

Development Control Policies 3

Conversion & Re-use of Rural Buildings as Dwellings

- 3.2.23** North Norfolk has a rich heritage of rural buildings many of which are no longer suitable for their original purpose and may be suitable for alternative uses. Housing development across the whole of the countryside, whether in the form of new build proposals or the conversion of existing buildings, would not comply with the Core Strategy. However, it is recognised that there is a balance to be struck between protecting the countryside from development pressure and promoting sustainable rural communities. Many rural settlements have some but not a full range of services / facilities which would be of benefit to and benefit from a modest amount of new residential development. The re-use of good quality existing buildings as dwellings in such locations, would offer the potential of meeting dual aims of supporting the sustainability of rural communities and services and securing the future of traditional rural buildings that positively contribute to the local distinctiveness of North Norfolk.
- 3.2.24** The Proposals Map indicates the locations in the district where residential conversion may be acceptable. The policy will only apply to buildings of historic, architectural or landscape value that are suitable for re-use without substantial re-build, extension or alteration. These buildings are worthy of retention, often vacant or under utilised, and residential conversion may offer a sustainable future. Poorly constructed buildings, those which have a negative visual appearance and those that have recently been constructed for another purpose will not be eligible. It is envisaged that the policy would not normally apply to the sub-division of existing residential properties, to outbuildings providing an ancillary domestic function or purpose built holiday accommodation.
- 3.2.25** Buildings that have been previously converted and are subject to holiday occupancy conditions will continue to be subject to these restrictions. However, where they lie within the area defined by the new policy, where full residential permission may be permitted, then an application for the removal of those conditions is likely to be permitted providing that the building meets the building type criteria, the requirements of Policy EC8 are met, and where applicable and viable to do so, a contribution towards the provision of affordable housing is made in accordance with Policy HO9.
- 3.2.26** In the case of Listed Buildings or buildings that would meet this Council's criteria for Local Listing, residential conversion may be allowed irrespective of location, provided such a use was demonstrated to be the optimum to secure the future of the building. Planning applications submitted on this basis would need to include a supporting statement justifying why the building is of such importance that its retention would be in the public interest, and include a robust consideration of why re-use of the building for economic purposes was not viable or appropriate for the building.
- 3.2.27** In all cases conversion schemes would be expected to be of the very highest quality and ensure that the qualities of the building and its setting are maintained. The North Norfolk Design Guide provides detailed advice on the conversion of agricultural and historic buildings. In addition applicants are referred to guidance produced by English Heritage 'The Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings: A guide to good practice' (October 2006). Where appropriate, a condition may be attached to any planning permission removing any permitted development rights the building would qualify for under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended, following its change of use.
- 3.2.28** Evidence indicates that there is a significant need for affordable housing across North Norfolk which will continue for some time. Extending the opportunity for residential conversions in the countryside requires consideration of how such development should contribute to the delivery of affordable housing. Although it is recognised that it may be difficult and in some cases not practical for such schemes to provide for affordable housing on site, it is considered entirely

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consistent with national planning policy and Core Strategy policies to seek a contribution where viable to do so. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will provide further guidance on the detailed nature of any financial or other contribution.

3.2.29 It is anticipated that the schemes likely to come forward under this policy will comprise individual and small groups of dwellings. Development proposals resulting in a level of residential use which would raise concerns over sustainability and the impact of the proposal on the rural character of an area will not normally be supported.

3.2.30 The objective of creating and maintaining sustainable rural communities will be the primary consideration when assessing individual planning applications. Safeguarding employment opportunities is integral to achieving such aims. Where buildings were last or presently used for commercial purposes and provide a significant number of jobs, residential conversion will not normally be supported.

3.2.31 Planning proposals will need to comply with all other relevant policies in the Core Strategy.

Policy HO 9

Conversion & Re-use of Rural Buildings as Dwellings

The conversion and re-use of suitably constructed buildings in the countryside for permanent residential purposes will be permitted provided that:

1. the building is located within an area identified on the Proposals Map for that purpose^(xlvii), and
2. the building is worthy of retention due to its appearance, historic, architectural or landscape value, and
3. the building is structurally sound and suitable for conversion to a residential use without substantial rebuilding or extension and the alterations protect or enhance the character of the building and its setting, and
4. the scheme is of an appropriate scale in terms of the number of dwellings proposed for the location, and
5. where it is viable to do so, on all schemes resulting in two or more units, not less than 50% of the total number of dwellings proposed are affordable^(xlviii), or an equivalent contribution is made in accordance with the requirements of Policy HO2.

Outside the locations identified, residential uses will not be permitted unless the building is of exceptional historic, architectural or landscape value^(xlix) and it is demonstrated that a residential use would best secure the future of the building and the above criteria 3 to 5 are met.

Proposals that would result in the loss of a significant number of jobs will not normally be supported.

xlvii Rarely the outer edge of the policy area may dissect a single building or established group of closely related buildings. Where this clearly is the case the policy will apply to the whole building or group.

xlviii This may take the form of a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision to ensure the required number of affordable dwellings can be built without the need for public subsidy.

xlix Listed Building or a building (including a building Listed by association) that would meet North Norfolk criteria for Local Listing. In the case of a building that lies within the curtilage of a Listed Building, it would need to be demonstrated that the building makes a positive contribution to the Listed entity as a whole. The key objective would remain that of identifying the optimum viable use, compatible with the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building. In this context, optimum refers to the conservation of the building. The optimum use may not be the most profitable use if that would entail more destructive alterations than other viable uses.