

CORE STRATEGY SINGLE POLICY REVIEW:

Conversion & Re-use of Rural Buildings as Dwellings Draft Policy

(incorporating Proposals Map Amendments)

Final Background & Methodology



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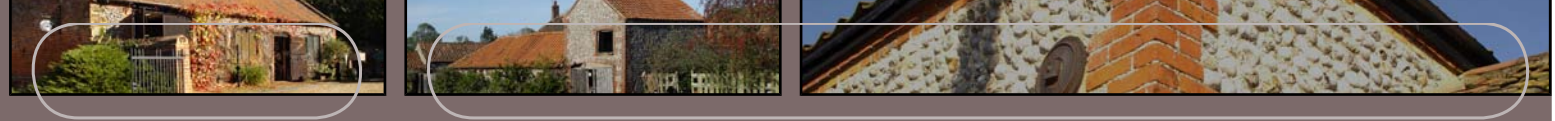
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Conversion & Re-use of Rural Buildings as Dwellings: Background & Methodology (Final)

1 Introduction & Background

- 1.1 This document is a supporting document to the Conversion & Re-use of Rural Buildings as Dwellings Draft Policy. It sets the background to the review and a more detailed explanation of the policy approach. In addition, detail is provided of the methodology used in the selection of locations where the policy will apply and the criteria for assessing building type.
- 1.2 Many rural buildings, especially those developed in connection with agriculture, are no longer required or suitable for their original use. These buildings are potentially an important resource and many contribute positively to the character and appearance of North Norfolk's rural landscape. Sympathetic re-use of suitable buildings can contribute to the achievement of sustainability objectives, by reducing the need for new building in the countryside and by supporting rural economies and communities.
- 1.3 Nationally, over the last twenty years or so, there has been an increasing demand to convert non-residential rural buildings, primarily barns and other attractive agricultural buildings that are either redundant or of limited use, to permanent dwellings. In North Norfolk, this demand has been particularly strong as a result of the attractiveness of its countryside, the large number of traditionally built agricultural buildings and a generally buoyant housing market.
- 1.4 For many years North Norfolk has had a policy of promoting the re-use of rural buildings for commercial purposes, including holiday use, and severely restricting the opportunities for conversion to dwellings to sites lying adjacent to the boundaries of certain settlements. This historic approach has been consistent with Government policy towards diversifying the rural economy and avoiding isolated dwellings in unsustainable rural locations.
- 1.5 The Government's planning policy advice for rural areas is set out in PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas). Previously para. 17 and 18 related specifically to the re-use of buildings in the countryside and was supportive of the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed buildings in the countryside where this would meet sustainable development objectives. It stated that the re-use of buildings 'for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of buildings'. This advice was now been cancelled and replaced by PPS 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (Dec. 2009). Policy EC12 relates specifically to the re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development purposes and restates that such uses will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations and for some types of building.
- 1.6 This Council has recently adopted a Core Strategy (September 2008) which contains the key elements of the planning framework for North Norfolk. The document sets out the core aims and objectives which will deliver sustainable development within the district along with a series of policies for determining planning applications. Reflecting national planning guidance a number of adopted policies relate, either directly or indirectly, to the approach to be taken to the re-use of buildings in the countryside, these policies have been found sound and are not subject to review:
 - Policy SS1 – Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk – directs new housing growth to the Principal, Secondary Settlements and villages identified in the Core Strategy. Development in the countryside is restricted to particular types which support the rural economy, meet affordable housing needs and provide renewable energy.
 - Policy SS2 – Development in the Countryside - provides for the re-use of buildings in the Countryside for 'appropriate purposes'.



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- Policy EC1 – Farm Diversification - permits a range of farm diversification proposals including the re-use of existing buildings.
- Policy EC2 – The Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside - provides for the re-use of such buildings for economic uses (including holiday accommodation).

1.7 The proposed Core Strategy Policy HO9 (Core Strategy Submission Document) had set out the proposed approach to the conversion of rural buildings to dwellings. The Inspector who examined the Core Strategy did not support the Council's suggested policy approach which would have permitted residential conversion of buildings of historic, architectural or landscape value, adjacent or closely related to the boundaries of the towns and villages identified in the Core Strategy. In deleting the policy the Inspector directed the Council to redraft the policy having regard to his comments and national planning advice set out in PPS1, PPS3, PPS7, PPG13 and PPG15. In particular his comments related to the key issues of:- in which locations should residential conversions be considered and, which building types should be regarded as suitable for such conversions.

2 Policy Context

2.1 The policy for the conversion of buildings in the countryside to dwellings has been formulated having had regard to land use policies and objectives set out in the adopted Core Strategy, national and regional planning documents (set out below), the Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment process and the direction given by the Inspector following the Core Strategy Examination.

North Norfolk Core Strategy (Adopted Sept 2008) : Core Aims

- Core Aim 1 - To address the housing needs of the whole community.
- Core Aim 2 - To provide for sustainable development and mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Core Aim 3 - To protect the built and natural environment and local distinctive identity of North Norfolk, and enable people's enjoyment of the resource.
- Core Aim 4 - To mitigate and adapt to impacts of coastal erosion and flooding.
- Core Aim 5 - To develop a strong, high value economy to provide better job, career and training opportunities.
- Core Aim 6 - To improve access for all to jobs, services, leisure and cultural activities.

National & Regional Planning Context

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (January 2005) (including Supplement)
- PPS3 – Housing (November 2006)
- PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth (December 2009)
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (August 2004)
- PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (August 2005)
- PPG13 – Transport (April 2001) of Rural Buildings as Dwellings
- PPG15 – Planning and Historic Environment (September 1994)
- RSS – East of England Plan: The Revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (May 2008)

Core Strategy Examination: Comments made by Inspector

2.2 These related in particular to:

- Location - He commented that the general approach proposed of allowing residential conversion in locations well related to identified settlements, was consistent with para.18 of PPS7. However, he indicated that he considered that there may be additional locations to those proposed, where residential conversions may both provide rural housing and help preserve the viability of village services and facilities consistent with PPS3 housing objectives.
- Building Type - He commented that the type of building was a relevant consideration and accepted the criteria requiring the building to be of historic, architectural or landscape value. However he questioned the lack of policy guidance regarding such buildings in locations away from selected settlements.

2.3 The new policy is more permissive of residential conversion than both former Local Plan Policy 29 and deleted Policy HO 9 and responds in particular to specific rural issues. Having regard to the results of the consultation process, the policy context and the specific direction given by the Inspector following the examination of the Core Strategy the following are proposed as aims for the new policy:



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Policy Aims

Aim 1: To help support the sustainability of rural communities and services.

Aim 2: To secure the future of traditional rural buildings that positively contribute to the local distinctiveness of North Norfolk.

3 Policy Approach

3.1 The new policy seeks to achieve these aims by:

- Identifying **locations** where the occupiers of new residential conversions would have access to, and help support, existing local facilities and services therefore contributing to sustainable development objectives.
- Identifying **types of building** where residential re-use may provide a viable future use ensuring the retention of such buildings and their continued contribution to the rural landscape of the district.
- Addressing rural housing need by seeking where it is viable to do so an **affordable housing** contribution.
- Ensuring the **scale of development** is appropriate to the location.
- Ensuring that important **economic uses** are safeguarded.

Locations

3.2 The new policy will only be applied to selected parts of the District and these will be shown by designating an area on the Proposals Map. The selected areas are based on identifying those villages in the district that have key facilities and services and defining a zone close to these where residents could access facilities by means other than private car. The identified locations include all of the Principal Settlements, Secondary Settlements, and Service Villages defined in the adopted Core Strategy together with an additional twenty locations. The selection methodology is as follows:

Stage 1 - Identification of villages that were re-designated as Countryside on adoption of the Core Strategy.

Stage 2 - Exclude villages without one of the following key daily facilities:

- a community or similar school within the settlement⁽¹⁾ or within a convenient walking distance⁽²⁾ of it; or
- a convenience store within the settlement⁽¹⁾ or within a convenient walking distance⁽²⁾ of it

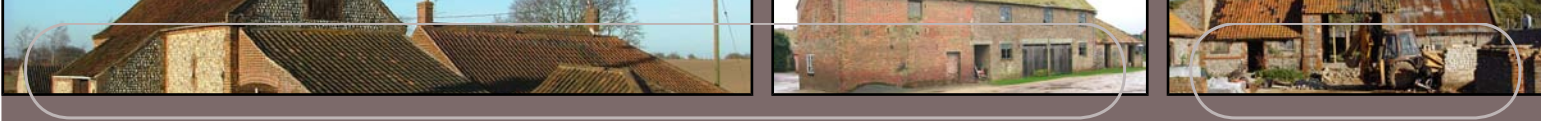
Stage 3 - Assessment of the remaining villages in terms of whether they contained a range of local facilities as of July 2009 (Appendix A). Those villages with three (inclusive of a school and/or shop) or more specified facilities or services, either within the former Local Plan village boundary or 1km from it, were selected for the purposes of this policy.

3.3 Specified facilities/services include:

- Local school
- Convenience store
- Daily post office service
- Other shop/s
- Doctors Surgery
- Pub/restaurant
- Garage/filling station

1 As defined by the former Local Plan Selected Small Village boundary

2 Within 1km of the former Local Plan Selected Small Village boundary



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- 3.4** Twenty villages, in addition to those already identified in the Core Strategy, passed all three stages (Appendix A - identified in bold) and have been included as locations where residential conversion may be permissible.
- 3.5** For the purposes of identification the Core Strategy Proposals Map has been amended to indicate the locations subject to this policy designation. For Core Strategy Settlements a zone has been identified extending 1km from the adopted settlement boundaries. For the additional settlements within the 'Countryside', the locations consist of an area within and extending 1km beyond the former Local Plan Selected Small Village boundaries. Given advice in PPG13 and the consultation responses received, 1km is deemed to be a reasonable walking distance.

Building Type

- 3.6** In terms of identifying buildings which provide an opportunity for residential conversion the policy includes building quality/type as a key criterion. Priority is given to buildings worthy of retention and that make a positive contribution to the rural landscape. Many of these buildings are no longer required for their original use, are often vacant or under utilised and conversion/re-use provides the opportunity for meeting dual objectives of both providing new housing and securing a viable future of these buildings. It is therefore envisaged that the policy would not normally apply to existing residential properties seeking subdivision, to outbuildings providing an ancillary domestic function or purpose built holiday accommodation.
- 3.7** Where buildings are considered 'exceptional', that is Listed Buildings and those that would meet this Council's criteria for Local Listing (Appendix B), identifying the best use to secure the future of the building will be the primary objective. Where it is demonstrated that a residential use is the optimum viable use compatible with the building and its setting, then such a use may be appropriate irrespective of location.
- 3.8** In order to be considered suitable for re-use the building would need to be structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial alteration, extension or rebuild. Proposed conversion schemes would be expected to be of the very highest standard to ensure that the qualities of the building and its setting are maintained.

Affordable Housing

- 3.9** Evidence indicates that there is a significant need for affordable housing across North Norfolk which will continue for some time. Core Strategy policy seeks to address this need by requiring the provision of affordable housing⁽³⁾ in suitable housing development. Adopted Core Strategy Policy HO2 requires that in Service and Coastal Villages on schemes of 2 or more units not less than 50% of the total number of dwellings proposed should be affordable and that in the countryside all new residential development should be affordable (Policy HO3).
- 3.10** Extending the opportunity for residential conversions in the countryside requires consideration of how such development should contribute to the delivery of affordable housing in the district. Although it is recognised that it may be difficult and not always appropriate for all schemes to provide for such affordable housing need on site, it is considered entirely consistent with other Core Strategy policies to seek a contribution where it is viable to do so. The policy therefore includes an affordable requirement at the same level as the Core Strategy requirement for Service and Coastal Villages.

3 PPS3 defines affordable housing by stating that it 'includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose need is not met by the market'

Scale of Development

- 3.11** The new policy will sit alongside the Housing policies (HO) of the Core Strategy and the strategic housing approach set out in Policies SS1 and SS3. These policies set out the scale and location of new residential development over the plan period and state that of the new homes planned:
- 50% should be within Principal Settlements
 - 20% should be within the Secondary Settlements
 - 30 % may be in a Service Village, Coastal Service Village, or in the Countryside policy area.
- 3.12** The adopted Core Strategy identifies that at least 8,000 dwellings will be built in the district between 2001 and 2021. Many of these homes have already been built or have planning permission and the Draft Site Specific Proposals Plan seeks to meet the short fall by allocating new land for approximately 3,250 new homes. Policy SS3 includes an allowance for restricted housing growth (nos.1,000) in the countryside recognising the potential for the re-use of rural buildings as proposed previously (HO9) and the desire to address the need for affordable housing through rural exception schemes (500 for each category).
- 3.13** A policy approach that resulted in a substantially higher number/proportion of dwellings in the countryside would represent a departure from the adopted Spatial Strategy set out in SS1 as it would result in a distribution of housing development that would be unsustainable. The location and building type criteria included as part of the policy will restrict both the number and distribution of new homes created through conversion in a manner consistent with the adopted spatial approach.
- 3.14** In addition account will be taken, when considering individual planning applications, of the number of dwellings proposed. Where it is considered that the level of development would raise sustainability concerns and or be incompatible with the character of the location, development will be resisted.

Economic Uses

- 3.15** In order for rural communities to be sustainable local jobs and homes are both required. The importance of local employment to rural areas is recognised by PPS7 in the expressed preference towards re-use for economic purposes. Adopted Core Strategy Policy EC2 reflects this policy advice and promotes a permissive approach towards the re-use of rural buildings for economic purposes including holiday accommodation. Policy EC2 is not subject to review and would continue to provide the policy context for most areas of countryside within the district. Furthermore, the proposed approach of restricting residential conversion to specific locations would ensure that a stock of rural buildings is retained and available for re-use for economic purposes. In addition, in the event of existing buildings providing important local facilities or tourist accommodation⁽⁴⁾ the requirements of policies CT3 and EC8 would apply and there would be an additional requirement to justify the loss of these facilities.
- 3.16** Buildings that have been previously converted and are subject to holiday occupancy conditions will continue to be subject to these conditions. However, where they lie within the area defined by the new policy, where full residential use would be permitted, then an application for removal of those conditions would likely be permitted provided the building meets the building type criteria, the requirements of EC8 are met and where applicable and viable to do so a contribution towards the provision of affordable housing is made.

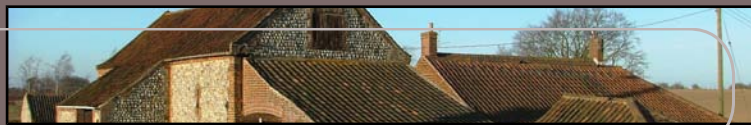
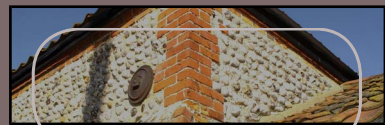
⁴ Hotels and other serviced establishments which provide 5 or more bedrooms, all self-catering units that provide more than five units



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- 3.17** There are examples of buildings in the district which provide significant local employment opportunities but because they are not being used for tourism or a key facility are not protected by either policy CT3 or EC8. In the main it is considered that employment opportunities should be safeguarded and a bullet point is therefore included in the policy to protect uses providing a significant number of jobs.

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Appendices





Appendix A Location Methodology

Table 1 Services Identified in Village Facilities Survey (July 2009)

Village	Local School	Convenience Store	Post Office (Daily)	Other Shops	Surgery	Pub/ Restaurant	Garage/ Filling Station
Aylmerton	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Banningham	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Beeston Regis	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y
Binham	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Bodham	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
Cley next the Sea	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
East Runton	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Erpingham	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Felmingham	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N
Great Ryburgh	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
Gresham	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Hickling	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
High Kelling	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
Hindringham	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Neatishead	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Northrepps	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Potter Heigham	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Sculthorpe	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Sea Palling	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Smallburgh	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Stibbard	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Stiffkey	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
Sutton	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
Swanton Abbott	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Trunch	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y
Tunstead	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Walcott	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N
West Raynham (Village)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N

Village	Local School	Convenience Store	Post Office (Daily)	Other Shops	Surgery	Pub/ Restaurant	Garage/ Filling Station
West Runton	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Wicken Green (Sculthorpe Airbase)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Worstead	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N



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Appendix B Criteria for Local Listing

The following criteria are to be used to select buildings or other structures for 'Local Lists' in the district of North Norfolk.

1. **Architectural importance**

- Good example of regional/vernacular style
- Good design/craftsmanship/architect
- Good example of a specific style or function (eg. Early purpose-built motor garage)

2. **Contribution to townscape or landscapes**

Building/structure which is part of an architecturally important group (termed group value) or makes a significant visual contribution to the townscape/character of an area or landscape.

3. **Historic importance**

Any building/structure which has made a significant contribution to an area's history (eg. 1902 lifeboat station at The Gangway, Cromer) or by historical association with a famous national or local person (such as Henry Blogg, Winston Churchill). Where known, the architect/designer may also have a bearing on 'listing'.

4. **Date**

Normally no buildings constructed post-1947 will be considered for 'Local Listing'.



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