

APPENDIX 7

Conservation of Farm Buildings

Introduction

A7.1 Planning Authorities have for several years sought the preservation of the Country's farm buildings of architectural interest, only a small proportion of which are listed. In appropriate cases grants towards the cost of repair are made and owners are encouraged to retain such buildings in agricultural use. Conversion to an alternative use is allowed only where this is not practical and the barn or oast has sufficient merit to justify relaxation of the policies aimed at preventing sporadic development in the countryside.

Conversion to new uses

A7.2 A wide range of new uses for barns, stables and oast houses have been approved by the planning authorities, in order to preserve structures of architectural and landscape merit. In appropriate cases light industry, farm shops, restaurants, museums, community or education uses and theatres, have been approved although it is the conversion to residential use which is more common. Factors which should be considered include:

- a) Intrinsic Value: the architectural or historic interest of the building.
- b) Group Value: relationship to other buildings.
- c) Landscape Value: prominence in the landscape setting;
- d) Accessibility: closeness to a public highway, sight lines at access to the highway, amount of traffic, effect upon farm operations if the building is to be in separate ownership.
- e) Boundaries: the ability to create an adequate curtilage distinct from the remainder of the farm complex.
- f) Condition: the objective of the planning policy is to preserve an existing structure of architectural interest. The building must therefore be in a condition capable of straightforward repair and not be so far failed as to require reconstruction.

If the proposal to convert is acceptable the following principles should be considered:

Maintenance of Structural Integrity

A7.3 Whatever the structural form of the building, whether timber framed, load-bearing brick or cast iron, it is important that as little as possible of the existing structure is removed.

Retention of the Agricultural Character of the Building

- A7.4 The purpose of allowing agricultural buildings to be converted to a new use is to ensure the preservation of structures recognised as symbolic of rural life and landscapes. If the conversion changes the character of the building to that of a suburban dwelling this policy is undermined.

Incorporation of Existing Features

- A7.5 Cows, wagon entrances, existing openings, hoist doors, access ladders, etc. should as far as possible be retained and adapted if appropriate.

Barn Interiors

- A7.6 At least one bay of a framed building should remain open for the full height of the interior, to reveal the construction and scale of the building. A bay accommodating the entrance hall, staircase and first floor landing is often suitably treated in this way.

Layout

- A7.7 Partitions should be located in relation to the structural bays of framed buildings.

Fenestration

- A7.8 The key to successful conversion often lies in the skill applied to window design and fenestration, for example:
- a) by exploiting existing windows or openings and seeking an informal pattern of openings with the minimum number of new windows, a formal domestic appearance may be avoided.
 - b) by avoiding the use of dormer windows in the roof of barns or openings of any sort in the roofs of oast roundels, and by the provision of vertically proportioned windows and applying a dark finish to external joinery.

Flues

- A7.9 Brick chimney stacks symbolise domestic character. An industrial metal flue, discreetly located, is usually the best compromise unless a gas supply is available to the building in which case a balanced flue can be incorporated.

