

## 4 Housing in the Countryside

### Policy C 4

#### Conversion of Existing Redundant Buildings in the Countryside to Residential Use

The conversion of existing redundant buildings to residential use will be permitted providing that:

- i. the proposal involves a building that is structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial rebuilding, extension or alteration; and
- ii. the applicant can prove the building is genuinely redundant and a change to a residential use will not result in a subsequent request for a replacement building; and
- iii. the environment is suitable for residential use and gives a satisfactory level of amenity for occupants; and
- iv. it has no adverse impact on / does not affect rural character; and
- v. the creation of the residential curtilage would not be visually intrusive, have a harmful effect on the rural character of the site, or its setting in the wider landscape; and
- vi. the conversion retains the character, fabric and historic interest of the building and uses matching materials where those materials are an essential part of the character of the building and locality; and
- vii. the impact on any protected species is assessed and measures proposed to mitigate such impacts.

#### Supporting Text

**4.30** This policy applies to all existing buildings that are structurally sound including for example, community or educational facilities and agricultural buildings. However, not all buildings will be suitable for conversion, due to their unsuitable location, condition or appearance of the structure. It may be a relatively modern agricultural building or an inappropriate scale or material to be re-used for a dwelling. Where a building being converted is located within the AONB or its setting, it will be expected to make a positive contribution to enhancing the special qualities and the natural beauty of the landscape of the AONB.

**4.31** For a building to be considered redundant, it is important that the original use of the building for that purpose no longer exists. If the building is performing an essential function and the conversion will lead to a request that a replacement building be provided elsewhere, now or within the foreseeable future, then the conversion will not be covered by this policy. A subsequent application for a replacement building may well be refused.

**4.32** There is a difference between a building of sound construction that has until recently been used and a derelict or semi-derelict structure that is now of sound construction, such as a temporary farm building or domestic outbuilding. The policy only allows for the conversion and adaption of sound permanent structures not the redevelopment of derelict buildings, which would be classed as new residential development in the countryside and assessed against Policy C1.

**4.33** Though redundant, where a building makes an important contribution to the local character and appearance of an area, great care will need to be exercised in the design of the conversion. The perceived contribution the building makes to the rural character of the area will need to be retained. It cannot be presumed that simply by being redundant, that the building can be converted to residential use.

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**4.34** Where, for example, a barn stands in an open field within the rural landscape, the conversion to residential use can raise the issue of curtilage. The existing field boundaries should not necessarily be taken as the curtilage for a proposed residential use. There is a need to define a curtilage appropriate to the building as the change of use from agricultural use to domestic garden has a profound visual impact on the immediate surroundings and potentially on the wider landscape, depending on the location of the site. The building should be capable of being converted and accommodated into the existing landscape, without significant effects on the rural character of the area, including light pollution and the character of rural highways. It is expected that any building works will be relatively minor and will involve the use of matching materials.

**4.35** There are Permitted Development (PD) Rights allowing the conversion of some buildings to residential use from other uses including shops and agricultural use. Some of the current PD rights are intended to be temporary. The latest position should be checked prior to seeking planning permission.

**4.36** Where Permitted Development Rights are being used, generally the Prior Notification procedure has to be followed. This essentially means notifying the Council of the intention to change the use and affording the Council the opportunity to request details of the schemes. It is advisable to seek professional advice or to contact the Council to discuss relevant requirements prior to commencing any development on site.