



Planning, Design and Access Statement

**For the conversion of barn to form additional residential
accommodation.**

At

Lower Dorweeke Farm,

Silverton,

Exeter,

EX5 4BU.

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Introduction

This statement has been prepared to accompany a full planning application submitted to Mid Devon District Council. This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of a barn to form additional accommodation at Lower Dorweeke Farm, Silverton, Exeter, EX5 4BU.

The purpose of the planning statement is to provide the local planning authority with the relevant background information to the proposal and the necessary objective criteria to address the key development control issues associated with the determination of this application.

This document will firstly outline the site location, the surrounding area and the relevant overarching planning policy framework, before justifying the design, access and any other material planning considerations for the proposed development. In line with Local Plan policy DM11, the proposal presents an appropriately scaled and functional form of ancillary development to complement the existing dwelling.

Overall, the conversion of a barn to form additional accommodation is appropriate and will provide the accommodation needed to serve the applicant for his retirement, which will be ancillary to the main house. The main house features very steep steps, which has raised concerns for the applicant. As they become elderly, they may no longer be able to use them; therefore, the proposed development will be needed. The proposal and the designs respect the size, appearance, and position of the existing and neighbouring dwellings without creating any harm or adverse impacts.

The Site and Surrounding Area

The proposed development site at Lower Dorweeke Farm is situated to the north of Silverton and to the south east of Bickleigh. The site is not located within a defined settlement boundary and, therefore, in policy terms, is classified as a countryside landscape.

The site itself is not subject to any historic listed building status, nor is the site subject to any special landscape designation or Article 4 Directive, with the site not part of a Conservation Area. Additionally, the site is located within a flood zone 2 and 3 area.

Lower Dorweeke Farm consists of the main farmhouse and a collection of old and new outbuildings, which forms the curtilage, which has been split into two properties. The original yard to the West of the Farmhouse is now in separate ownership, but the shippon and threshing barn are still associated with the Farmhouse.

The Location



Site Location: (Image reproduced from Google Maps 2024)

The site is bordered by the River Burn to the west of the site, and open countryside landscape to the north, east, south and surroundings.

It is considered that the proposed development will create no adverse impacts or harm upon the site, the neighbouring dwelling or its primary surroundings as an appropriate form of development.

T. 01884 38662

Planning History

Having researched the Mid Devon District Council website planning history, it shows that a few of planning applications have been made in relation to the site at Lower Dorweeke, before submitting this planning application.

Date	Type of Application	Decision	Reference
18 th Nov 2010	Conversion of redundant barn to form annexe/guest suite ancillary to use of main dwelling	Approved	10/01282/FULL
03 Aug 2009	Certificate of lawfulness for an existing porch	Approved	09/00812/CLU
20 th May 2008	Erection of extensions	Approved	08/00621/FULL

Policy Context

The following section of this planning, design and access statement highlights the current national and local planning policies relevant to the proposed development.

National Policy Context

The revised NPPF was published on 20th July 2021 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The revised framework replaces the previous version of the NPPF published in February 2019, with a presumption in favour of sustainable development remaining at the heart. The following paragraphs from the revised NPPF are relevant for the determination of this application.

Under Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places, Paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.*

The proposed development seeks to sensitively integrate the additional accommodation needed to serve the applicant's retirement and is appropriately located to function well alongside the host dwelling. The design of the ancillary accommodation seeks to respect the existing rural characteristics of the site and sit comfortably within the site context, in accordance with the aims of paragraph 130.

Local Policy

Mid Devon District Council voted on the 29th July 2020 to adopt the Local Plan 2013-2033 following the receipt of the Planning Inspectors report which concluded that the plan was 'sound'. The policies within this adopted plan carry full weight in the determination of planning applications, with the relevant policies for this application being the following.

The relevant Local Plan development management policies for this proposal are S9, S14, DM1, DM5, DM9 and DM11. It is noted that Policy DM11, residential extensions and ancillary development, is of key relevance to the proposed development.

S9 – Environment

Development will sustain the distinctive quality, character and diversity of Mid Devon's environmental assets and minimise the impact of development on climate change through:

- a) *High quality sustainable design which reinforces the character and distinctiveness of Mid Devon's historic built environment, mitigates and adapts to climate change and creates attractive places*
- b) *The efficient use and conservation of natural resources of land, water and energy, minimising pollution and preserving the quality and productivity of the best and most versatile agricultural land where possible*
- c) *The provision of measures to reduce the risk of flooding to life and property, requiring sustainable drainage systems including provisions for future maintenance, guiding development to locations of lowest flood risk by applying a sequential test where appropriate, and avoiding an increase in flood risk elsewhere;*
- d) *Renewable energy development in locations where there is an acceptable local impact, including visual, on nearby residents, landscape character and wildlife balanced with the wider sustainability benefits of renewable energy;*
- e) *The preservation and enhancement of the distinctive qualities of Mid Devon's natural landscape, supporting opportunities identified within landscape character areas. Within the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and within the setting of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks, the primary objective will be to protect the special qualities of that landscape and its setting;*
- f) *The protection and enhancement of designated sites of international, national and local biodiversity and geodiversity importance. On both designated sites and undesignated sites, development will support opportunities for protecting and enhancing species populations and lining habitats. If significant harm resulting from development cannot be avoided impacts should be adequately mitigated. Compensation measures will only be considered where appropriate as a last resort; and*
- g) *The preservation and enhancement of Mid Devon's cultural and historic environment, and the protection of sites, buildings, areas and features of recognised national and local importance such as listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and local heritage assets.*

T. 01884 38662

S14 – Countryside

Development outside settlements will preserve and where possible enhance the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside whilst promoting sustainable diversification of the rural economy. Detailed development policies will permit agricultural and other appropriate rural uses.

DM1 – High Quality Design

Designs of new development must be of high quality, based upon and demonstrating the following principles:

- a) *Clear understanding of the characteristics of the site, its wider context and the surrounding area;*
- b) *Efficient and effective use of the site, having regard to criterion (a);*
- c) *Positive contribution to local character including any heritage or biodiversity assets and the setting of heritage assets;*
- d) *Creation of safe and accessible places that also encourage and enable sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling;*
- e) *Visually attractive places that are well integrated with surrounding buildings, streets and landscapes, and do not have an unacceptably adverse effect on the privacy and amenity of the proposed or neighbouring properties and uses, taking account of: i) Architecture ii) Siting, layout, scale and massing iii) Orientation and fenestration iv) Materials, landscaping and green infrastructure*
- f) *Appropriate drainage including sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), including arrangements for future maintenance, and connection of foul drainage to a mains sewer where available.*
- g) *Adequate levels of daylight, sunlight and privacy to private amenity spaces and principal windows;*
- h) *Suitably sized rooms and overall floorspaces which allows for adequate storage and movement within the building together as set out in the Nationally Described Space Standard with external spaces for recycling, refuse and cycle storage; and*
- i) *On sites of 10 houses or more the provision of 20% of dwellings built to Level 2 of Building Regulations Part M 'access to and use of dwellings'*

DM5 – Parking

Development must provide an appropriate level of parking, taking into account the accessibility of the site, the availability of public transport, and the type, mix and use of the development.

DM9 – Conversion of rural buildings

The conversion of redundant or disused rural buildings of substantial and permanent construction which positively contribute to an area's rural character for residential, tourism or employment uses will be permitted where:

a) A suitable access to the building is in place or can be created without damaging the surrounding area's rural character and the road network can support the proposed use;

An existing access is already in place and is sufficiently wide and has good visibility therefore, there would be no adverse impact on the surrounding highway network.

b) The building can be converted without significant alteration, extension or rebuilding;

The structural report, prepared by Consulting Engineers on the 25th of July 2023, recommends that the existing building structure is capable of conversion to a domestic application. The structural report has been submitted alongside this application.

c) The design will retain the original character of the building and its surroundings; and

As mentioned above, the building is structurally sound, and although a few works will be required, the proposed development will retain the existing character of the building and its surroundings. The proposed development will comprise enhancement of the building, while retaining its key characteristics.

d) The development will retain any nature conservation interest associated with the site or building, and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible.

The proposal can include the provision of bat and bird boxes on the building.

Policy DM11 – Residential extensions and ancillary development

Extensions to existing dwellings and other ancillary development will be permitted, if they:

- a) Respect the character, scale, setting and design of existing dwellings;*
- b) Will not result in over-development of the dwelling curtilage; and*
- c) Will not have a significantly adverse impact on the living conditions of occupants of neighbouring properties.*

Taking into account the national and local planning policy requirements, along with the general support for ancillary residential development, the proposal is considered to constitute an appropriate form of development in this location.

The remainder of this statement will justify how the development will complement the existing dwelling as a modestly scaled and functional form of ancillary development.

The Case for Permission

The case for permission is set out in the subsections below and demonstrates how the development proposal meets with the key planning policies contained within the Mid Devon Local Plan. Specifically, Policies DM9 and DM11 are of key relevance to this proposal.

The proposed conversion of the barn is to provide additional residential accommodation for when the applicant enters his retirement. The main house features very steep steps, which has raised concerns for the applicant. As they become elderly, they may no longer be able to use them; therefore, the proposed development will be needed. The structure will not result in an overdevelopment of the site as it will utilise the existing building, which is closely located to the main house.

As policy DM11 states, ancillary residential development to dwellings is acceptable in principle and will be permitted where they respect the character, scale, setting and design of the existing dwelling, will not result in overdevelopment and will not have a significantly adverse impact on the living conditions on the occupants of neighbouring dwellings which the remaining parts of the statement will demonstrate.

The proposal seeks to make use of an existing redundant agricultural building, which is supported in principle by the NPPF paragraph 80 and policy DM9, which has been explained above in the local policy section.

As such, the proposal is considered an appropriate form of development in this location to complement the main dwelling and meet the applicant's needs for additional living space, alongside enhancing the disused rural building, which fully complies with local plan policies S9, S14, DM1, DM5, DM9 and DM11.

Layout and Scale

The proposed amount and layout are further shown in greater detail on the accompanying proposed plans.

With regards to the layout, the proposed ground floor plan shows there will be a study, a bathroom, and an open-plan kitchen/dining and living room area. The study can easily be converted to a downstairs bedroom if one level is needed for when the applicant becomes elderly. The proposed first-floor plan conveys a bedroom and an upstairs sitting area. The plans also propose photovoltaic and solar hot water panels on the south east facing roof.

There are no adverse impacts created as a result of the size and scale of the conversion. It is considered that the substantial-sized curtilage at Lower Dorweeke can readily accommodate the proposal, with no overdevelopment or overbearing impacts to be created. The proposed design of the barn conversion is considered to respect the setting of the site, and will be viewed alongside the already converted barn directly opposite of the barn. It will, therefore, not appear out of place in this now residential cluster of buildings.

The proposed conversion is not considered to pose any detrimental impacts upon the primary surrounding landscape, but rather complements the existing property with no overbearing impacts. As such, this proposal therefore adheres to the Local Plan policies S9, S14, DM1, DM9 and DM11 effectively.

Appearance

As local plan policies S9, S14, DM1, DM9 and DM11 state, the appearance of development should demonstrate core design principles and have a clear understanding of site characteristics, being visually attractive and integrating well with the surrounding buildings and countryside landscape. The design of ancillary residential development should respect the scale and design of the existing dwelling and the character of the surrounding area.

Externally, with regard to the scale, materials and overall appearance, the proposed design for the development is considered to reflect core design principles, reflecting the character of the existing rural building and the surroundings.

As the accompanying proposed plans illustrate, the proposal utilises existing openings in the structure through a new timber framed glazed door, new glazing blockwork wall to bring light into the kitchen on the east elevation and metal and blockwork infill of existing openings to be removed and replaced with timber framed glazing on the south elevation.

With the conversion being ancillary to the main dwelling, this ensures that no adverse or overbearing impacts are created, nor is there any loss of residential amenity in terms of privacy or overlooking for nearby properties. The proposed designs are considered to create no reduction in the visual amenity of the site.

The proposed conversion will not create any significant visual change from what can already be seen on-site due to the sensitive material choices. Essentially, the proposed materials, scale and form allow for a simplistic yet visually enhancing design, which aims to make a positive contribution and enhancement to the character of the existing site whilst providing the additional residential space required by the applicant that complies with Local Plan policies S9, S14, DM1, DM9 and DM11.

Landscaping and Ecology

A preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds was undertaken at Lower Dorweeke Farm by Western Ecology, with the report dated 24th March 2023. The report concluded that further surveys were needed to determine if bats were present in the building.

A bat emergence survey was then undertaken at Lower Dorweeke Farm by Western Ecology, with the surveys dated the 31st July and the 5th of September 2023. The surveys concluded that there was at least 1 long-eared, 1 common pipistrelle, and 4 soprano pipistrelle bats day roosting in association with the building. It is, therefore, necessary for the applicant to apply for a Natural England European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence for bats.

In line with the discussion and recommendations in section 5 of the report, the EPS licence will be supported by a detailed mitigation strategy to ensure that bats are not killed or injured during the works and to make sure alternative roosting opportunities are provided during the works and created within the completed structure.

With respect to the materials, the siting and overall appearance of the development, apart from the conversion itself, no additional screening or landscaping is proposed or considered necessary in this location.

The remainder of the domestic garden space will otherwise be retained as the existing, and there is considered to be no adverse visual or environmental impact as a result of the works in line with policies S9, DM1 and DM11.

Access and Parking

As part of the development, no changes are proposed to the existing vehicular access to the driveway itself, nor are there any changes proposed to the parking arrangements, which are retained as the existing to comply with Local Plan policies DM1 and DM5 effectively.

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Surface Water Drainage Strategy

Surface water will continue to be managed in accordance with the existing arrangements. The site is situated within flood zones two and three, and therefore, a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted alongside this application. As the site is situated within flood zones two and three, the designs have incorporated new black painted metal rainwater goods.

The proposal is for the conversion of an existing building only, and therefore, there is no risk of flooding in this location or elsewhere as a result of the small-scale development. As such, the proposal sustainably adheres to local policies S9 and DM1.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposed conversion of a barn to form additional residential accommodation at Lower Dorweeke Farm is considered to be an appropriate form of ancillary development. The proposed conversion is in close proximity to the host dwelling by virtue of its scale, massing, design and location and is not considered to harm the privacy or amenity of the occupiers of another dwelling, the future amenities and services of the residential curtilage to be developed or its surroundings.

The design of the barn conversion is considered to respect the setting of the site, and will be viewed alongside the already converted barn directly opposite the barn, which will remain in keeping with the now residential cluster of buildings. Essentially, the proposed design for the development provides the applicant with the required ancillary accommodation to meet their needs in retirement. The proposed conversion enhances the amenity of the disused rural building whilst retaining the character and appearance of the site and its primary surroundings through the appropriate material choices. The proposal will not result in overdevelopment of the site as it will utilise the existing building.

As such, the proposal is considered to fully comply with policies S9, S14, DM1, DM5, DM9 and DM11 of the Mid Devon Local Plan (adopted July 2020), with both form and function

T. 01884 38662



demonstrated within the designs, and therefore it is considered the proposed development should be granted full planning permission.