

Planning Statement

Strenneth,
Airfield Road,
Fersfield
IP22 2FF



Prepared for Client:
Paul Davey



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Date of Application	August 2023
Local Planning Authority	South Norfolk Council
Applicant	Paul Davey
Development Description	Conversion of existing barn to Class C3 Dwellinghouse
Site Address	Strenneth, Airfield Road, Fersfield, IP22 2FF
Our Reference	J4021
Report Revision	V.1.0

Planning Statement

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by Parker Planning Services Ltd on behalf of Paul Davey (the Applicant) in support of a full planning application for the change of use of a barn / outbuilding at Strenneth Guesthouse to form one dwelling. This application has followed pre-application advice provided by the Council under reference ENQMI/2020/0982.

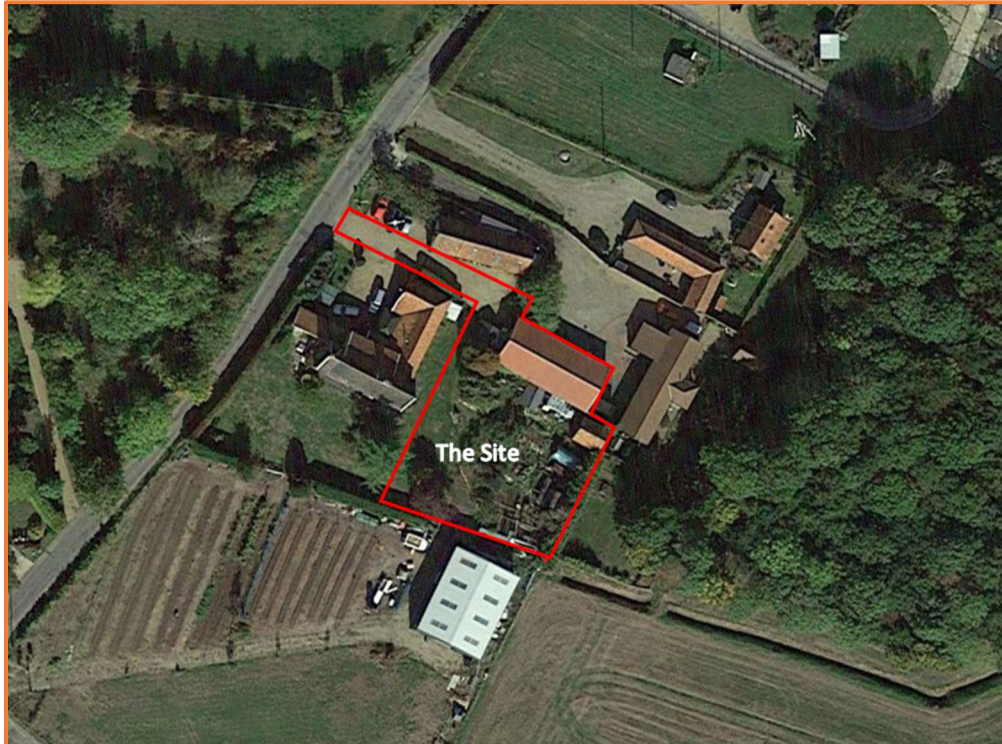


Figure 1- Site Location



Photo 1 – showing the building and garden area for the building

2. Description of Development

The Proposed Building

- 2.1. The building proposed for conversion had most recently been used for storage in conjunction with Strenneth Guesthouse. The building was originally used as a piggery until its conversion in 2003 following application reference 2003/1313 for commercial use.
- 2.2. The Applicant intends to live in the building once a permission has been granted for C3 as they currently live within an apartment in Strenneth Guesthouse.
- 2.3. The structure is sound and capable of conversion to an attractive dwelling and is sited away from other buildings to a level which ensures good residential amenity will be maintained for the existing dwelling and proposed.



Photo 2 – Showing existing entrance to building

Site & Context

- 2.4. The site is located just north of Fersfield, outside of any defined development boundaries. The site is accessed from Airfield Road and is immediately adjacent to Strenneth Guesthouse and the buildings associated with the business, including the manager's accommodation.
- 2.5. Strenneth Guesthouse is a Grade II Listed Building listed under Row Farmhouse. A collection of barns converted to dwellings lie between the site and the neighbouring Row Farm to the north and east, agricultural land lies to the south and neighbouring dwellings lie to the west across Airfield Road.

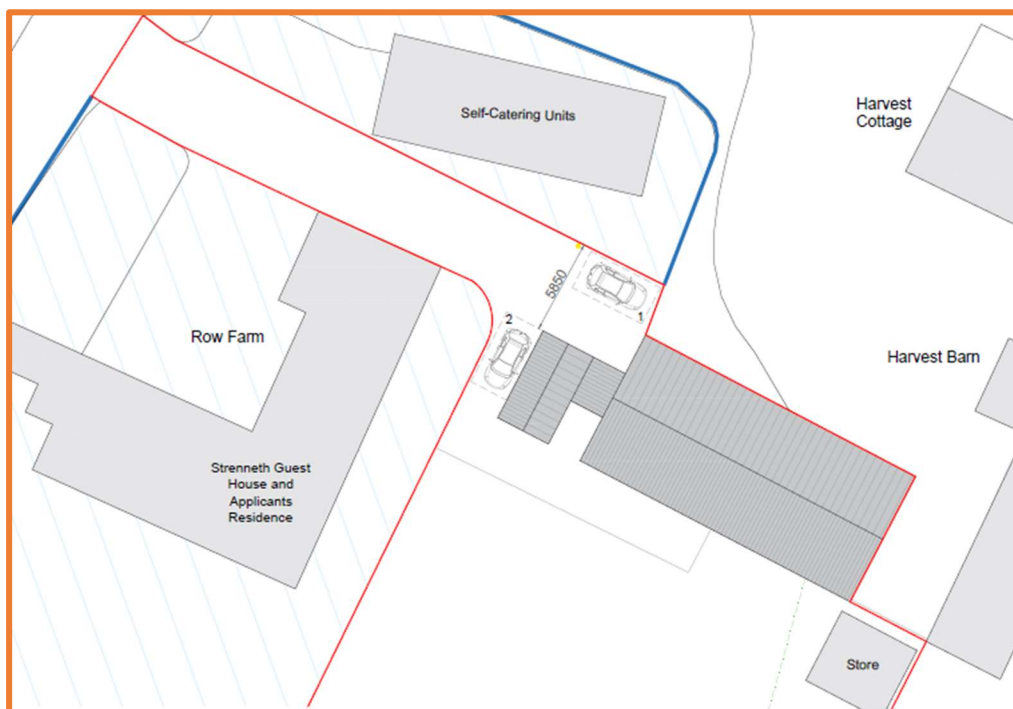


Figure 2- Proposed Site Plan

3. Relevant Planning History

3.1. The following planning applications are considered relevant to the site and proposal:

<i>2017/0016</i>	<i>Variation of Condition 2 of permission 2017/0016 - alterations to the site layout, access road, larger poly tunnel, provision and details of water storage, addition of windows to building and fence location</i>	<i>Approved</i>
<i>2003/1313</i>	<i>Variation of condition no3 of planning permission 02/1499/F to allow building to be retained and used in connection with domestic storage for Strenneth</i>	<i>Approved</i>

4. Planning Policy Context

Introduction

4.1. In making this application, consideration has been made of relevant local and national planning policy and guidance.

Local Policies

4.2. The Site is located within South Norfolk District; as such any development must account for the development strategies and plans in place locally. The Council's Local Plan comprises the following documents including relevant policies:

Joint Core Strategy (adopted 2011)

- Policy 1 – Addressing Climate Change and Protective Environmental Assets
- Policy 2 – Promoting Good Design
- Policy 4 – Housing Delivery
- Policy 6 – Access and Transportation
- Policy 17 – Smaller Rural Communities and the Countryside

South Norfolk Local Plan (adopted 2015)

- DM1.1 – Sustainable Development
- DM1.3 – Sustainable Location of Development
- DM2.10 – Conversion and Re-Use of Buildings in the Countryside
- DM3.11 – Road Safety and the Free Flow of Traffic
- DM3.12 – Provision of Vehicle Parking
- DM3.13 – Amenity, Noise and Quality of Life
- DM4.10 – Heritage Assets

National Planning Policy Framework

4.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance are both material planning considerations. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied while the NPPG sets out Government guidance in relation to planning related issues in England.

4.4. The relevant sections from the National Planning Policy Framework include:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Chapter 5 – Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- Chapter 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport

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- Chapter 11 – Making Effective Use of Land
 - Chapter 12 – Achieving Well Designed Places
 - Chapter 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

5. Assessment

Principle of development

- 5.1. The application seeks permission for the conversion of a barn / outbuilding used in association with Strenneth Guesthouse to form a single detached dwelling. The Applicant has previously submitted a pre-application enquiry (reference ENQMI/2020/0982) for advice and guidance on the proposal though it is appreciated that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been updated since the advice was received in September 2020.
- 5.2. Further, it is understood that South Norfolk District Council do not currently hold a demonstrable 5 Year Housing Land Supply due to the impacts of Nutrient Neutrality across Norfolk. The application site lies outside the catchment area for Nutrient Neutrality and is therefore considered that the 'tilted balance' should be engaged in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- 5.3. Notwithstanding the current 5 Year Supply issues, it is still considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable when considered against Policy DM2.10 of the South Norfolk Local Plan (adopted 2015) for the conversion of buildings in the countryside. Policy DM2.10 contains 5 criteria applicable to the conversion and re-use of buildings for residential use:
- The proposed development should not result in the loss of a farm building suitable for continued agricultural use and which, if its alternative use is permitted, would be likely to result in the construction of a replacement agricultural building;
 - The building(s) to be re-used should be standing and of adequate external dimensions to accommodate the proposed use, without the need for the erection of major extensions and additional outbuildings and / or significant changes in materials and appearance that would have a serious adverse impact on the rural characteristics of the original building;
 - The development (including associated use of external space and change of use of land) is sympathetic to the setting;
 - It is satisfied that the buildings cannot be practically or viably converted for Employment Uses; and
 - It is a historic and traditionally constructed building worthy of protection, and the proposals will enhance the building and / or the setting of other nearby buildings in the Countryside.
- 5.4. It was established within the pre-application process that the building has been converted for storage purposes and no longer constitutes an agricultural building. There would therefore be no loss of a farm building due to this application in accordance with criteria a) of the Policy.
- 5.5. The building has already been converted from a piggery to use for storage, the proposal would seek to convert this to a level suitable for inhabiting as a residential dwelling. A supporting structural survey was submitted with the pre-application enquiry and no concerns were raised regarding the structural integrity of the building. There are existing lean-to structures to the

building which would be reused as a modest carport and would therefore not require extension. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with criteria b) of Policy DM2.10.

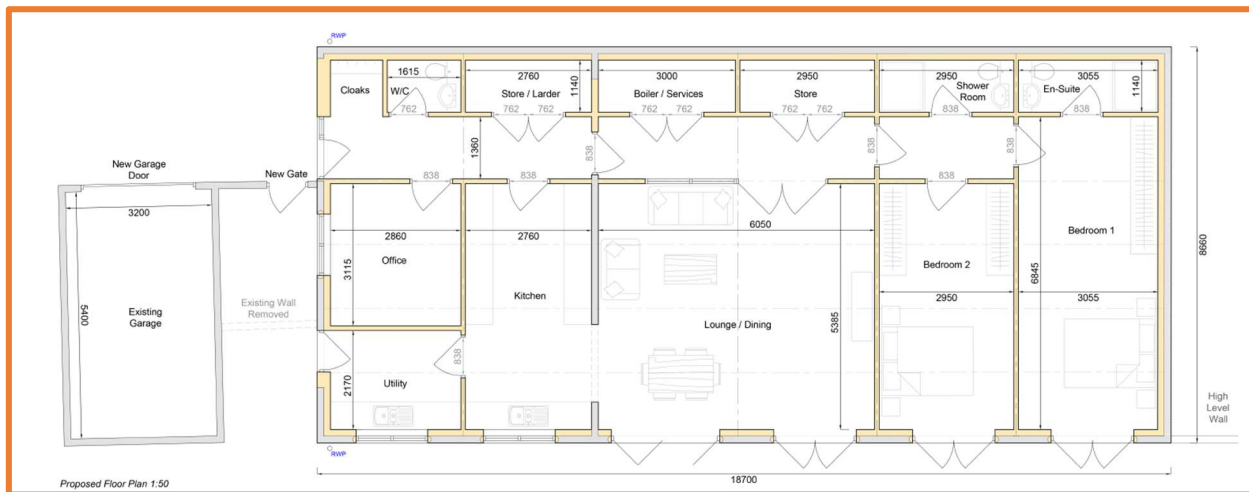


Figure 3 - Proposed Floor Plan

- 5.6. Criteria c) of Policy DM2.10 requires development (including use of external space) to be sympathetic to the setting. The application site lies within an arrangement of buildings which had previously formed an agricultural holding. These buildings have since been converted either for tourism use or to residential dwellings and annexes. It is therefore considered that the setting of the building under this proposal has changed over the years from a purely rural one to a domesticated arrangement in the countryside. The proposal will require limited alterations to the exterior of the building and will provide adequate external amenity space to be used as a private garden in accordance with criteria c).
- 5.7. The conversion of buildings for residential use also requires compliance with criteria e) of the Policy to ensure that the building cannot be viably converted for Employment Uses. The building has been used for commercial storage in association with Strenneth Guesthouse, however in more recent years the converted barns used as holidays lets have had occupancy restrictions removed to form residential dwellings due to viability issues. It is therefore considered that the building would not be suitable for employment uses and the most viable use of the barn is to form a residential dwelling.
- 5.8. With regards to criteria f) it was considered during the pre-application process that this criteria was not met by the proposal as the building did not meet the historic requirements of the Policy. Since the pre-application response was received the National Planning Policy Framework has been updated and Paragraph 80 does not require redundant buildings in the countryside to be of a historic or traditional construction in order to be converted. It is therefore considered that criteria f) is out of date and no longer applicable to applications for the conversion of buildings in the countryside to dwellings.
- 5.9. Further, it is noted that South Norfolk Council do not currently have a demonstrable 5 Year Housing Land Supply due to the impacts of Nutrient Neutrality. In locations outside of the Nutrient Neutrality catchment area the 'tilted balance' is to be applied under Paragraph 11 of the

NPPF in favour of sustainable development, resulting in little weight being given to the Local Plan Policies.

5.10. The site lies approximately 4 miles north west of the main town of Diss. Whilst the site is located some distance from the nearest settlement it is not considered that this renders the site unsustainable when weighed up against the benefits of reusing a redundant building. The site is surrounded by residential dwellings therefore the proposal will not introduce residential use in an isolated location. Further, the benefits that the new dwelling will contribute to the South Norfolk 5 Year Supply as well as the local economy would outweigh the impact of traffic movements to and from a single dwelling.

Design and appearance

5.11. The proposal will require minimal alterations to the exterior of the building, in accordance with Policy DM2.10. The exterior walls of the building are currently exposed masonry brickwork with elements of timber cladding. The proposal seeks to render the entire building for a more uniform appearance in keeping with the surrounding buildings.

5.12. The size of the existing barn will provide sufficient space for two bedrooms, a kitchen/lounge with separate utility, a study, and several storage cupboards. The building benefits from existing lean-to structures which have also been used for the storage of cars, it is proposed that these remain in place to form a carport for the new dwelling. The overall massing of the building will therefore remain in keeping with the size of the site and the surrounding dwellings whilst the scale and appearance of the dwelling will integrate with the other converted barns in the immediate setting of the site in accordance with criteria (4)(a) of Policy DM3.8 of the Local Plan.

5.13. The southern elevation of the building currently benefits from 3 windows and it is proposed that these are enlarged with three additional windows to provide sufficient natural lighting to the habitable rooms in accordance with Criteria (4)(f) of Policy DM3.8. The southern elevation to the building faces onto the proposed external amenity space for the dwelling and no new windows are proposed on the remaining elevations to ensure there is no impact on neighbouring privacy or harm to the character of the building and setting.

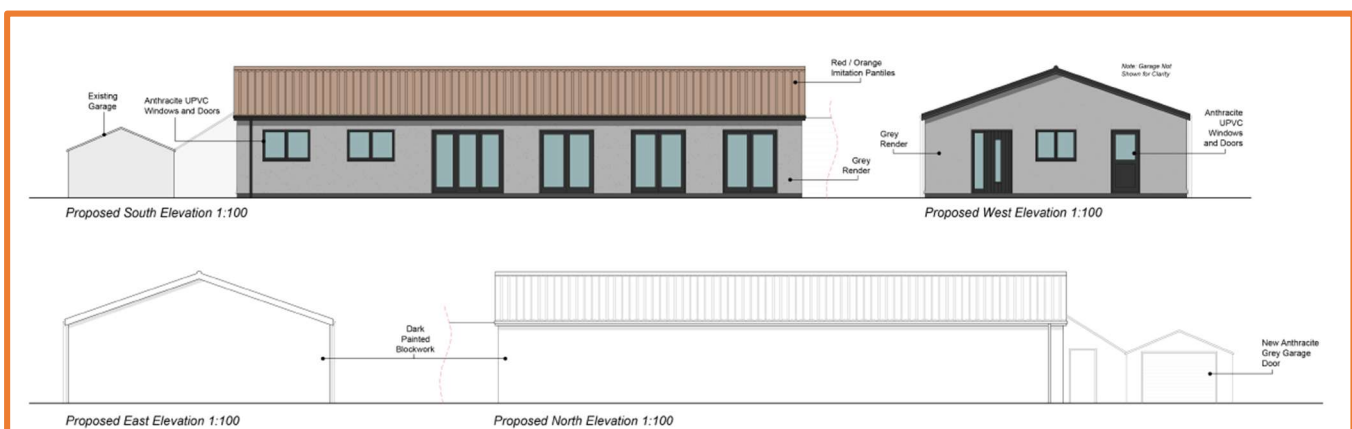


Figure 4 - Proposed Elevations

5.14. The southern boundary of the site is bordered by an adjacent barn which mostly blocks views of the site from the surrounding viewpoints. The proposed fenestration arrangement will

therefore have a limited impact on the character and appearance of the countryside in accordance with Policy DM4.5.

5.15. Further, previous planning applications on site have converted multiple agricultural barns to residential dwellings and annexes. It is therefore considered that character of the site has altered over the past 25 years from a rural setting to a rurally located grouping of dwellings. The introduction of additional fenestration to the southern elevation of the building will therefore remain in keeping with the residential nature of the surrounding buildings and will not have a harmful impact on the setting of the barn or surrounding countryside in accordance with Policy DM4.5 of the Local Plan and Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy.

5.16. Strenneth Guesthouse is a Grade II Listed Building, listed under the name Row Farmhouse. It was considered at pre-application stage that as the barn for conversion is not itself Listed or curtilage Listed the proposal would not result in harm to the buildings in the vicinity of the site, in accordance with Policy DM4.10 of the Local Plan, and sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990.

Impact on amenities

5.17. Policy DM3.13 seeks to protect the amenities of residents adjacent to a site for development, as well as residents of a proposed dwelling through high quality design. As mentioned above the application does not seek to create any new windows to elevations which share a boundary with a residential neighbour so the proposal will not result in a loss of privacy to neighbouring properties.

5.18. The garden will lie to the south of the dwelling to provide sufficient external amenity space to the new residents whilst maintaining the privacy to both the new dwelling and existing residents in the area. The conversion of one existing barn into a dwelling in an area already occupied by several residential neighbours is not considered to create a harmful level of noise or light and will comply with the requirements of Policy DM3.13

Ecological Impacts

5.19. Due to the nature of the application for a conversion of the building, the Applicant has obtained a Preliminary Ecological Assessment in support of the application. The Assessment obtained demonstrates that the habitats within and adjacent to the site has the potential to support bats and breeding birds. The habitats have however been deemed of a relatively low intrinsic ecological value and no other ecological surveys are required to support the application as the development is not considered to affect the local bat populations.

5.20. Mitigation measures are proposed within the Preliminary Ecological Assessment to provide wildlife sensitive lighting as well as habitat enhancements with bat and bird boxes. The mitigation measures set out within the Assessment are considered sufficient to not only mitigate the impact of the proposal but also deliver a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Policy 1 of the Joint Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

- 5.21. Provision of vehicle parking is set out in Policy DM3.12 of the Local Plan in accordance with Norfolk County Council's parking standards. The proposal provides a secure carport for storage as well as ample parking on the dwelling's driveway for the required 2 spaces as set out under the County standards.
- 5.22. The dwelling will share the existing access with Strenneth Guest House though the modest addition of an average 6 traffic movements per day will not have a harmful impact on the safety of the highway. There is adequate space for two passing vehicles within the access point for Strenneth Guest House and parking provision for the dwelling will be separate to the existing carpark, thereby ensuring sufficient parking for the dwelling and Guest House to avoid any on-street parking in accordance with Paragraphs 110 and 111 of the NPPF and Policy 2 of the Joint Core Strategy.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1. Due to changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in 2021 following the receipt of the pre-application advice from South Norfolk District Council, it is considered that the proposal for the conversion of an existing barn at Strenneth Guesthouse is compliant with all the relevant criterion of Policy DM2.10 for the conversion of buildings in the Countryside.
- 6.2. Further, the site lies outside of the Nutrient Neutrality Catchment Area and would therefore be subject to the 'titled balance' under the NPPF. The proposal would provide an additional dwelling in an area which has already benefitted from several permissions granting the conversion of barns to dwellings, and would therefore not be considered to be isolated.
- 6.3. The proposed design and appearance of the conversion has been suitably considered to ensure that the development will remain in keeping with the residential and rural character of the area whilst not impacting on the amenities of existing residents.
- 6.4. For the reasons set out above it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in Planning Balance terms, and the development should be approved accordingly.

7. Appendix

Pre-application advice response

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Our ref ENQMI/2020/0982

17 September 2020

Dear Mr Day

Location: Strenneth Airfield Road Fersfield Norfolk IP22 2FF
Proposal: Conversion of existing domestic storage unit to dwelling.

Thank you for your enquiry. Detailed below are the main planning considerations and planning policies which are relevant to your proposal and an officer's opinion on the likelihood of permission being granted, together with details of how to apply.

Assessment

The scheme is assessed against policy DM2.10 of the SNLP 2015. This permits the conversion of buildings in the Countryside for non-agricultural purposes subject to meeting certain criteria.

I note that the building has been in domestic use for some time being used for storage, therefore the proposal for the conversion to a dwelling meets criteria a) as there is no loss of a building suitable for continued agricultural use.

It is intended to convert the building as it stands without significant extension or additional outbuildings, therefore criteria b) is met.

It would be possible to provide adequate external space which would be sympathetic to the setting of the site, so criteria c) could be met.

Criteria d) is not relevant as the scheme is not for commercial use.

The policy goes on to say the conversion of buildings in the Countryside for residential use will only be supported where all the above criteria are satisfied and there is compelling evidence submitted that buildings:

e) cannot be practically or viably converted for Employment Use: and
f) it is a historic and traditional constructed building worthy of protection and the proposals will enhance the building and/or the setting of other nearby buildings in the Countryside.

In terms of criteria e) I note from the history, a previous building on the site had a condition lifted to allow a holiday let to become a permanent dwelling because it was not viable as a holiday let. Therefore, I do not consider that converting this building to commercial including holiday let would be viable and therefore criteria e) is met.

Turning to the last criteria f), I note from your planning statement that the building is masonry / steel portal framed unit with a duo pitch roof, divided equally into six* bays by principal steel portal frames sitting on 150mm blockwork walls. The roof is clad with red / orange imitation pantiles sheeting, walls consist of masonry blockwork up to approx. 2.6m. I do not doubt that the building is of solid construction, however, is not considered to be of historic or of traditional construction and therefore not worthy of retention to meet the requirements of criteria f). It is for this reason the proposal to convert the building to residential fails to accord with policy DM2.10.

I also note from the supporting statement that it is the owner's intention to occupy the conversion and use the existing main dwelling as hotel B/B. It would be difficult to condition this, and given the location of the site, and the previous history stating that the other holiday let was not financially viable to justify the removal of the occupancy restriction, it is not a condition the authority would wish to impose.

The supporting statement mentions that the site may not be considered as a sustainable location, however, when considering buildings for conversion, they are rarely in sustainable locations, but they are assessed against the other criteria of policy DM2.10. Therefore, from the point of view of sustainable development, I would not consider this to be a material consideration when assessing the conversion of buildings in the Countryside.

Impact on the historic environment

DM Policy 4.10 sets out that proposals must have regard to the historic environment and safeguard the setting of such buildings. The proposed building which is the subject of this enquiry is not listed, nor curtilage listed has no impact on the setting of the main listed building, therefore policy DM4.10 and S16(2) and S66(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is met.

Highway safety

DM Policy 3.11 relates to highway safety and DM Policy 3.12 relates to parking. These seek to ensure that proposals have no impact on the highway safety of the surrounding area and that there is adequate parking on the site. I am satisfied that the proposal would comply with both of these policies.

Conclusion

The construction of the building, is not historic or of traditional value to justify its retention and conversion to meet criteria f), or the conversion of the building to any form of holiday let, due to the financial viability of previous units on the site. I do not consider the proposal to convert the building to residential meets the criteria of policy DM2.10 and cannot be supported.

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