles remain as existing.
Avoid disrupting the visual appearance of the roof with roof lights. They should be modest in size, located flush with the roof pitch and restricted to the absolute minimum and located preferably in the bottom third of the roof slope and related to the scale of the building.	It is proposed to insert 2 no. conservation roof lights into the rear slope of the roof towards the gable end of the roof and set within the bottom third of the roof slope.
Walls	
Retain the original walling material wherever possible: making good, repairing, or reinstating as necessary.	Repairs to the original brick walling will be undertaken as necessary.
Retain the geometric patterns of air vents often associated with brick barns	All existing features are to be retained as part of the proposals.
Ensure that any new rainwater goods are kept to the absolute minimum, are of metal construction and are painted an appropriate dark colour.	Rainwater goods will be replaced as necessary and will be of metal construction.
Interiors	
Ensure that a substantial part of the main interior void – at least one third – remains open to its full height.	The central part of the main building [approximately one third of the area] will remain open to its full height.
Ensure that original framing members – roof truss, tie beams, bracing members etc. are retained in situ.	The two existing roof trusses located either side of the central space are to be retained within the proposals.

Don't compartmentalise the interior void.	The proposals retain and utilise the existing spaces with glass screens / balustrading utilised to define the spaces.
Don't remove original internal walls or partitions unless structurally necessary.	No structural walls or partitions are being removed as part of the proposals.
Don't cut existing roof trusses or remove original bracing timbers or ties. This is more important if the integrity of the original building is to be retained.	Separate staircases are to be installed to access the first floor areas to avoid the need to cut the existing trusses.
Don't lower the original floor level.	The proposals allow for the existing floor level to be retained.
Wagon Doors	
Where good doors remain, they can be retained as shutters allowing opening to be used as a light source, or sealed in situ if daylight is not a problem	Doors to be removed as these openings are the main source of daylight.
Consider the detailing of any new screen inserted into the barn door carefully – the original door frame should be retained if possible. A strong vertical emphasis should be retained.	The new hardwood frames are set back into the openings and have a strong vertical emphasis.
Doors	
Restrict the amount of new openings to the absolute minimum.	There are no new openings proposed within the external walls of the building.
Re-use existing door openings wherever possible.	The proposals make use of the existing openings within the structure.

5.14 Housing Need

Policies for new housing in Warwick District are set out in the Local Plan. It is directed to allocated sites and to various places including infill at named villages. Policy H1 directs that there are Limited Infill Villages where housing within a defined boundary may be acceptable

in principle. Rowington and Rowington Green are two such villages. The application site lies outside the village of Rowington Green and outside the area where infill might be supported. While outside the boundary, the application site is nevertheless close to both villages and is closer to Rowington Green than it is from Rowington. Rowington Green infill is only 120m away see attached plan as **Appendix a**.

5.15 Policy H1 also refers to housing in the open countryside and at Policy H1 e) iv) supports development that would '*re-use redundant or disused buildings in accordance with Policy BE4 and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting*'. The barn at Shepherds Fold is disused and is redundant in terms of agriculture, its conversion fully accords with Policy BE4 and the proposal by removing a dilapidated building and hardstanding would enhance the setting of the barn.

5.16 The proposal fully accords with Policy H1.

5.17 Ecology

GS Ecology has provided an Ecological Assessment comprising an extended Phase 1 habitat and protected species scoping survey, bat roost assessment and great crested newt assessment. This recent assessment has been prepared following field survey work of the barn, the games building and the stables. Shepherds Fold itself was found (during 2014/5 in preparing or the submission for planning permission for an extension) to contain bats.

5.18 It comes as no surprise to discover that there are three types of bats associated with the outbuildings. There are three roosts in the barn and stables – common and soprano pipistrelle day roosts and a brown long-eared maternity roost. A licence is therefore required from Natural England. The position of the need for a licence before the

commencement of development can be safeguarded by condition. The applicant agrees to this approach.

- 5.19 A bat loft is proposed within the stable building.
- 5.20 There are four ponds within 100m of the application site. Pond 1 was surveyed, and great crested newts found not to be present. Pond 2 close by was not surveyed (as permission was not given) and it can be assumed that GCN are not present given the proximity of Ponds 1 and 2 and the habit of GCN to spread out from occupied ponds. Two further ponds have been identified, one of which appears to have been infilled. No surveys were carried out. It is concluded that it is highly unlikely that GCN would be affected by the proposal.
- 5.21 A mitigation strategy incorporating precautionary measures to protect species is necessary and is set out. The NPPF advice at Paragraphs 179 and 180 are supported and it is intended to provide native planting and to implement appropriate measures to enhance the biodiversity of the locality in terms of wildlife.
- 5.22 The proposal accords with planning policy in the NPPF, Policy NE2 of the adopted Local Plan, and Circular 06/2005 which remains in place despite the advent of the NPPF.
- 5.23 Other matters including parking and climate change

The proposal incorporates car parking and provides for a car charging point. The barn is not far from the village and residents could walk there but there are no shops or schools in the village. This development would not support a school or village store (neither would any infill dwellings) but would support well-established and well-used village facilities and networks.

- 5.24 In terms of climate change the proposal represents sustainable development, the re-use of a building. It would be converted to the

highest standard possible in terms of insulation, energy, and water. There is no conflict with national or local policy.

5.25 In summary, the proposed barn conversion comprises sustainable development which would contribute a small addition to the housing stock close to a village where there are some amenities and services. The proposed development would be a positive benefit in the area as it would provide housing choice for a small household. It could be an attractive option for the elderly or disabled given the proposed ground floor bedroom. The development proposed therefore accords with the Local Plan and with the NPPF.

5.26 The barn is located close to a scattered and loosely formed village (or villages). Though outside an infill area Shepherds Fold is part of a historic village grouping and that context must be fully considered. As previously stated the infill area of Rowington Green is only 10m away.

5.27 Paragraphs 78 to 80 of the NPPF are clear that there is a need to promote sustainable development in rural areas. Housing in rural areas should be located where it can enhance, support or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It states implicitly that a wider view is needed and directs that development in one village may support services in another. Distance from services is not a problem and does not rule out development. Paragraph 80 c) supports the re-use of redundant or disused buildings like the barn at Shepherds Fold. The proposal wholly aligns with various diverse policy strands.

5.28 In conclusion, there are no Green Belt, housing, ecology, design, or highway issues, there are no amenity issues are no other planning issues. There is a housing shortfall in Warwick - something which must be seen in the context of a sustained issue - and the adoption of the LP has not fully addressed the long-standing issues.

5.29 The development proposed fully accords with the Local Plan, local guidance and with the NPPF.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This very modest development would add to the quantum of housing in a District where the required 5-year housing land supply remains in question. The development would provide a modest and beautiful dwelling and would save an attractive but disused traditional building. It would support local services and facilities and enhance the site and wider locality.
- 6.2 The proposed dwelling would occupy land that is presently underused but is well located to the village close to established facilities and local amenities. It is a sustainable location, and the proposal represents sustainable development.
- 6.3 The proposal would have a positive impact on the character and appearance of the immediate area. The proposal has been designed to ensure that there would no harm to amenity and privacy. It is exactly the sort of development that national and local government seeks to encourage – it is the use of a brownfield site, it is in a sustainable location close to existing facilities and services, it is close to a largely residential village, it would meet the needs of a range of users, it would be safe and secure, it would improve the quality of the environment and will support the integrity of the existing small settlement.
- 6.4 The proposal has taken account of all aspects of the Local Plan and the NPPF as national planning policy and would fully accord with the overall objectives of those policies.
- 6.5 It is hoped that Officers will support the current proposal to provide this modest dwelling by conversion of a disused barn.



PLANNING AND DESIGN STATEMENT

CONVERSION OF REDUNDANT BARN AT SHEPHERDS FOLD, ROWINGTON

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