

Conversion of agricultural building to form dwelling (resubmission of application 3/2024/0674)

Meregill Farm
Holden Lane
Bolton by Bowland
BB7 4LZ

Supporting Statement/Design & Access Statement

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- Application 3/2024/0674: Removal of garden room extension from plan, but creation of an enlarged living area beyond application 3/2023/0598.
- Current amended application: Reverts to level of development previously advised by the planning officer as being acceptable – that being the removal of the garden room extension, and removal of the enlarged living area and associated reduction to residential curtilage.

3. Planning History

3/2022/1157 – Agricultural Building. Prior Approval is not required – 17/01/2023

3/2023/0139 – Formation of new agricultural access together with creation of agricultural access track to existing and approved agricultural buildings. Formation of agricultural hardstanding to approved agricultural building. Approved 18/04/2023

3/2023/0468 – Formation of new agricultural access together with creation of agricultural access track to existing and approved agricultural buildings. Formation of agricultural hardstanding to approved agricultural building (pursuant to removal of condition 7 (completion of agricultural building 3/2022/1157) and variation of condition 8 (tree protection measures) of planning permission 3/2023/0139. Approved 11/08/2023.

3/2023/0598 – Proposed conversion of agricultural building to one two-bedroom dwelling. Withdrawn 06/12/2023.

3/2024/0674 – Conversion of and extension of agricultural building to one self-build two-bedroom dwelling and formation of residential curtilage. Refused 08/10/2024

4. Assessment of Application

Planning Policy

The application falls to be considered against the policies and objectives contained within Ribble Valley’s Core Strategy 2008 – 2028.

Policies DMG1 ‘General Considerations’ sets out the requirements for new developments to, amongst other things, be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses, consider landscape impact, ensure safe access can be provided, consider the protection and enhancement of public rights of way, and not adversely affect the amenities of the surrounding area.

Policy DMG2 ‘Strategic Considerations’ requires development in the open countryside to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area in terms of size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting. Policy DMG2 further sets out that in protecting the designated area of the AONB the most important consideration in the assessment of any development proposals will be the protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape and character of the area, avoiding where possible habitat fragmentation.

Policy DMH3 ‘Dwellings in the Open Countryside and AONB’ sets out that the appropriate conversion of buildings to dwellings within the open countryside or AONB will be permitted where they are suitably located, and their form and general design are in keeping with their surroundings. Further, buildings must be structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for major rebuilding.

Policy DMH4 ‘The conversion of barns and other buildings to dwellings’ sets out the circumstances where planning permission will be granted for the conversion of buildings to dwellings. Amongst other things buildings must not be isolated in the landscape (for example they must form part of an existing group of buildings) and must not materially damage the landscape qualities of the area or nature conservation etc.

Key Statement EN2 ‘Landscape’ sets out that any development proposals will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the AONB, and that development should be in keeping with the character of the landscape and reflect local distinctiveness.

Principle of Development

The previous application was refused on the basis that the works proposed were considered to go beyond those that would be deemed acceptable for conversion of the building. Consequently the extent of works proposed led the planning officer to consider the development to be tantamount to a new build development, which would not be permitted in an open countryside location.

In preparing this amended application the plans have reverted back to a position the planning officer advised would be acceptable in the previously withdrawn application 3/2023/0598 – that being the removal of the garden room element of the extension. Whilst this element was removed from the refused scheme (3/2024/0674) it had been considered that a small extension to the living room may be acceptable, however clearly this went beyond the level of extension deemed to result in a conversion rather than a new build. This amended application does not include either the originally proposed garden room, or the later extension to the living room.

In the officer’s report for the previously refused scheme (3/2024/0674) the principle of development is found to be acceptable on the basis that;

- The building is to be converted within a farmstead and near other buildings, and is not isolated.
- The existing services and proposed services (access track and private package treatment plant) would not incur any unnecessary expenditure by public authorities or utilities.
- A bat survey has been provided and demonstrates that the works would not harm protected species.
- The building to be converted does not serve an integral part of any agricultural operation, and would not result in any harm to the economy.

The extent of works proposed, which have now been addressed in this amended application, was the only cause for refusing the principle of development.

Design considerations and visual impact

Policy DMH4 sets out that a building to be converted should be of a sufficient size to provide necessary living accommodation without the need for further extensions which would harm the character or appearance of the building. The wording of policy DMH4 in respect of this requirement is such that further extensions to a building are not disallowed, but that those extensions should not harm the character or appearance of the building.

The application proposes the removal of an existing corrugated metal lean-to extension on the south elevation, and opens up the original south elevation of the building. The new extension proposed would follow the existing built form of the southern part of the building, creating a continuous roof form, and removing the previous proposal for dual gables on the south elevation and terminating just beyond the western gable, effectively infilling a corner of the existing building. This amended application provides a sensitive scheme of alterations to the existing building, allowing its original appearance to be revealed through the removal of a lean-to addition, and extending the building in a sympathetic manner. In accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy DMH4, the extensions proposed do not harm the character and appearance of the building, and indeed the scheme of proposals enhance the appearance of the building.

Policy DMH4 sets out the character of the building to be converted, and its materials, are appropriate to its surroundings and that the building and its materials are worthy of retention because of its intrinsic interest or potential or its contribution to its setting.

The agricultural building is of brick construction with a blue slate roof and would have been constructed in the post-war period of the late 1940s or 1950s. The building is one of two brick agricultural buildings at Meregill Farm, the second is attached to the western end of the farmhouse and attached barn. Both of these brick buildings are of intrinsic interest, as they demonstrate the growth of the farm in the mid-nineteenth century which has progressed in a westerly direction (stone farmhouse and barn at the eastern end, brick buildings to the west of those, with the modern farm building located at the western end). The agricultural building contributes to the setting of the Meregill Farm, and is worthy of retention through conversion due to its appearance, method of construction and illustration of the historic growth of farming in the local area.

In consideration of the proposal in relation to the AONB, it is noted that Policy DMH3 places importance on the protection of the open countryside and designated landscape areas from sporadic or visually harmful development. Policy DMH4 states that the conversion of buildings to dwellings must not result in a materially damaging effect on the landscape qualities of the area. Key Statement EN2 'Landscape' states that the landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland AONB will be protected, conserved and enhanced, and that any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area.

The building is set against the backdrop of existing buildings when viewed from the south, and whilst not fully obscured from public views (particularly from the public right of way passing by the northern elevation of the property) it is sheltered from wider public views by mature landscaping - in particular an established native hedge on the eastern boundary of the farm. The works for proposed conversion are sympathetic with the existing property, with new openings kept to a minimum, and replacement extensions following the form and

style of the existing appearance of the building. The position of the building within a grouping of existing buildings prevents harm through avoidance of sporadic development in the open countryside. Furthermore, through the retention of a traditional farm building through conversion, the proposal will conserve and enhance the character of the AONB.

Accessibility and amenity of future occupiers

The building is single storey, and would provide level accommodation for the applicants, and for any occupants in the future. An is proposed in the east elevation, with two entrances in the south elevation via a gentle slope.

The conversion has been designed to ensure that each room has suitable levels of light, and external garden space is provided for occupiers to enjoy.

Neighbouring privacy and amenity

The proposed dwelling would accommodate the daughter and son-in-law of the occupier of the farmhouse, and the intention of the applicants is that both properties would be retained within the family going forwards. However, it is appreciated that the properties may fall into separate ownership at some point in the long-term future, and therefore it is necessary to consider the interrelationship of the proposed and existing dwellings in order to maintain privacy and amenity for both sets of occupiers in the long-term.

The farmhouse and building to be converted are off-set from one another, which prevents any direct views from window to window. The only habitable room windows with the potential to have views towards or from the farmhouse are those serving bedroom 2, which would look directly towards the blank gable of the extension to the front of the farmhouse, sheltering views from the farmhouse garden, and the kitchen window which looks towards agricultural buildings. The proposed development would maintain both the short term and long term privacy in terms of intervisibility between properties.

Highway safety

Meregill Farm is currently served by a single access off Tinklers Lane, shared by the farmhouse and farm buildings. Planning permission has been granted (with amendments sought in a current S73 application) for a new agricultural access and track that would serve the farmland and agricultural buildings. The existing access would continue to be used to serve the farmhouse, and to serve the proposed dwelling to be converted. The removal of agricultural traffic from the existing access will result in a significant reduction in vehicular movements of large farm vehicles. The proposed dwelling, which will have two bedrooms, will result in a far lower number of vehicular movements, and will not represent any increase in movements or harm to highway safety.

The dwelling would be served by 2 dedicated parking spaces located on existing hardstanding against the eastern boundary of the site. An electric vehicle charging point is proposed adjacent to the parking area. Furthermore, a dedicated bicycle storage shed is proposed to serve the property.

Lancashire County Council Highways were consulted on the previous application and advised that they had no objections to the proposed development. This amended

application proposes no changes to the development that would result in any changes to the highways situation Lancashire Highways previously commented upon.

Ecology

In accordance with the requirements of Policy DMH4, an ecology survey has been undertaken in relation to bats and nesting birds. The survey demonstrates that the building is not a habitat for bats or nesting birds, and nor is it suitable to be used as such, and so there will be no harm in terms of nature conservation. The ecology survey recommends the installation of a bat box on site to offer biodiversity enhancement, which the applicants are happy to agree to.

Other considerations

In accordance with Policy DMH4, the proposed development would make use of an existing redundant agricultural building by converting it to a dwelling. The benefits of a new dwelling, in terms of the provision of a home for the applicants, and the knock-on benefits of employment and spending in the local area, will provide clear benefits to the rural economy. Furthermore, there will be no unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on the provision of infrastructure, as the existing farmhouse is served by mains water, electricity and broadband. The dwelling to be formed would be served by these existing facilities, with a new package treatment plant installed to provide for waste generated by the dwelling.

In accordance with criterion 2 of Policy DMH3, and with the requirements of Policy DMH4, the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion, and is accompanied by a structural report to confirm that this is the case.

5. Conclusion

The proposed development will allow an existing traditional building to be put to a new use that will ensure its long-term retention and to provide a home for the applicants. The proposed development complies with the aims and objectives of the policies contained within Ribble Valley's Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 and conserves the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Ribble Valley Borough Council are respectfully asked to support this application.