



The countryside charity
Hampshire

VERSION 1 as at Sept 2021

Position Statement

Re-use of Redundant Farm Buildings

CPRE Issue

CPRE's vision within our 2020 Strategy **is for a beautiful and thriving countryside that enriches all our lives**. With people living and working in active and sustainable rural communities, promoting rural life with a shared vision for a sustainable rural economy in which all communities can thrive and new and sustainable models of farming and better environmental land management as part of its core aims.

CPRE strongly supports rural economic activity that supports the landscape character and recognises the importance of the sympathetic conversion of redundant agricultural buildings to enable farming to be sustainable in the long term.

Poorly controlled conversion of redundant buildings can have a significant adverse impact on the landscape and lead to increased noise and light pollution and increased levels of traffic along country lanes.

Many existing and traditional farms and farm buildings are assets which make an important contribution to landscape character, local distinctiveness and an important contribution to the remarkably varied character of England's landscape and environment shaped by centuries of farming. They are fundamental to a sense of place and local distinctiveness but many of them have now become redundant for modern agricultural purposes. Although they lack the agricultural income needed to keep them in good repair many nevertheless have the potential to accommodate a variety of economically viable new uses. Farms that successfully diversify are often able to put their existing farm assets to improved and better use.

Guidance on Conversion of Redundant Agricultural Buildings

There are a wide range of permitted development rights available to farms, both for agricultural development and for the change of use of agricultural buildings, without the need for planning permission. Note that permitted development (PD) rights are set out in the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (Amended)* (referred to as the GPDO).



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However, most agricultural developments and changes of use which do come under the category of permitted development will still be required to go through the prior notification system. The prior notification system places “conditions” on proposals for example the need to submit an application to the Local Planning Authority to determine if its 'Prior Approval' will be required. This allows the Local Planning Authority to consider the proposals, their likely impacts in regard to certain factors (e.g. transport and highways) and how these may be mitigated.

Work must not commence on the development until the Local Planning Authority has issued its determination, or the time period for it to do so has expired. It should, however, be noted that the Local Planning Authority's opportunity to influence the form of the development in Prior Notification cases will be limited, as compared to those requiring a full planning consent.

Successful adaptive reuse of any farmstead or building depends on understanding its significance, its relationship to the wider landscape setting and its sensitivity to and capacity for change. Any conversion of existing buildings should conserve and where possible enhance the agricultural character of such buildings and their setting.

Conversion of Redundant Agricultural Buildings

The aim of the policy on the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings, is to ensure that farmers can re-use redundant assets in a way that safeguards their agricultural character and contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of the rural community. Whilst ensuring that buildings remain appropriately sized and located as part of the rural character of the countryside and that their generally functional and minimal design remains related to their integral relationship with the management of the surrounding land. Small scale local rebuilding may be acceptable but significant rebuilding should be considered new-build rather than conversion and subject to other policies.

Given their location, low intensity of human use and other characteristics, redundant agricultural buildings in rural locations have special potential to support protected species (in particular, bats and barn owls). Any proposal for conversion must therefore be accompanied by a protected species survey.



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Example Policy – Conversion of Redundant Agricultural Buildings

The conversion of redundant agricultural buildings outside of defined settlement boundaries to an alternative use will be permitted where

- a) The location is sufficiently well related to existing infrastructure, amenities and services
- b) The existing vehicular access is suitable in landscape terms for the use proposed
- c) The original building is worthy of conversion with regard to its current character, scale and condition, without the need for substantial reconstruction, significant extensions or ancillary buildings
- d) Conversion will not result in the need for another agricultural or forestry building on the holding
- e) If the building proposed for conversion is not a traditional one, there are no redundant traditional buildings within the holding capable of being reused in the first instance
- f) There is no adverse impact on the character of the building and its setting, in particular its agricultural character, and
- g) The building is converted to the most appropriate viable use according to the following cascade
 - a. Firstly, housing for essential agricultural or forestry workers, or succession housing for former agricultural or forestry workers
 - b. Farm diversification for employment use
 - c. Affordable housing
 - d. Farm diversification for visitor accommodation or facilities
 - e. Open market housing

Conversion of redundant buildings that are identified as heritage assets

The conversion of redundant agricultural or forestry buildings outside of defined settlement boundaries identified as heritage assets will be permitted where;

- a) The above conditions are complied with
- b) The optimal viable use is proposed to conserve and enhance the architectural and historic significance and setting of the heritage asset
- c) Essential utilities and other functional requirements do not harm significant internal or external fabric and



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- d) Existing historic fabric and features of architectural or historic significance are retained and respected.

NB In considering the wording of individual policies in Local Plans, it is important to bear in mind that Local Plans must be looked at as a whole. This means, for example, that policies for the protection of landscape must be applied when considering each and every planning application; and accordingly, there is generally no need for other policies to refer specifically to landscape matters.