

The Suffolk Coastal Local Plan

Supplementary Planning Guidance



Redundant Buildings in the Countryside

March 1991 (updated November 2004)



This document was superseded on 1st June 2021 with the adoption of the Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document by East Suffolk Council.



On 1st April 2019, East Suffolk Council was created by parliamentary order, covering the former districts of Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council. The Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regulations 2018 (part 7) state that any plans, schemes, statements or strategies prepared by the predecessor council should be treated as if it had been prepared and, if so required, published by the successor council. Therefore this document applies to the part of the East Suffolk Council area formerly covered by the Suffolk Coastal District until such time that it is replaced.

Following the reforms to the Planning system through the enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 all Supplementary Planning Guidance's can only be kept for a maximum of three years. It is the District Council's intention to review each Supplementary Planning Guidance in this time and reproduce these publications as Supplementary Planning Documents which will support the policies to be found in the Local Development Framework which is to replace the existing Suffolk Coastal Local Plan First Alteration, February 2001.

Some Supplementary Planning Guidance dates back to the early 1990's and may no longer be appropriate as the site or issue may have been resolved so these documents will be phased out of the production and will not support the Local Development Framework. Those to be kept will be reviewed and republished in accordance with new guidelines for public consultation. A list of those to be kept can be found in the Suffolk Coastal Local Development Scheme December 2004.

Please be aware when reading this guidance that some of the Government organisations referred to no longer exist or do so under a different name. For example MAFF (Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) is no longer in operation but all responsibilities and duties are now dealt with by DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). Another example may be the DETR (Department of Environment, Transport and Regions) whose responsibilities are now dealt with in part by the DCLG (Department of Communities & Local Government).

If you have any questions or concerns about the status of this Supplementary Planning Guidance please contact a member of the Local Plan team who will be able to assist you in the first instance.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we feel it inappropriate to reproduce each document with the up to date Government organisations name as they change.

INTRODUCTION.

This is the first of a series of Supplementary Planning Guides which the District Council intends to publish to assist both the general public and, more especially, those requiring a fuller appreciation of how the Council's Local Plan policies will apply to particular circumstances, in this case to the re-use of redundant and under-used buildings in the countryside.

Many traditional agricultural buildings which characterise the Suffolk countryside are significant, not only from an architectural or historic point of view, but are also important or attractive features in the rural landscape. Changes in agricultural practices and the rural economy, however, have resulted in an increasing number of these buildings being under-used or becoming redundant and neglected. Often the argument is put forward that it is only a change of use which will ensure that such buildings will remain standing and continue to form part of the local scene.

Farm diversification has also resulted in a variety of new uses being put forward for both traditional and non-traditional agricultural buildings. The District Council is, therefore, under increasing pressure to grant consent for new uses in redundant buildings in the countryside, with conversions to residential use being a particularly controversial issue.

This document has, therefore, been published to help explain the District Council's Local Plan policies relating to the re-use of traditional and non-traditional buildings in the countryside, the criteria and procedures for assessing applications, and to provide advice and guidance on how to design acceptable conversion proposals.

This Supplementary Planning Guidance, is to be read in conjunction with the adopted Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Policies shown in Appendix 1.

The Draft of this Guidance was first considered by the Council's Planning Committee in August, 1990, who resolved to consult a number of local and national organisations, including those representing farmers and landowners, conservation groups, English Heritage, the Department of the Environment, the County Council and others who represent both private and public interests.

Of the responses received, general support was indicated for its aims and objectives. Of particular significance were the letters received from Suffolk County Council, who confirmed that "the Supplementary Planning Guidance conforms generally with the Structure Plan", and the Department of the Environment, who stated that "the guidelines will satisfactorily assist the implementation of national guidance in this Policy area,"

Following reconsideration of the Draft Guidance in the light of these responses, the Committee authorised the adoption and publication of this document as Supplementary Planning Guidance, at its meeting in December 1990.

The document was originally published in March 1991 and has recently been updated in respect of policies and the names of organisations and departments.

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The document comprises six sections:

Section One

PLANNING POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

outlines the objectives of the District Council's Local Plan policies and their relationship to Central Government advice and policy and to the Suffolk County Structure Plan.

Section Two

REDUNDANCY AND SUITABILITY FOR RE-USE

asks the questions - is the building really redundant, and is it a suitable candidate for re-use?

Section Three

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE USES

considers possible suitable alternatives once the redundancy issue has been satisfactorily addressed. The list of options comprises:

- * Commercial and Industrial uses
- * Community and Recreational uses
- * Certain types of Retail use

Section Four

RESIDENTIAL USE

explains why residential use is often the least preferred option and describes in detail the criteria which must be satisfied before a building is considered a possible candidate for such a use. It also outlines why using a building for holiday and tourist accommodation is normally preferable to permanent residential use.

Section Five

DESIGN GUIDANCE

provides advice on design issues, with particular emphasis on the conversion of important traditional buildings.

Section Six
PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

explains the procedures for assessing proposals. For the purposes of considering planning applications, types of use are divided into two groups. The kind of information required from applicants being different for each.

A) covers commercial, industrial (employment), community, recreational and retail uses; and

B) covers residential use, including holiday and tourist accommodation and ancillary residential uses.

The circumstances under which an application for listed building consent for conversion is necessary is also outlined.

Appendix 1 – Local Plan Policies

Section One

PLANNING POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

Central Government advice and policy relating to the issue of redundant buildings in the countryside is outlined in Planning Policy Statements and Circulars.

The Department of the Environment has also confirmed that Local Planning Authorities should take account of the document issued by English Heritage in May, 1990 entitled 'The Conversion of Historic Farm Buildings'.

Policy ENV4 of the County Structure Plan seeks to protect the quality and character of the countryside. Except as provided in ENV6 permission will not normally be granted for new dwellings.

Policy ENV2 encourages the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside for employment uses.

The District Council has taken particular note of the contents of these documents and it is considered that the primary aim of both County Council and Central Government policy in this context is on the one hand to protect the character of the countryside from sporadic and unco-ordinated development whilst, at the same time, to support the rural economy and rural diversification. It is clearly not intended to encourage the provision of additional residential accommodation in the open countryside.

With this very much in mind the District Council has prepared the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. For development control purposes the District Council's more detailed policies will, therefore, provide the framework for considering applications.

Section Two

REDUNDANCY AND SUITABILITY FOR RE-USE

It is inevitable that existing buildings in the countryside will, from time-to-time become under-used or surplus to requirements.

However, because in certain circumstances some agricultural buildings can be erected without the benefit of planning permission, and often consent is granted for new buildings on the basis that they are necessary for the economic viability of a particular agricultural holding, the District Council will generally resist proposals for a change to non-agricultural use for these types of building unless a genuine change in circumstances can be justified.

Although the policies which support the principle of alternative uses for redundant buildings are primarily aimed at encouraging new enterprises and providing jobs in rural areas, they are also concerned with reducing sporadic and unco-ordinated new building in the countryside. Therefore, buildings which cannot readily be re-used because they are derelict, or are such that they require complete or substantial reconstruction or alteration, will not be considered suitable. Nor will the re-use of buildings which are situated in very remote locations be encouraged, because of possible problems associated with accessibility, the provision of services and the potential impact upon the remote rural landscape.

It is important, therefore, that owners or potential users who wish to convert a particular building to a non-agricultural use should be aware of these restrictions, and in every instance the District Council will need to ensure that buildings are genuinely redundant and surplus to requirements and that, as a result of converting or re-using an existing building for non-agricultural purposes, there will not be pressure to erect a replacement structure elsewhere in the countryside.

It should be stressed that the principle behind the policy of allowing the conversion of farm buildings to other uses is certainly not based on the idea of enabling owners to sell them off with the benefit of planning permission in order to finance the erection of other buildings elsewhere.

Applications for the conversion of agricultural buildings in the countryside should, therefore, always be accompanied by a written statement explaining why the building is no longer needed, or is incapable of being used for agricultural or similar agriculture-related purposes. The statement should provide answers to the following questions:

- * is the building capable of beneficial agricultural, or similar use, at the time of application and if not, why?
- * what is the likelihood of there being a future beneficial agricultural use for the building in its unconverted state by a different owner or user?

- * would it be possible for the building to be satisfactorily altered or adapted in order that it could continue to be capable of an agricultural, or similar use, without the necessity of spending an unreasonably large sum on its repair, maintenance or adaptation?
- * would any grants available from such bodies as the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) make any difference?
- * would the conversion of the building leave land without adequate utility or service buildings, thereby leading to the likely need to construct new replacement buildings close by or elsewhere in the countryside? (Details of all the buildings and land which are in the applicant's ownership will need to be submitted.)

Owners will be encouraged to engage the services of an agricultural consultant to produce the statement or should consider making use of the services provided by Business Link, which has a farming advisory service sponsored by Defra. If a professional consultant or Business Link were to be involved at an early stage and their report supported the redundancy claim, then it would assist the Council in considering a change of use application and significantly speed up its determination.

Section Three

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE USES

A) *COMMERCIAL and INDUSTRIAL USES*

Once a building has been proven to be

- * genuinely redundant and surplus to requirements in terms of agriculturally-related uses
- * structurally sound
- * situated in an appropriately accessible location

then, generally, the District Council will encourage proposals for a particular range of 'employment uses', including certain types of storage, light industry, offices, workshops, etc.

Redundant agricultural buildings can often make ideal places for small businesses, providing cheap, flexible accommodation for a variety of uses. Wherever possible, the Council will endeavour to overcome any planning objections through the use of appropriate conditions attached to a planning permission, or by requiring a legal agreement to be entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990.

Each proposal, however, will be assessed on its own merits and in relation to the circumstances pertaining at the time. In order to ensure that there will not be an adverse effect on any existing nearby uses, or on residential or rural amenity, a careful assessment will be made of any potential problems relating not only to the nature of the proposed use, but also, to the scale of activity, particularly the effect of external storage and work areas, access and parking facilities. Steps will be taken to ensure that they will all be carefully controlled as appropriate.

The design of any alteration to the building and to the site generally will also need to be sympathetically handled, and any works that are undertaken should form a positive improvement in the overall appearance of the building and its relationship to its landscape setting. (See Section Five, Design Guidance).

B) *COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL USES*

In certain circumstances the District Council will support alternative uses for redundant buildings which provide suitable accommodation for recreational, sporting and social facilities for the community as a whole, including village halls, sports halls, meeting rooms, theatres, changing rooms, pavilions, museums, arts centres, educational facilities, etc, including uses related to farm diversification proposals.

Again, each proposal will be assessed on its own planning merits and its likely impact upon the character of the countryside. Conditions and legal agreements will be imposed or required, as appropriate. The quality of the building and its visual impact in the landscape will also be a material consideration.

C) RETAIL

Given the general policies of restraint on development in the countryside, the conversion of existing redundant buildings to retail uses will not normally be acceptable. An exception will sometimes be made in appropriate circumstances, where retail outlets relate directly to agriculture, horticulture and forestry, eg, nursery gardens and farm shops.

Garden centres, however, are frequently related to nursery gardens and can involve the sale of a wide range of items, as well as large areas of greenhouses, outdoor display areas and associated car parking. Where there are proposals to establish one based on existing buildings in the countryside, such developments can have a considerable impact on the locality and normally, therefore, consent for such a use would not be forthcoming.

There has been an increasing trend towards the direct sale of farm produce to the public. This trend is likely to continue, particularly as farmers are now encouraged to diversify. In many cases, the retail sale of produce directly from the farm, based on an existing farm building, is perfectly acceptable and, in fact, planning permission may not be required. In some circumstances, however, where access is inadequate, or the retail use is on a large scale, highway dangers and environmental problems can occur. Again, each site and proposal will be considered on its own merits.

Other proposals for retail uses will only be permitted where there is an overriding necessity for a particular outlet to be located in the countryside. An example of this may be where retailing is related directly to a manufacturing or craft use, which utilises a redundant or under-used building. This would be consistent with the Council's policies on rural enterprise and the use of such buildings.

Section Four

RESIDENTIAL USE

Whilst commercial and other similar uses will almost always provide a better means of ensuring that a redundant traditional building in the countryside is retained without significant alteration or loss of character, in many cases, the financial implications will usually mean that the most attractive alternative use for an owner will be residential.

In the past, where a redundant traditional building has been regarded as being of sufficient architectural, historical or landscape value, allowing its conversion to residential use has been considered an acceptable way of ensuring its retention and preservation.

The principle of allowing the conversion of such buildings to residential use, however, often conflicts with well established settlement policies which seek to prevent the introduction of scattered residential development in rural areas. Allowing such conversions to take place has been solely with the aim of ensuring that a traditional building, which has important qualities and characteristics, is preserved and that its important features are retained. Experience has shown, however, that in many cases, the very act of attempting to preserve these redundant agricultural buildings, especially the barns, by converting them into dwellings, often actually ruins the special features and character which make them valuable in the first place. When this is combined with the inevitable changes to the landscape setting of the building, frequently all that is achieved is the creation of a large (sometimes rather odd-looking) new dwelling in the open countryside where, under normal settlement policy, permission would otherwise not have been granted.

Clearly, if it is the case that the proposed new use actually destroys the essential features of an important traditional building, then that new use cannot be appropriate and a relaxation of normal planning constraints cannot be justified. In the light of this, the District Council will now need to be satisfied that in order for any existing building in the countryside to be acceptable for conversion to residential use, it should first meet all the following criteria:

- * the building is definitely redundant;**
- * the building is structurally sound and that significant repair and replacement is not required;**
- * it has been proven that the conversion to residential is the only feasible use and that the other preferred uses listed earlier in Section Three are unsuitable or impractical;**
- * the building is of sufficiently high architectural, historic or landscape value;**
- * the conversion work will not erode or adversely affect the essential character and important traditional features of the building;**

- * the landscape setting of the building will be preserved;
- * the building is not able to be used in conjunction with an adjoining dwellinghouse;
- * it is not practicable to use the building for short-stay holiday or tourist accommodation;
- * the required amount of residential accommodation, including garages, storage and outbuildings, can be provided within the existing building(s) without the need for substantial alteration, extension or new-build;
- * that proposals to create a new residential unit will not adversely affect the residential amenities and privacy enjoyed by adjoining occupiers and that such a use will not adversely affect the future viability of existing agricultural or commercial uses nearby.

These requirements are set out in more detail on the following pages.

A. THE BUILDING IS DEFINITELY REDUNDANT

SEE SECTION TWO

B. THE BUILDING IS STRUCTURALLY SOUND

It is important that conversion proposals do not involve substantial replacement of structural elements. The work should be a 'conversion' not a 'rebuild'.

The main frame or external walls and the roof of the building are considered to be structural for the purposes of assessing condition, and significant dismantling, demolition and re-erection of these elements would no longer constitute a genuine conversion.

Replacement of 'weathering surfaces', such as boarding, which traditionally require renewal from time to time, will normally be acceptable where absolutely necessary, provided materials and finishes match the existing building and are traditional in character. Where original infill exists, such as wattle and daub or lath and plaster, this should be retained as far as practicable.

If the structure of the building cannot be readily adapted to allow the use proposed without adversely affecting the integrity of its important elements, then permission will not normally be granted.

C. THERE ARE NO SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE USES OTHER THAN RESIDENTIAL

When assessing the suitability of a particular building for conversion into a dwelling, the District Council will need to be convinced that residential is the only possible alternative use.

Often there may be other options, in particular, uses which relate to agriculture in one form or another. However, if an owner considers that there would be greater financial reward or advantages in seeking residential use, then the 'hope value' involved would mean that these possibilities may not be fully explored. Obviously the cost of repair and upkeep of the building might be such that certain uses are not economically viable. However, if such an argument is put forward, then the District Council will require evidence to support the claim. (See Section Six: Processing Applications for details.)

D. THE BUILDING IS OF SUFFICIENTLY HIGH HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUE

The contribution to the character of the countryside which a building, or group of buildings make is determined by two factors -the architectural and historic quality of the building itself and its prominence and situation in the landscape.

ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC INTEREST

In assessing the architectural and historic value of particular buildings, the following factors are important.

*** *Listing***

Listed buildings (and other 'curtilage' buildings of significant quality) will normally be considered to have sufficient intrinsic architectural character and historic merit to justify conversion to an alternative use, even if their contribution to the character of the surrounding landscape is limited. However, the conversion of a listed building to residential (or some other) use will require very careful handling to ensure that the work does not detract from the architectural and historic significance of the building and that its important historic fabric is not adversely affected. This is particularly important in the case of timber-framed or brick barns, where the building's value and significance is very much derived from the often large, single, open space with exposed roof structure. In such cases, the impact of converting the building to residential use (ie, incorporating a number of smaller spaces divided off from one another) can completely ruin this character. It should be noted that English Heritage, supported by what was the DoE, had issued a statement in May 1990 on listed farm buildings which recommended the introduction of a presumption against residential conversion.

* **Age**

The older the building the more important it is. Some nineteenth century or even early twentieth century buildings might be considered sufficiently important, but normally, factors other than age will determine such cases. Furthermore, because of the significant increase in the construction of farm buildings in Victorian and Edwardian times, simple, timber-framed, or red brick and tile buildings of the period represent a high proportion of the number of existing traditional farm buildings in the countryside. If all these simple structures were held to have sufficient architectural merit to justify acceptance for residential use, then the potential for undermining the basis of the Settlement Policy would be considerable.

* **Structural Quality**

The form of construction is always an important factor. In timber-framed buildings, for example, the use of hardwood, morticed and pegged carpentry joints, etc, is of great significance. In brick structures, decorative or moulded brickwork,; flint with good brick dressings, etc, will all be looked for.

* **Completeness of Structure**

The original structure should be substantially intact. The more the building has been altered over the years, the less is its importance. Substantial alterations will mean that the building is of little value, despite the existence of some historic remains.

* **Use of Traditional (original) Materials**

The existence on a building, for the structure, infill, cladding and roofing, of materials such as old clay pantiles and plain tiles, natural slate, thatch, soft red or white brick, wattle and daub, timber weatherboarding, flint, etc, will all add to its architectural and/or historic value, but only if these can remain intact as part of a conversion scheme.

* **Traditional Form, Design and Detailing**

Aspects of the history of rural architecture or the rural economy which are illustrated by the configuration, form, design or function of the building, including the presence of rare or unusual features, openings, machinery, detailing, fenestration etc, will be an important consideration. (See also Section Five; Design Guidance).

LANDSCAPE VALUE

In determining landscape value an assessment should be made of the importance of the building in relation to the landscape generally and how much the building adds to its visual attraction. The question to be asked is - Would the quality of the landscape suffer if the building were to be removed or altered?

In the landscape, buildings are important because they provide scale and character to the rural scene. For them to be of sufficient value, therefore, they should be visible from points accessible to the general public, ie, road, footpath, public

buildings, common land, etc. This does not mean that buildings must be in close proximity to roads or footpaths. Buildings in the middle, or even far distance, when viewed from such vantage points may still conform to the policy requirements, if they are significant structures which positively contribute to an otherwise open landscape.

In many instances, a reasonable case can be put forward to support the argument that a particular traditional agricultural building in the countryside is of sufficient landscape value in its existing state (or if it is adequately repaired). However, the essential character, appearance and, therefore, the landscape value of such buildings is very much derived from their existing simple, well-proportioned, functional form. If they are converted to domestic use the alterations required for them to adequately function as a residential unit (ie, the necessity for windows and doors to be installed, the creation of a domestic curtilage etc) will almost inevitably adversely affect their inherent landscape value. Very often, the net effect is such that the converted building will no longer meet the necessary criteria in respect of its positive contribution to the rural landscape.

E. THE CONVERSION WORK WILL RETAIN THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER AND IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE BUILDING

A building which is adjudged to make a significant contribution to the character of the countryside in its existing form must be sympathetically converted if it is to continue to fulfil that function. The building should always clearly express its original use by retaining the essential qualities of its traditional form and detailing in a way which is easily recognisable.

When considering conversion schemes, regard will be paid to the extent to which the proposals affect the traditional features which contribute to, and reinforce, the expressed functional form of a building. Clusters of farm buildings, for example, rely heavily on plain, unbroken roof pitches, simple detailing and on their courtyard configuration for their character. As such, the insertion of even one solitary rooflight can often have a significantly detrimental effect.

Demolition of important ancillary buildings and extensions which help to express the function and evolution of the building should normally be avoided. Demolition of inappropriate modern extensions or outbuildings, however, will be encouraged if the appearance of the building is thereby enhanced. (See Section Five; Design Guidance).

F. THE LANDSCAPE SETTING OF THE BUILDING SHOULD BE PRESERVED

It is also extremely important to ensure that the setting of converted buildings is not adversely affected by inappropriate use of land or other development associated with the new activity. Careful consideration will need to be given as to the best means of catering for the requirements of domestic use, whilst minimising the impact on the landscape and the setting of the building. Elements of particular concern include garages and garden sheds, boundary enclosures, soft and hard landscaping, access arrangements and vehicle parking and manoeuvring areas.

Almost inevitably the conversion of a former agricultural building to domestic use will have a significant effect on its landscape setting. Conversion proposals will generally be rejected, therefore, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that potential problems are capable of being overcome.

G. THE BUILDING IS NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN ADJOINING DWELLING

The District Council will generally resist schemes which propose the severance and change of use of a building (eg barn or outbuilding) which is associated with, or is within the curtilage of, an existing dwellinghouse in the countryside, if it is capable of use in association with the dwelling, ie, can reasonably be expected to be used for ancillary storage, playroom, garaging, studio, workshop, annexe, etc. This is because, in certain circumstances, the creation of a new, separate residential unit can leave an existing dwelling without adequate ancillary buildings, inevitably leading to pressure on the District Council to grant consent for new garages, storage buildings, etc to replace the facilities that have been lost.

However, if schemes are put forward which combine the use of part of a building as ancillary living accommodation and the rest as studio or workshop space, then such an arrangement may prove acceptable, subject to the District Council being able to ensure that the commercial floorspace is retained and used in the appropriate manner. Suitable planning conditions will be applied to any consent, or an owner will be required to enter into a legal agreement limiting the uses of the relevant parts of the building or group of buildings.

The use of a curtilage building as a self-contained residential annexe will normally be accepted only if the work of alteration respects the character and appearance of the building and its relationship to the main dwelling. If the building is physically separated from the main dwelling, then the District Council will normally require a legal agreement to be entered into in order to prevent the building being used as a separate dwelling unit, or will apply appropriate conditions to a planning permission.

H. IT IS NOT PRACTICABLE TO USE THE BUILDING(S) FOR HOLIDAY OR TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

In cases where it is accepted that a particular building is of sufficient historic, architectural or landscape value and it has been proven that the building is definitely surplus to requirements and is unsuited to the preferred alternative uses then the District Council may consider proposals for conversion to holiday or tourist accommodation, subject to certain conditions and a willingness on the applicant's part to enter into a legal agreement restricting the use.

The Council will normally encourage the conversion of such buildings to tourist/holiday accommodation in preference to permanent residential use for the following reasons:

- * there is normally a greater flexibility with regard to the form and layout

of temporary holiday accommodation than with a permanent residential use;

- * there will not be the same need for typical domestic paraphernalia, such as garages, sheds, aerials, washing lines, greenhouses, fences, screen walls, etc;
- * there is no need for a domestic garden or separate residential curtilages, which tend to adversely affect the setting of a building;
- * holiday accommodation provides support for the local economy and local services and helps to stimulate employment opportunities related to holiday and recreational activities;
- * it does not create the same degree of problems for, and pressure on, public services, particularly in areas of education, health and social services.

An applicant will need to demonstrate why the use of a building for holiday and tourist accommodation is impractical or unreasonable, prior to any consideration being given to the concept of permanent residential use.

If holiday accommodation turns out to be an acceptable alternative use, then the District Council will need to retain control over the length and type of occupancy in order to ensure that the use of the building remains genuinely one of holiday accommodation. Depending on the particular circumstances of individual cases, conditions will either be imposed or a legal agreement will have to be entered into in order to control the maximum letting period or to ensure that the premises remain empty for a short period every year.

I. IT SHOULD NOT BE NECESSARY TO ERECT NEW BUILDINGS OR EXTENSIONS

In order to retain their character and appearance, new extensions to existing buildings will not normally be allowed. Buildings proposed for conversion should, therefore, be of sufficient size and configuration to allow a reasonable standard of accommodation to be provided within the existing envelope. This should include adequate garaging, utility and external storage space as would normally be expected to be provided for the size of the residential unit proposed and the size of the plot of land that goes with it.

J. PROPOSALS SHOULD NOT AFFECT ADJOINING OCCUPANTS OR LAND USES

For the proposals to be acceptable, sufficient steps will be required to be taken to ensure that existing residents of adjoining properties will not be adversely affected by the creation of a new residential unit in former agricultural buildings alongside.

Furthermore, the viability of existing agricultural holdings and other commercial uses should not be affected by proposals. An application for the residential use in a building within a working farm complex, for example, could be refused if there were to be a likely conflict of interest arising out of the granting of permission or any safety implications.

Section Five

DESIGN GUIDANCE

The design guidance contained in this section is primarily aimed at the conversion of traditionally constructed buildings of high architectural, historic or landscape value. It must be stressed, however, that the design and visual implications of works to all buildings and sites in the countryside, when converting them to other uses, is nonetheless extremely important.

Often the impact of alterations can have far-reaching consequences. This is because many buildings, and not just the traditional ones, can play a significant role in the creation of the character and appearance of the rural landscape. Therefore, in order for a conversion of a particular building to an alternative use to prove acceptable to the District Council, special care and attention should always be paid to any alterations to ensure that they are sympathetic to the character of the building and its setting, and that the result is an improvement, in visual terms, which positively contributes to the overall appearance of the countryside. As a result, the Council will always encourage works to be undertaken which involve the removal of, or improvements to, inappropriate extensions, finishes and other unsightly elements of an existing building or group of buildings, together with improvements to its landscape setting through additional planting and works to boundary walls, fences, hardstandings and accessways, etc.

TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS

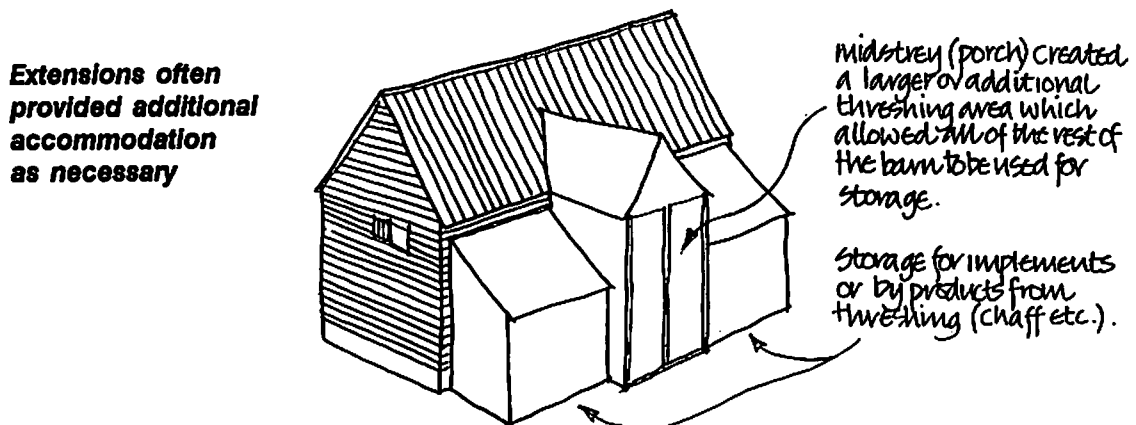
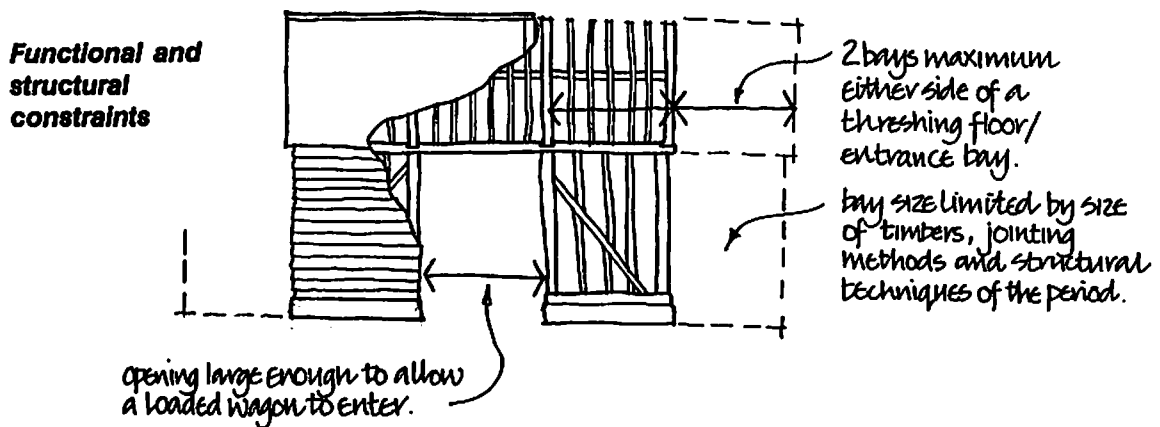
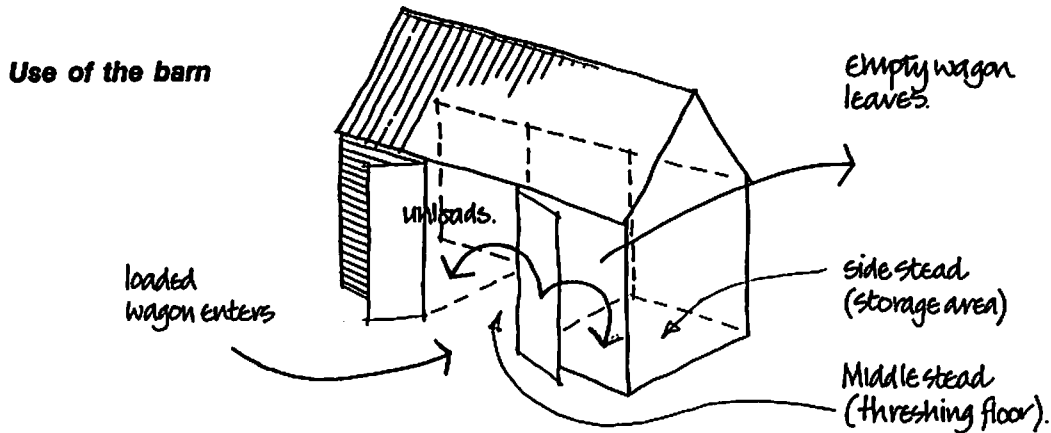
Most traditional agricultural buildings are very simple, well proportioned structures. Their form and use of natural materials such as brick, flint, weatherboarding, thatch and claytiles make them contribute to the character of the countryside in a very significant and sympathetic way.

There are many different types which have developed over the years for a multitude of different uses. The form of these buildings, being derived from a combination of functional necessity, the availability of local materials and the limitations of the constructional techniques of the period, has led to the development of building types of considerable refinement in terms of proportion and detailing, which are very highly valued in today's world of mass production, artificial materials and standardisation.

It is extremely important, therefore, that these qualities are understood and respected when attempting any sort of alteration. Furthermore, a set of design principles will need to be closely followed. The following paragraphs relate primarily to groups of farm buildings which are centred on an historic barn, although generally, the same principles will be relevant for other building types as well.

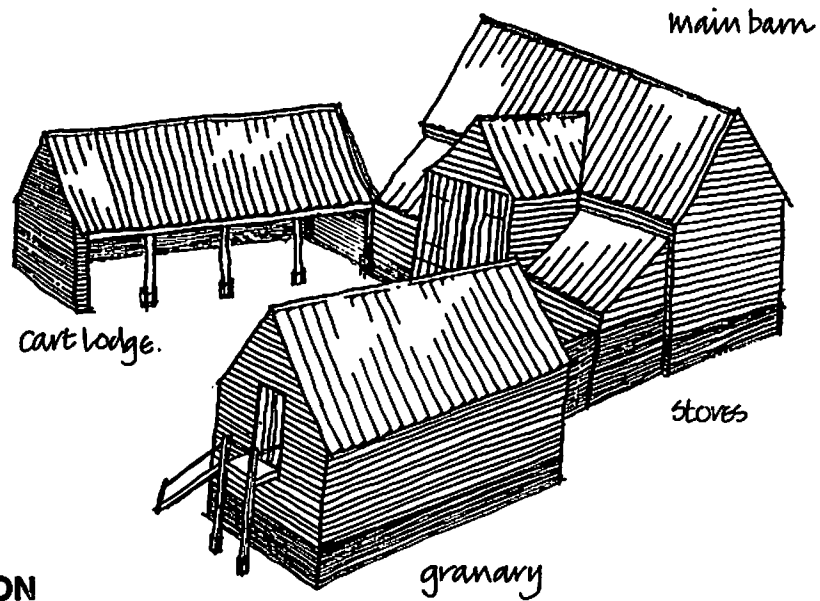
A FORM AND FUNCTION

The essential character of these buildings is primarily derived from their simple functional forms, for example, the diagram below describes how the form of a typical barn is dictated by its function.



A typical farm group would comprise a number of different buildings, each having a particular purpose or purposes, which contributed to the overall function of the complex. These could include the farmhouse, barns, cart sheds, stock sheds, stables, granaries, etc. Apart from the farmhouse, the buildings would be characterised by a closely grouped layout (usually a courtyard), simple rectangular shapes, plain unbroken pitched roofs and minimal external openings, especially in the walls which faced away from the courtyard.

Example of a Closely grouped farmyard



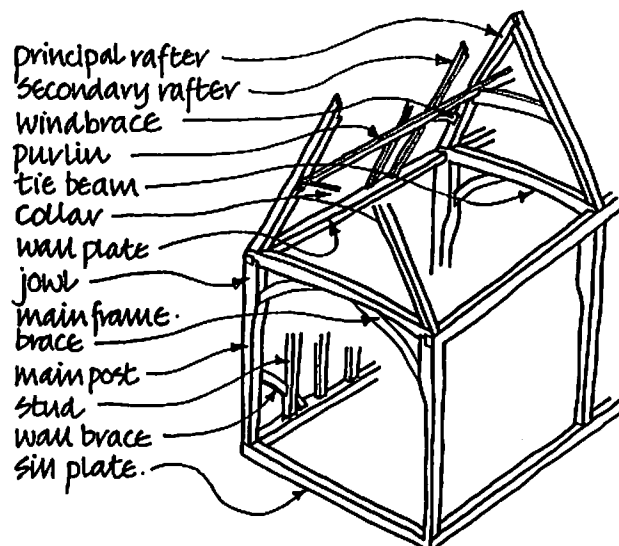
B CONSTRUCTION

Structure

Timber framing:

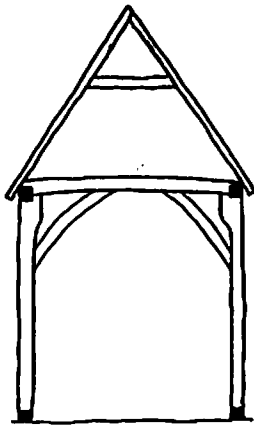
Most of the earlier farm buildings were timber-framed. Carpentry methods developed and changed over the years so that it is possible to make an assessment of the likely age of a particular building by studying this aspect.

Structural elements of a traditional timber framed barn

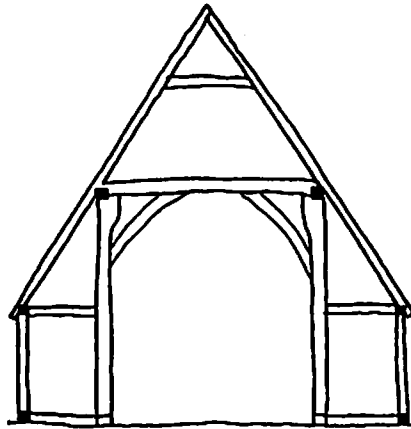


Some examples of Roof Types - Sections (with appropriate dates).

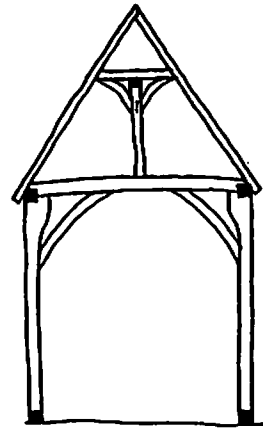
Note: Great variations exist within these basic forms and during overlapping periods many hybrid forms of construction are found.



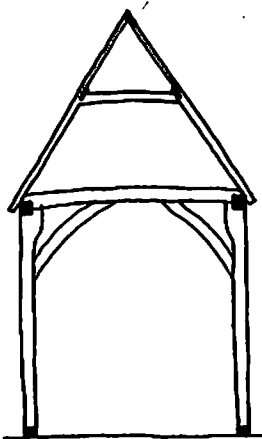
Rafter roof
(no purlins).
pre 16th C.



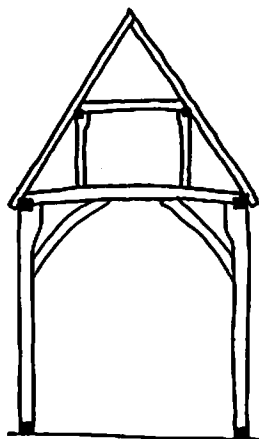
Aisled roof
pre 19th C.



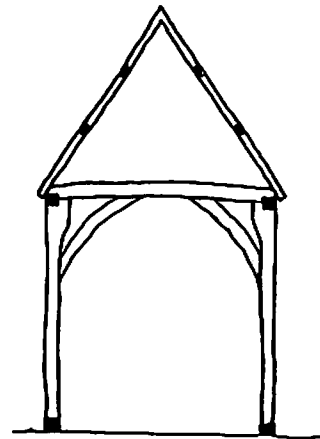
Crown post roof
15th and 16th C.



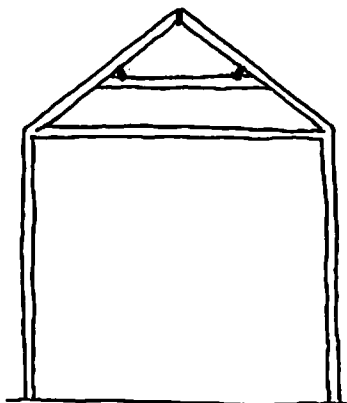
Diminished rafter
roof with side purlins.
16th and 17th C.



Queen post roof
16th C.



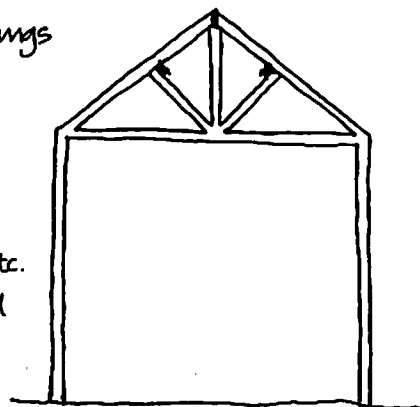
Butt purlin roof
17th and 18th C.



Modern collar and purlin roof
19th and 20th C.

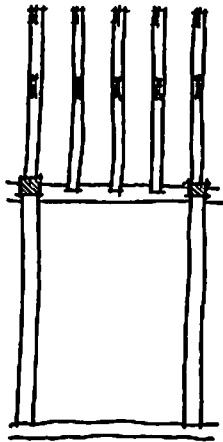
later timber framed buildings
characterized by:

- use of softwood.
- nailed/ bolted joints.
- uniform rectangular sawn timber.
- square shaped sections to main posts, wall plate etc.
- carpentry joints limited to simple dovetail at tie beam ends.
- ridge piece to roof.

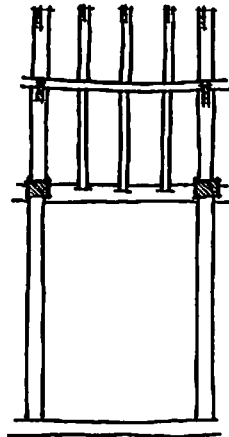


Modern truss type roof
19th and 20th C.

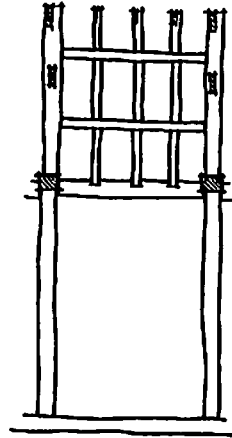
Some examples of Roof Types - Internal Elevations



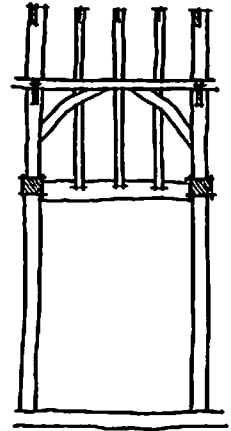
Collar rafter roof
(no purlins)
13th to 17th C.



Clasped purlin roof
(purlin runs length
of roof above collar
where it joins principal
rafters)
16th C onwards.

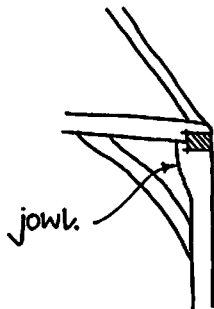


Butt purlin roof.
(one or more purlins
spanning between
and jointed to
principal rafters).
17th and 18th C.

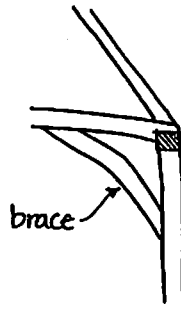


Clasped purlin roof
with windbraces.
(braces beneath secondary
rafters spanning between
purlin and principal rafter).
16th and 17th C.

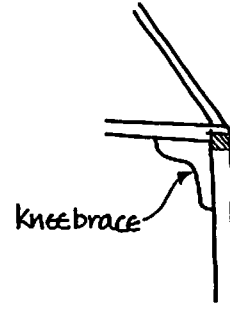
Mainframe details



pre 18th C.

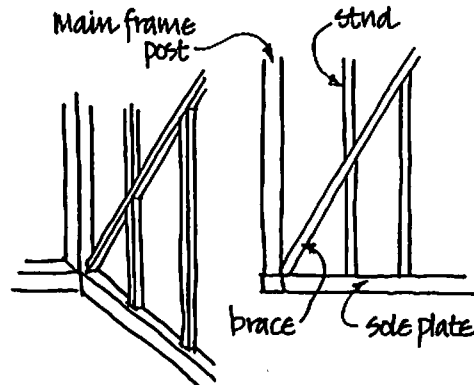
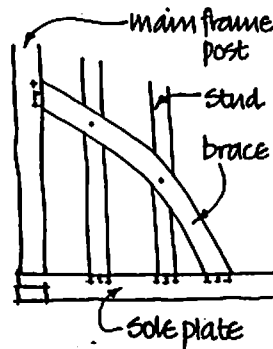
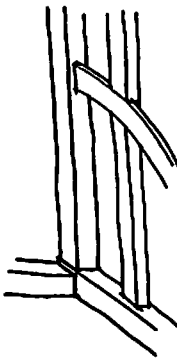


pre 19th C.



18th and 19th C.

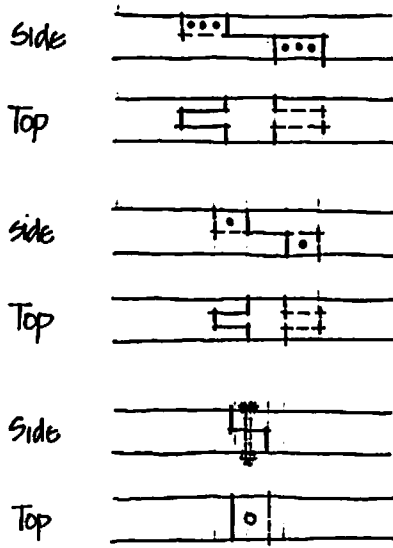
Wallframe details



Example of early, pre 16th C, framing (during the 16th and 17th C bracing was normally located between wall plate and top of main frame post and not at sole plate level)

Later wall frame detail of the late 18th and 19th C (brace was continuous between cut studs).

Scarf Joints (often found in purlins wall and sole plates)

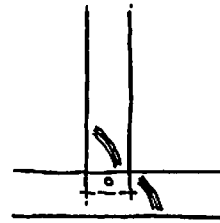


earlier form of long pegged joint.

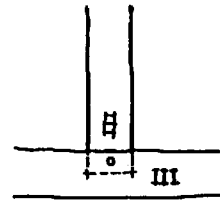
later examples were generally shorter.

simple lapped pegged or bolted joints replaced the more complicated earlier forms.

Carpentry marks (timber frames were often pre-cut and marked prior to assembly)

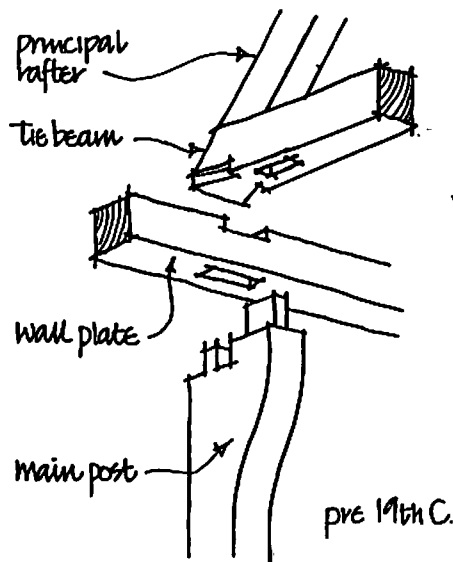


earlier forms comprised light, long (about 200mm) scratches



later examples were deep carved grooves forming small precision cut numbers (Roman numerals about 25mm long)

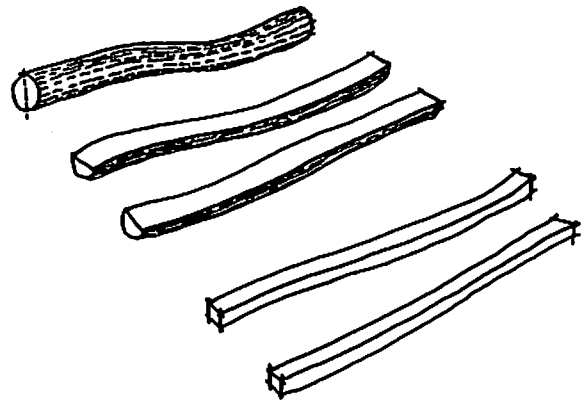
Typical main post assembly illustrating carpentry joints



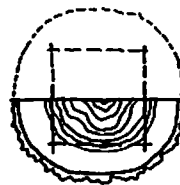
pre 19th C.

The jointing of principal rafter, tie beam, wall plate and main post mean that they work together to form a structural whole.

Beam and post manufacture



pre mid 18th C.

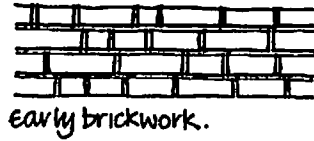


Without the benefit of mechanical sawmills a log was converted to two rectangular beams (or one beam of roughly square section) by removing the sapwood and squaring the edges with an axe or adze.

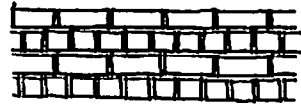
Logs which were not straight could still be used for secondary rafters, collars and ties.

Brick:

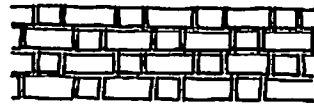
Produced locally, mostly Suffolk 'reds' although there are some examples of agricultural buildings being constructed in white 'gault' bricks. Early bricks were irregular in shape and size, although they tended to be thinner than later examples.



random colour and bonding, very textured. Sometimes cut to shape sometimes burnt.



english 16th C to mid 17th C.



flemish mid 17th C onwards.

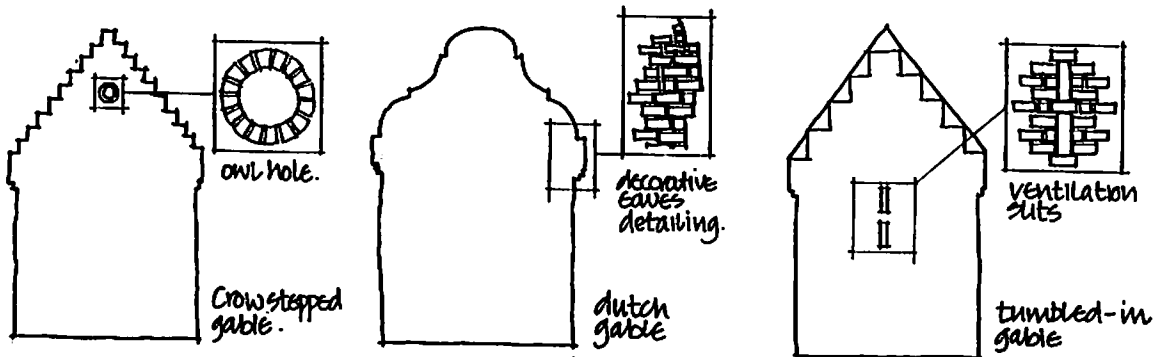
bricks tended to be standardized from the early 1800's to 9" x 4 1/2" x 3".



stretcher 20th C (cavity walls).

Examples of brickwork bonding (with approximate dates)

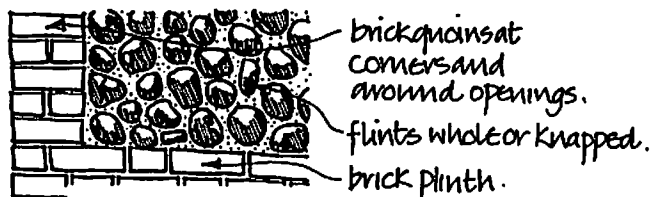
From the early 16th century onwards the Dutch influence in the use and manufacture of bricks in the region was significant, promoting its use for structural as well as decorative purposes (gables, decorative bonding, etc) and for functional reasons (ventilation, owl holes, etc).



Examples of the use of decorative brickwork in gable ends

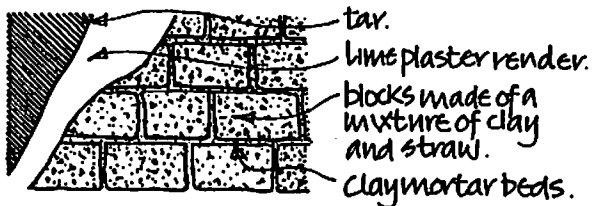
Flint:

Sometimes used in conjunction with brick as an infill material which could easily be picked up off the fields or bought cheaply as a by-product of quarrying.



Clay lump:

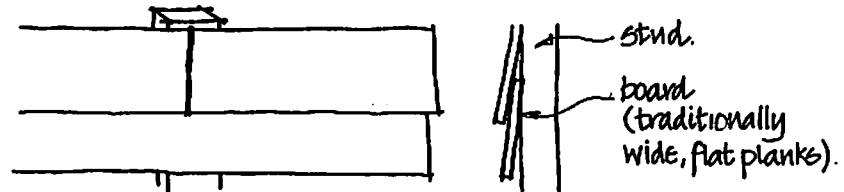
Few surviving examples in the west of the district. Primarily found in the smaller, single-storey buildings on farms. Usually rendered and often tarred.



Cladding and Infill

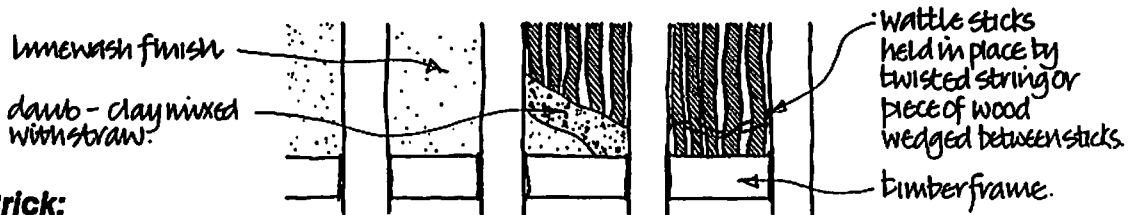
Weatherboarding:

Horizontal, feather-edged weatherboarding is the most common form of wall covering for timber-framed structures. Planks were nailed (earlier examples were probably pegged) to studs and usually tarred. Traditionally, oak and elm were used but scarcity and cost resulted in the use of imported softwood.



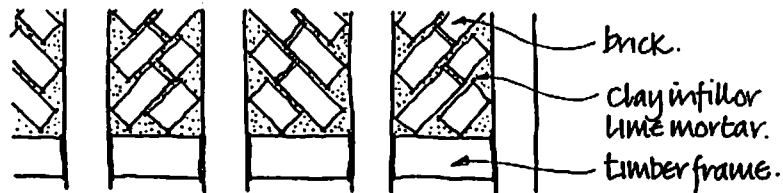
Clay:

Some timber-framed barns in the District, although not many, had clay lump or wattle and daub infill. This comprised hazel or willow stays woven together and placed within the timber frame. The clay or 'daub' was then pushed into it.



Brick:

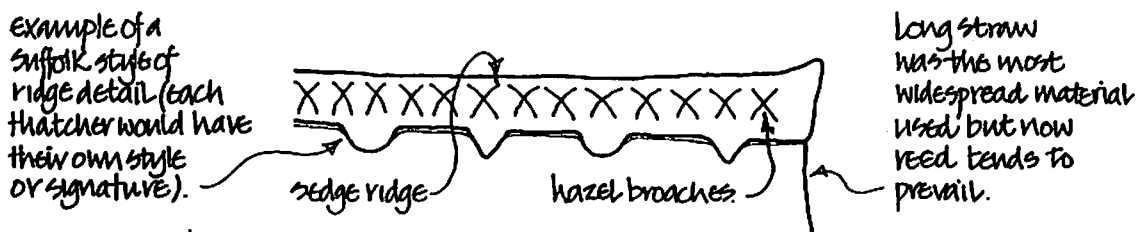
Sometimes used as an infilling on a timber-framed building called 'brick-nogging'.



Roofs

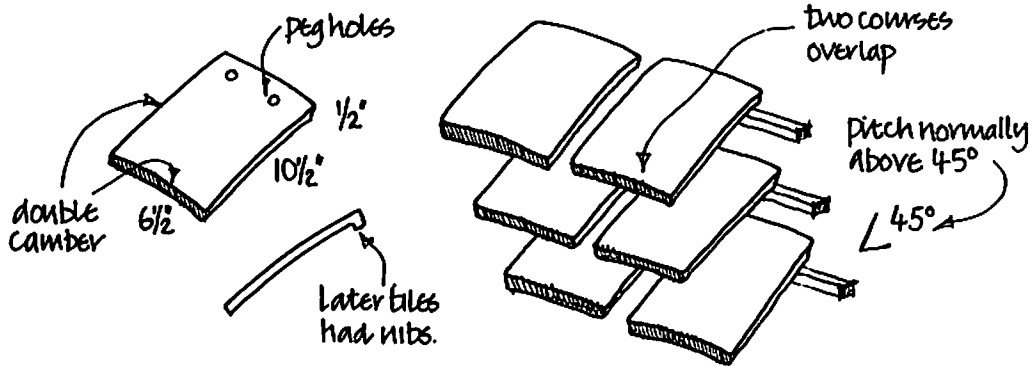
Thatch:

Thatch, a relatively light material which did not require a particularly massive roof construction, was the most widespread roofing material. Subsequent replacement with tiles, therefore, could cause structural problems for a building.



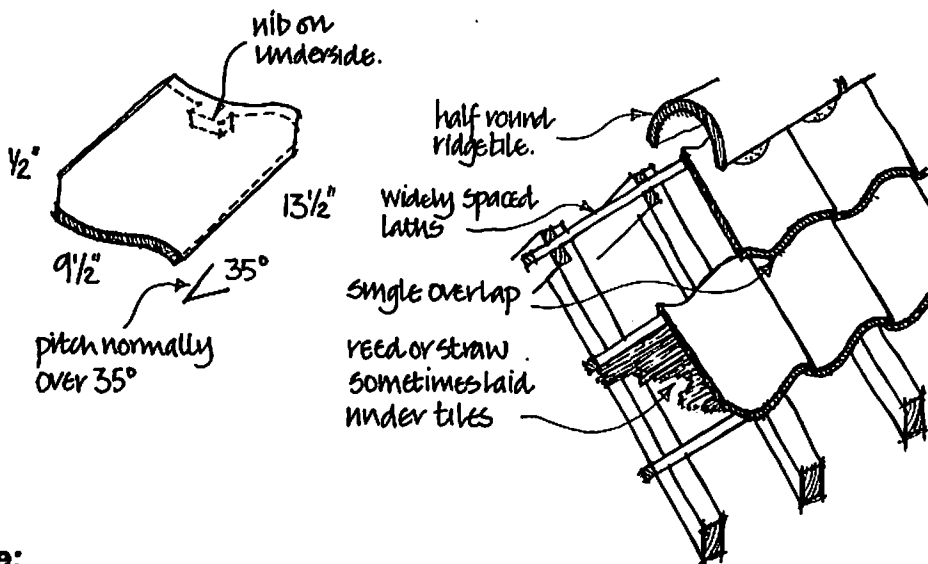
Plain or Peg tiles:

The manufacture of clay plain tiles developed alongside brickmaking. Laid on steeply pitched roofs with wooden pegs and later nails. Nibs moulded into the tile allowed the tile to be hung from light battens.



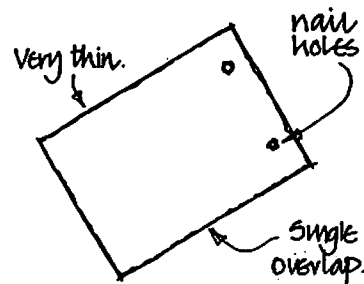
Pantiles:

Introduced during the 17th century. The most common form of roof covering for traditional agricultural buildings in the region. Long-lasting and well designed to keep water out but to allow air to circulate. They therefore do not have very good insulation qualities. Consequently, a lagging of straw under pantiles can sometimes be seen.



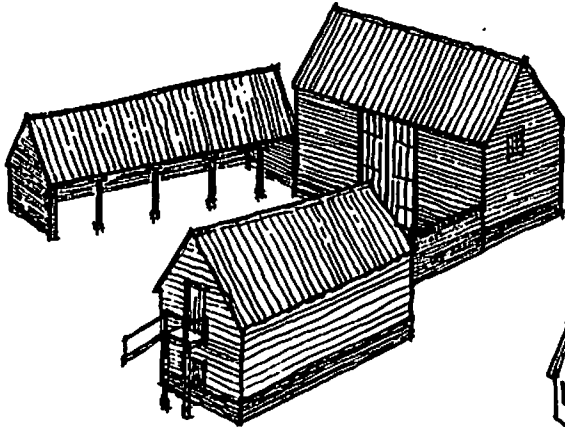
Slate:

Imported into the region from the 18th century onwards. Not a common roofing material for agricultural buildings in the District. (This, of course, does not mean it is not considered important). Mostly used to cover the roofs of later brick built structures.



C DESIGN PRINCIPLES

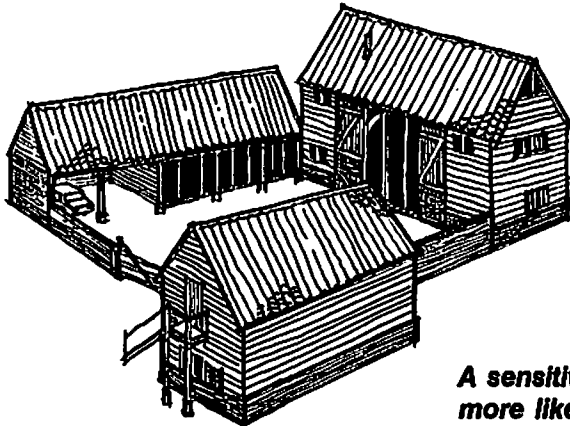
The above forms only a very brief analysis of the form, function and construction of traditional farm buildings. What must clearly be understood by anyone who is proposing to carry out alteration or conversion work, be they architect, designer, builder or owner, is that the apparent simplicity of these buildings is a result of centuries of refinement. The key concern, therefore, must always be to preserve as far as possible this essential character by keeping alterations to a minimum and ensuring that they are sympathetic through not being overfussy or too obviously contrived.



A redundant group of farm buildings as existing



A proposal for conversion which is obviously unacceptable



A sensitive approach which is more likely to prove acceptable

Roofs

The characteristic long roof slopes are a notable feature and must be left uninterrupted visually. Rooflights and dormer windows are, therefore, very disruptive and must be avoided. On the the larger buildings (especially barns) the internal roof structure is usually the finest and most interesting feature and should be left open to view, even if it is intended to partially sub-divide some of the interior space.

Often, the height of the beams and wall plates is too low to allow the insertion of a first floor and can create problems when inserting window openings below eaves level. Split staircases, galleries and walkways can sometimes overcome problems often with dramatic effects. Wind and arched braces can also cause difficulties in terms of making use of interior spaces, but these must be kept not only for historic reasons but also because they are an integral part of the structure of the building.

Exterior walls

As with roofs, creating new window openings in walls obviously has a significant effect on the essential character of farm buildings. Existing openings, therefore, must be made use of whenever possible.

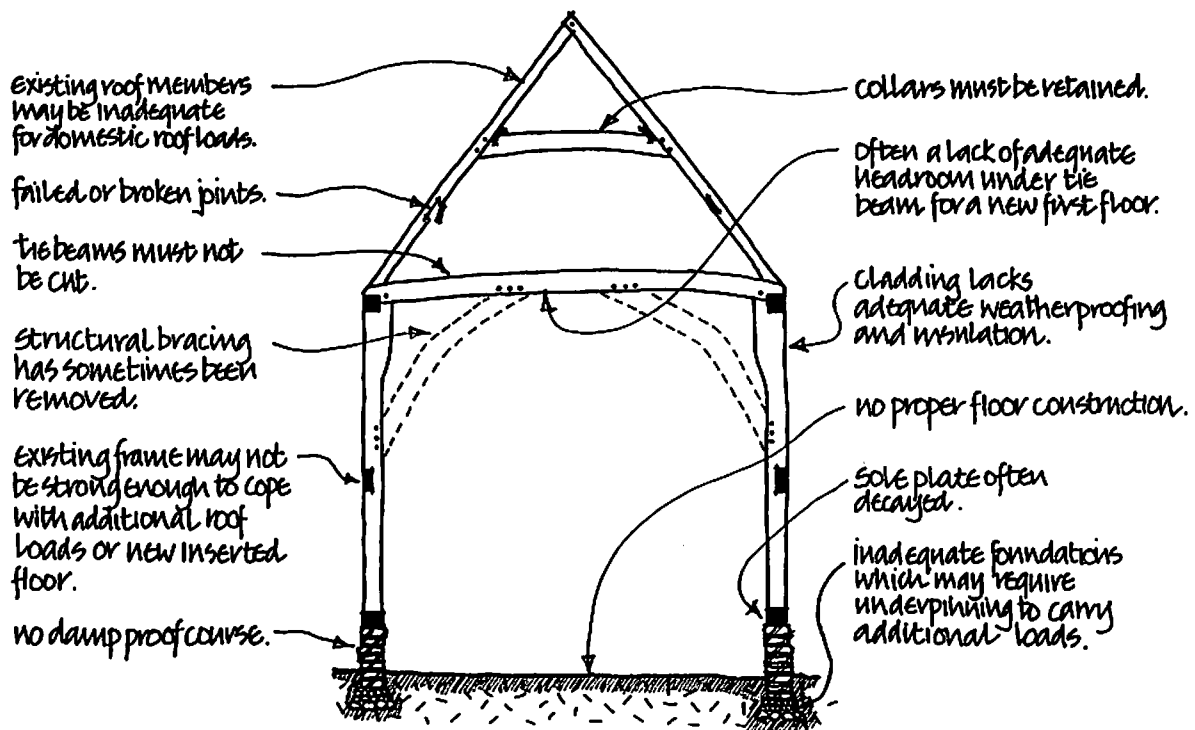
Ventilation and access doors can be used for windows and the door retained as a shutter. Openings which have been blocked up in the past can be reopened.

The great barn doors provide an excellent source of light for interior spaces, (both for direct and borrowed light). The glazing to the opening should be set back so that the impression of a large 'open void' on the elevation is retained.

Decorative and functional details, such as ventilation slits, patterned brickwork, buttresses, parapets and ironwork, should all be preserved. All original openings and their doors should be retained and not blocked in to match the surrounding walls even if they are no longer required as a result of a conversion scheme.

Structure

Many traditional agricultural buildings have structural and constructional problems, the significance of which are greatly increased when a change of use and alterations are proposed. Their implications need to be carefully considered at the design stage. There is no point in producing a design for the Planning Officer which will need to be substantially altered in order to satisfy the Building Inspector.



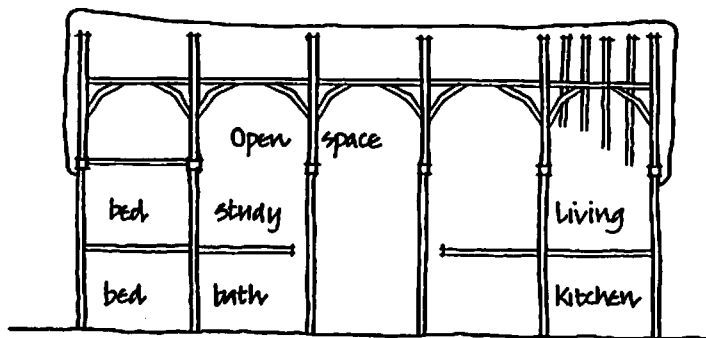
Common problems

Interiors

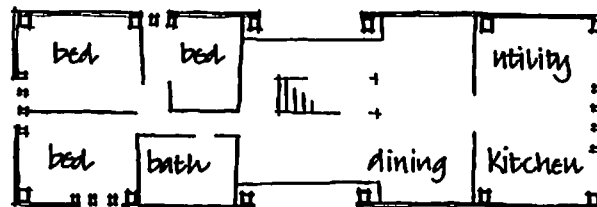
Low animal and cart sheds, stables and other ancillary buildings can lend themselves well to conversion and subdivision. Larger buildings such as barns, however, are much more difficult to convert successfully. The more open the interior can be kept, the less its subdivision, the better its character can be retained. If converting to residential use, the 'normal' arrangement of bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs, and a separate lounge, study, dining room, utility room, kitchen and hall downstairs will almost never prove to be an acceptable solution. 'Open plan living' is the key.

All the important original or historic fabric and features of the interior of a building should be retained, including any original dividing walls, floors or any machinery and equipment of historic significance.

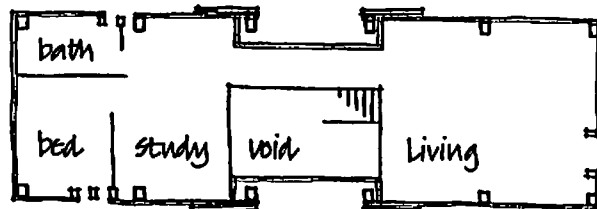
Section



Ground



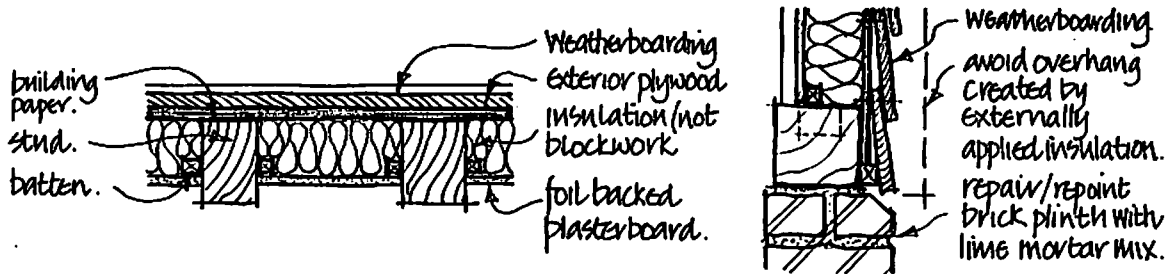
First



Sketch to illustrate one possible solution to the problem of converting a barn to residential use whilst, at the same time, ensuring that some of the 'open' character of the interior of the building is retained. (This particular solution may not necessarily prove acceptable to the Council in every instance, however, as each building and proposal will be considered on its own merits.)

Insulation and Damp-proofing

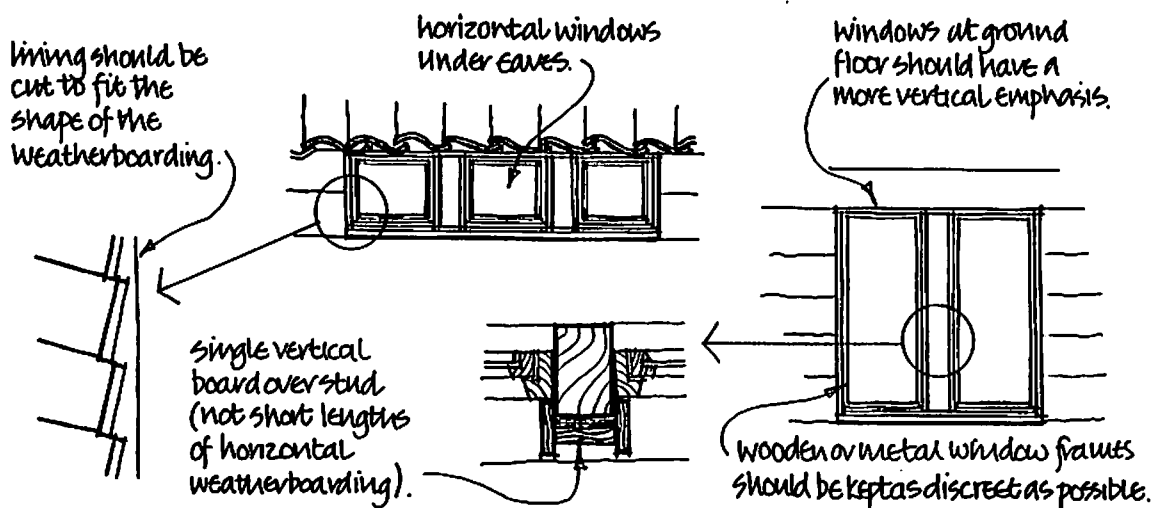
Most agricultural buildings have no insulation or damp-proofing so great care must be taken over how walls and roofs are upgraded in order to satisfy the requirements of the new use. In timber-framed buildings, structural members should be left exposed internally and the relationship between the external face of a brick plinth and the face of the weatherboarding after the insertion of insulation should not be changed (see diagrams below).



Insulating timber frames

Windows and Doors

Where new window openings have to be provided they should be kept as small and unobtrusive as possible. Roof lights, dormer windows and large windows of overtly domestic proportions and appearance must be avoided. The location of studwork and diagonal bracing in timber framed structures, which should not be cut, will often therefore determine the location and form of new windows. Where new high level or first floor openings are necessary, horizontal strip windows tucked directly underneath the eaves are preferred, although the height requirements of the Building Regulations will need to be considered. On the ground floor, windows with more vertical proportions set in between studs or with heavy mullions may be acceptable. Outward opening lights where possible should be avoided. Inward opening casements (top, side or even bottom hung) or, in some instances, horizontal sliding ('Yorkshire') sashes will reduce the impact of new window openings, or windows that have been inserted into existing openings. Metal windows with thin sections are preferable to thick wooden ones. Plastic windows are wholly inappropriate.



Inserting windows between existing studs

Chimneys

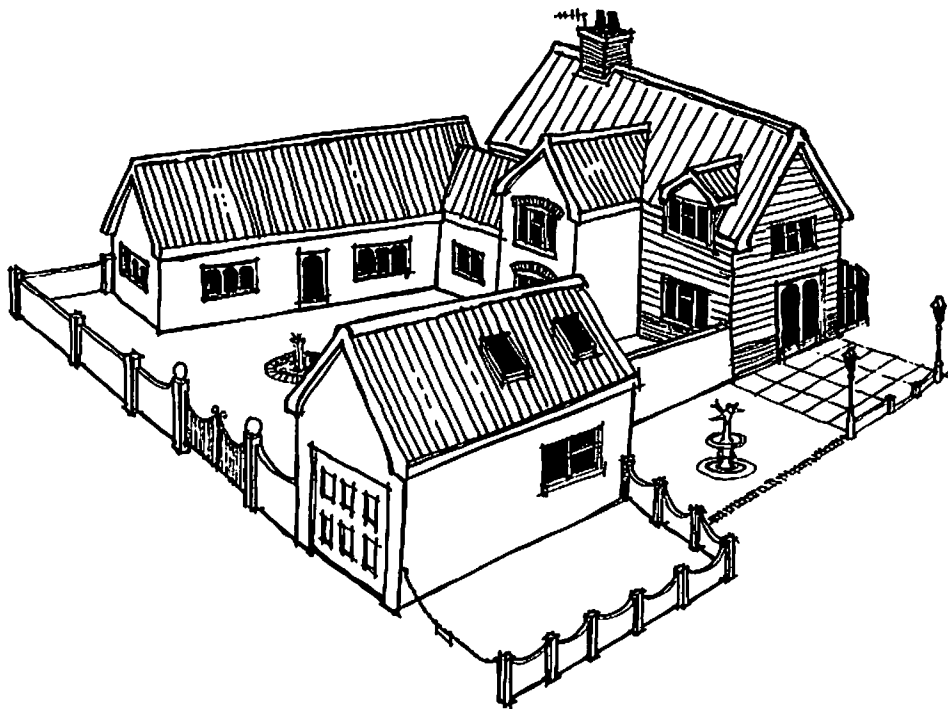
Brick chimneys must be avoided on barn conversions and black painted metal flues are, perhaps, the only solution to a difficult problem. Low ancillary buildings, such as blacksmiths' shops or tack rooms, sometimes have existing chimneys which can be used for central heating flues, but these are not common.

Finishes

A number of completed barn conversions have been ruined by windows and doors being stained light or mid-brown. Openings should almost always be finished black to match the tarred weatherboarding on timber framed structures. On brick or flint agricultural buildings, black is also the most appropriate finish, unless there is a precedent alongside for white paint. Existing brick and flint walls should not be rendered or painted.

Settings

No matter how well a conversion scheme is carried out, if the landscape setting of the building is not treated sensitively, the effect can be ruined. Planting and hard and soft landscaping should, therefore, be kept as simple as possible. The design and location of additional walls and fences should all be carefully considered, courtyards should not be subdivided, 'suburban' gardens and patios avoided and gravel or even concrete driveways and paths laid, rather than tarmac. The overall scene should be a 'rural agrarian' one.



A badly converted building can be made even worse!

Section Six PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

When considering applications for planning permission, the District Council divides types of use into two groups. The kind of information which needs to be submitted by applicants is different for each:

A) COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL (EMPLOYMENT), COMMUNITY, RECREATIONAL AND RETAIL USES

In normal circumstances, to enable the District Council to adequately consider applications for a change to these sorts of uses, an applicant will have to provide the following information:

- * a statement explaining why the building is no longer required for its original purpose or most recent use;
- * details of the nature of the new use;
- * if an employment use, the likely number of employees;
- * an estimate of the number of vehicles (cars, vans and lorries) which will be using the site and details of parking and access arrangements;
- * if a recreational or community use, an estimate of the number of people using the site, in particular, details of the largest number that is likely to be using the site at any one time;
- * details of any alterations to the building or the site that will be necessary.
- * a site plan showing all the other buildings on and adjacent to the site, together with details of other buildings and land in the applicant's ownership.

B) RESIDENTIAL USE (including ancillary residential and holiday accommodation)

In order to be satisfied that a particular proposal for conversion is feasible and will

respect the character of an existing building of architectural, historic or landscape value, applications for full planning permission for building works which include a change of use will normally be required. Applications should include the following:

- * a statement addressing the questions raised in Section Two (page 4) on the issue of redundancy;
- * proof that the building has been made available for sale or to let and marketed for a reasonable period (usually at least 6 months) at a price which reflects the site value for the preferred alternative uses listed in Section Three, and not its potential residential 'hope' value. Such proof would include the building having been placed on the District Council's Redundant Buildings Register plus a statement signed by a qualified valuer. The statement should describe in detail the steps taken to sell or lease the building, provide proof that the quoted price has been asked for, should outline the interest shown, including details of any offers made, and if turned down, should explain the justification for doing so.
- * detailed drawings (plans, sections and elevations) clearly showing the existing structure, a written statement describing its condition and photographs illustrating the interior, exterior and setting of the building; together with similarly detailed drawings, clearly annotated, showing those parts of the existing fabric and structure of the building which are to remain, those parts to be altered, and all the new work envisaged, together with a structural report or statement indicating how the conversion is to be achieved;
- * details of any proposed external works, including alterations to existing, or the provision of new, walls, fences, etc. Details of any change to the access to the site, both pedestrian and vehicular, will also be required;
- * a site plan showing the location of all the adjacent buildings, roads, driveways etc, and all the important landscape features, including trees and hedgerows, clearly marked, together with an indication of any work which is likely to affect them. (The plan should identify all the buildings and land which are in the applicant's ownership);
- * a statement describing why the building is considered to be of a sufficiently high historic, architectural or landscape value in order to satisfy the requirements of the policies outlined above. Details of the building(s) history and evidence of its age would be particularly useful.

Once a planning consent has been granted, work on the site may reveal the need for further demolition and rebuilding. If this is claimed, it will be permitted only with the express written consent of the District Council as Local Planning Authority. Consents will normally have a condition attached which would require the work to be implemented in complete accordance with the approved documents. The additional work found to be necessary could mean that the terms of the condition could not be met. In such circumstances, applicants will be required to either apply to vary the condition, or make a fresh application. They would also be advised to stop work pending the outcome of the application, as there would be no guarantee that a new consent would be forthcoming. An advice note will be placed on all decision notices reminding owners, or future purchasers of the property, of that possibility.

Redundant traditional buildings can deteriorate rapidly over a comparatively short period of time. The implementation of any planning permission granted for works to such a building will, therefore, normally be subject to a relatively restricted time limit. This will allow the Planning Authority to reassess the circumstances if the work has not been implemented within a reasonable period of the permission being granted.

In cases where structures or sites of historic or archaeological significance are affected, it will be necessary to provide for an archaeological and photographic record to be carried out prior to conversion work commencing.

LISTED BUILDING APPLICATIONS

Applications for listed building consent will be required for proposals to change the use of a listed building if, as a result of that change of use, any development which takes place will affect its character, or its architectural or historic importance. Furthermore, under listed building legislation, any object or structure which is fixed to a listed building, or forms part of the land comprised within the curtilage of the building (unless it is a free-standing building, object or structure that has been erected since 1 July, 1948), is treated as part of the building.

Obviously, where agricultural holdings are concerned (and in some instances, industrial or similar complexes in the countryside) it is difficult to define the exact curtilage of a particular listed building.

Three factors have to be taken into account in such circumstances:

- * the physical layout of the site of the listed building and related structures;
- * ownership past and present;
- * the use and function past and present.

Usually, the nature and extent of the curtilage is obvious. The building is set in land, the land is, and has been, used in conjunction with the building. There are physical boundaries, there is a history and tradition of connected or associated use.

In normal circumstances, therefore, a group of farm buildings centred on a listed farmhouse will all fall within the curtilage, and thus within the listing, even if they are not mentioned in the list description, or if any of the buildings (including the farmhouse itself) have subsequently been sold off. This would mean that the conversion of a barn close to a listed farmhouse and once forming part of a group of working buildings, will be treated by the District Council as being listed and, therefore, listed building consent will be required for any proposals which would alter the fabric of the building or affect its architectural or historic importance, both externally and internally.

In considering the suitability of a new use or any alterations to a listed building, the District Council is required to "have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which

it possesses." [Section 16 (2) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990].

If the District Council is minded to approve an application for the conversion of a building listed Grade I and Grade II*, the application has to be referred to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The old Department of Environment (now DCMS), however, had informed the Council that applications for the conversion of such buildings to residential use are "normally unlikely to receive listed building consent".

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on making applications can be provided by the Development Control staff in the District Council's Planning Department (Tel Woodbridge 383789). The Planning Department's Design and Conservation Section and the Economic Development Officer can advise on technical matters and sources of grants. Other organisations which might also be able to provide assistance, sometimes including financial help, include Suffolk County Council, English Heritage, (who have established a Technical Services Group to provide owners of historic buildings with specialist advice on technical matters), Defra, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and Business Link.

APPENDIX 1

Supplementary Planning Guidance number 1, is to be read in conjunction with, and supports the following policies as adopted in the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, First Alteration, February 2001

POLICY AP71

Alternative Uses of Buildings in the Countryside

Consistent with the need to conserve the Countryside, the most satisfactory use for a building in the Countryside will always be that for which it was constructed. However, subject to the general considerations contained in Policies AP72 and AP74 and other specific policies of this Plan, the following alternative uses may be appropriate:

- (i) uses related to agriculture;
- (ii) employment use (see Policy AP73);
- (iii) community use (see Policy AP88);
- (iv) recreation;
- (v) retail, if related to farm sales (see Policy AP65), or inextricably linked to an employment use in that it involves the sale of goods made on the premises;
- (vi) use ancillary to an existing dwelling, but not separate living accommodation;
- (vii) tourist accommodation within buildings of traditional construction, or which make a positive contribution to the Countryside, the use of which will be secured by conditions or legal agreement restricting the length of occupancy;
- (viii) residential use in accordance with Policy AP75 only.

As a general rule, the District Council will favour an employment use. Any associated new building must be small in scale, ancillary in function, unobtrusive, and compatible in style and design. New dwellings will not be permitted.

POLICY AP72

Conversions in the Countryside: General Considerations

In considering proposals for the alteration and/or conversion of buildings in the Countryside, the District Council will only grant planning permission for proposals which:

- (i) are of a suitable scale and character;
- (ii) do not have a significant adverse impact on the landscape;
- (iii) respect the form, character, setting and appearance of the building;
- (iv) would not lead to traffic movements that would prejudice highway safety or the free flow of traffic, or materially harm the living conditions of local residents;

- (v) are supported by evidence that a thorough survey has been carried out for legally-protected species, and make adequate provision for any which might be found.

Where substantial reconstruction is necessary, the proposal will be considered in the same way as a new building in the Countryside and assessed against other policies of the Local Plan.

Footnote:

“Living conditions” relate to such matters as noise, vibration, dust and highway safety.

POLICY AP73

Re-use and Adaption of Rural Buildings for Employment Uses

Outside Towns and Villages, proposals for employment uses in existing buildings, parts of dwelling houses or buildings within the curtilage of dwelling houses will be encouraged and supported subject to the following criteria being met:

- (i) there should be no significant loss of residential or rural amenity, or of best and most versatile agricultural land, or material detriment to the environment generally;
- (ii) the proposal should not lead to increased traffic movements that would prejudice highway safety or the free flow of traffic, or materially harm the living conditions of local residents, particularly by increased commercial vehicles;
- (iii) warehousing and haulage uses will not be permitted, unless the activity is primarily to provide a service to the immediate locality;
- (iv) adequate site access should be available;
- (v) the conversion of recently constructed agricultural buildings which have not been materially used for agricultural purposes, or very remote buildings, will not be permitted;
- (vi) the design of conversions and external works shall be sympathetic to the character of the building and its setting;
- (vii) businesses should be small, and preferably provide jobs and/or services for the local community;
- (viii) the subsequent expansion of the activity on the site will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that it would have no adverse impact on the surroundings and, under certain circumstances, the District Council will consider seeking the removal of rights under the General Development Order.

Footnotes

- (a) “Small” is defined as a business which employs 25 persons or fewer on the site in question.

- (b) "Living conditions" relate to such matters as noise, vibration, dust and highway safety.

POLICY AP74
Historic Barns

Proposals for the change of use or alterations to historic barns will only be acceptable, subject to Policies AP72 and AP75, where:

- (i) the single, open volume is largely retained;
- (ii) there is minimal external change;
- (iii) changes which are proposed respect the form, character and appearance of the building.

All applications must be supported by a full structural survey and the District Council, in granting planning permission, will consider restricting permitted development rights in order to control subsequent extensions, alterations and associated developments.

The conversion of any historic barn to residential use will only be permitted where it is clearly a last resort in order to preserve it. Much stricter controls will apply to those historic barns which are listed. In particular, the conversion of Grade I and II* listed barns to residential use will be strongly resisted.

POLICY AP75
Conversions to Residential Use

The conversion to residential use of buildings in the Countryside, such as churches, mills, barns or other traditional agricultural buildings, will only be permitted if:

- (i) it is essential to retain the building because of its architectural or historic interest, its contribution to the character of the Countryside through its presence in the landscape, or its contribution to a group of buildings in the Countryside;
- (ii) the building is in sound condition and will not require substantial alteration or extension;
- (iii) the applicant has clearly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the District Council that the building is unsuitable for an employment use, or other alternative uses set out in Policy AP71 and a residential use is the only possible way that the building can be saved;
- (iv) there are no problems relating to residential amenity, highway safety, access and other planning considerations;
- (v) in the case of barns, the proposal accords with Policy AP74.
- (vi) the building is of permanent and substantial construction;
- (vii) the creation of a residential curtilage will not have a harmful impact on the character of the countryside;

- (viii) any historic structure or archaeological evidence which would be lost or destroyed during alteration and conversion is adequately recorded before conversion work takes place.

In assessing applications, the District Council will have regard to the need to secure the retention of the essential character, structure and important details of the building, and will expect applicants to provide adequate plans, drawings and survey results to show how this can be achieved. If appropriate, the District Council, in granting planning permission, will consider restricting permitted development rights in order to control subsequent extensions, alterations and additions.

The conversion of buildings to residential use in connection with the employment use of other related buildings will only be acceptable if the conversion is a subordinate part of the overall use and accords with (ii) to (iv) above. In approving any conversion, the District Council will consider tying its implementation and occupation to the remainder of the scheme.

POLICY AP76
Supplementary Planning Guidance

In the determination of proposals for the conversion of buildings in the Countryside, the District Council will have regard to any Supplementary Planning Guidance which is in operation at the time as a material consideration.