



# PROPOSALS FOR THE RE-USE OF RURAL BUILDINGS

## POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE

SEPTEMBER 2006

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 We have produced this guidance to assist those who are considering possible alternative uses for agricultural and other rural buildings located outside defined settlements (excluding dwellings) within the District. As an area that has always relied on agriculture, South Holland contains many farm buildings dating from the 18th century onwards as well as other rural buildings such as chapels, windmills and warehouses associated with the District's cultural, economic and social heritage.
- 1.2 Rural buildings can be split into two categories. Firstly, there are buildings dating from the twentieth century such as poultry sheds or utilitarian agricultural storage and workshop buildings which may have fallen out of use. These are generally of no significant historic or architectural value and contribute little to the visual quality of the fenland landscape. However, they can in certain circumstances offer opportunities for new uses of benefit to the rural economy.
- 1.3 Secondly, there are older, more traditional buildings that convey an important feeling of the District's past agricultural history and contribute greatly to landscape character. These are often found in attractive groupings and are built predominantly of red brick with pantile or slate roof coverings. Many of these older buildings were designed before agricultural mechanisation and may be unsuitable for modern farming purposes. It is important that appropriate alternative uses are found to secure the future of the best examples.
- 1.4 We have seen increasing numbers of proposals to convert farm and other buildings to new uses. This guidance supplements the policies of our South Holland Local Plan 2006 and explains the criteria that we will use to assess proposals for the re-use of rural buildings. It also offers advice on

design detailing to ensure sympathetic restoration and conversion where re-use is supported. The guidance will be used in our assessment of planning applications.

## **2.0 PLANNING POLICY**

2.1 Through 'Planning Policy Statement 7 : Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' (PPS7) Government supports the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed rural buildings where this would meet sustainable development objectives. Business uses are preferred as they benefit the rural economy and create jobs.

2.2 The South Holland Local Plan 2006 gives local expression to PPS7 and includes policies for the re-use of rural buildings. Policy EC4 establishes criteria for the assessment of farm diversification projects involving redundant rural buildings and Policy HS16 criteria for the assessment of proposals to convert such buildings to residential use. Policy HS16 requires that it be demonstrated that there is no prospect of economic re-use before residential use is considered. These policies are attached in full at Appendix A to this guidance.

## **3.0 HISTORIC AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL VALUE**

3.1 There are a number of important differences in our policy approach to the re-use of those traditional buildings within the District that are of historic and architectural importance and those that are more modern. Consequently our guidance is split into the two parts set out below:

- Part A – Guidance on the re-use of buildings of significant architectural or historic value

- Part B - Guidance on the re-use buildings of no significant architectural or historic value.

3.2 In assessing whether or not a building or group of buildings has significant architectural or historic value we will take into account the following:

- **Building Type**

The most common examples of historic buildings that may be found within the District are:

- (i) Agricultural - Threshing barn, hayloft or barn, cow house, horse stable, cart shed, granary, dovecote, field barn, planned or mechanised farms, crew yards
- (ii) Mills - Tower mill (for drainage or grinding grain). Few examples of other types exist in Lincolnshire (with the exception of Sneath's Mill Luton which is a bricked over Smock Mill)
- (iii) Redundant Chapels.

- **Age and Design**

Farm buildings in South Holland are likely to date from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards through to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Any earlier surviving farm buildings or structures would be considered rare and may be put forward as a candidate for Spot Listing, if not Listed already). Unless the farm building is of the planned or mechanised type, age can be difficult to estimate as styles of agricultural buildings changed little during this period. However, it is possible to gain a good idea of age from:

- (i) Brick size and bond. Brickwork bond was often used to denote status. Flemish bond (alternate headers and stretchers in each course) was a highly fashionable brickwork bond normally reserved for houses of middling and high status from approximately 1700. Old English Garden Wall Bond (every third

or fifth course is formed of headers with stretcher bond between) is the most common form of brickwork bond found during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century on farm buildings of lesser status. Flemish bond is occasionally found on agricultural buildings to denote status and a high quality farm building. English bond (a course of headers followed by a course of stretchers) is usually confined to early buildings (before 1700). Victorian buildings are often of a machine made brick and are larger in size with a smoother texture.

- (ii) Roof structure, including assessment of its internal structure (beams, ties, wall plates, etc) pitch and covering. Most mill towers in the District have lost their caps but this does not mean that less consideration will be given when a new use is proposed.
- (iii) Verge eaves and parapet details such as tumbled gables, raised brick parapets and dentilled eaves.
- (iv) Size, type and function of original openings (e.g. threshing barn opening). Arch or beam details, ventilation slits.
- (v) Joinery details such as full height barn doors, stable doors, ventilation windows and windows. In the case of chapels, windows and doors will be a dominant feature.
- (vi) Internal Features such as feeding troughs, stable dividers, staircases, extant machinery (mills and farms can both contain remnants), and panelling (chapels).
- (vii) Relationship to extant historic farmhouses. In the case of mill towers there may be a relationship with other industrial structures on the site as well as a historic dwelling house. Redundant chapels and churches are often found within the District as lone structures remote from any other structure or settlement.

- **Extant Architectural Features**

How much of the original building and its detail (as set out above) actually exists. Assessment can still include original openings which have since been blocked up and original fixings for shutters or doors even if the doors are no longer extant.

- **Group Value**

Historic farm buildings with a variety of functions can often be found together forming attractive groups of buildings. Farm buildings frequently form a visual link to a farmhouse. It is important to maintain such groups, even if in separate ownership. Individual field barns can also be found.

- **Landscape Value**

Mill towers have an obvious landscape value in most instances. Redundant churches, chapels and farm buildings can contribute positively to the landscape of an area providing interest in a remote and generally open, flat countryside. Such buildings are also a highly visual reminder of the district's social and cultural history.

#### **4.0 PART A – RE-USE OF BUILDINGS OF SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL VALUE**

4.1 Traditional rural buildings such as eighteenth and nineteenth century barns, barn complexes, stable blocks, coach houses, windmills and chapels form an important part of our built heritage and culture and they help to define the historic character of our fenland landscape. We will very carefully assess proposals for the re-use of these buildings. All too often we receive planning applications for new uses which involve removing original fabric such as roof trusses and wall plates, reconstructing walls and replacing roof tiles, inserting new openings and adding extensions. In the case of residential conversion schemes proposals often seek to create

a suburban, domestic appearance. The combined result is tantamount to new build. Any re-use scheme must be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building.

- 4.2 Those proposing new uses are strongly advised to discuss their proposals with us prior to the submission of a planning application. Contact details are set out in Appendix B of this guidance.

### **Structural Condition**

- 4.3 Before considering proposals for re-use we will require applicants to demonstrate that the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without significant rebuilding, alteration, or replacement of original fabric. A full structural survey prepared by a qualified and experienced Structural Engineer will be required together with detailed floor and elevation plans (existing and proposed) showing the extent of proposed works to convert the building. This should be accompanied by a detailed schedule of proposed works and sympathetic repair techniques and an internal and external photographic survey. We will carefully assess the structural survey and may commission an independent survey. Those proposing conversion often argue that significant works are required to satisfy the Building Regulations and for insurance purposes. The Council's planning and building control staff work closely together and we have significant experience in dealing with conversion schemes and finding solutions that do not necessitate intrusive and damaging works. For example, it is possible to insert additional roof timbers to strengthen an existing roof and to treat retained timber rather than replacing the roof as a whole. Schemes proposing extensive reconstruction and replacement will not be supported. We would expect a minimum of 80% of the original roof and wall structure and fabric to be capable of retention when considering the extent of structural repairs.

- 4.4 Where the structural survey indicates that the building is beyond repair and/or would require substantial rebuilding then we will not support proposals for re-use as this would effectively constitute new development in the open countryside which is contrary to local and national planning policy. Although of no economic benefit to the District such buildings can provide valuable habitat for wildlife including bats, barn owls and nesting birds.

### **Stewardship Scheme**

- 4.5 If farm buildings are part of a working farmstead it is possible to obtain high levels of grant funding to repair and retain important historic features with assistance from the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme operated by DEFRA. Where farm buildings of architectural and/or historic merit are contained within a working farmstead we will ask applicants to consider this assistance if a building, or group of buildings, are of such special merit (particularly Listed farm buildings) that retention in their original form and use is desirable. This will ensure that any outstanding examples of historic farm buildings that may be found in the District are retained in their original form and use. Contact details for DEFRA are included at Appendix B to this guidance.

### **Employment Use**

- 4.6 We will encourage the conversion of rural buildings to uses that benefit the rural economy where this would be compatible with the design and layout of the building and the character of the area in which it is located. Uses falling within Class B1 'Business' are the most appropriate and these include light industry and office use. We will carefully assess the impact of any employment use on the local road network to ensure that there would

be no harm to highway safety and that the roads are suitably designed for, and have the capacity to serve the development. We will also assess the impact of the proposed use on local residents to ensure that they would not be adversely affected.

- 4.7 Business uses should normally be low key to respect their rural context. Uses that would employ high numbers of staff or generate significant traffic are unlikely to be acceptable. The South Holland Local Plan 2006 seeks to direct major employment development to the District's principal settlements and allocated industrial sites in order to ensure that they are readily accessible by public transport and by cycle as well as by private car.
- 4.8 Employment uses that would necessitate a new on-site residential presence are unlikely to be acceptable.

### **Tourism**

- 4.9 Historic rural buildings can be re-used to provide accommodation for tourists and visitors to the District. The Council supports the development of tourism as a means of diversifying the local economy. Barns, chapels and other buildings can be converted to either holiday cottages or more simple bunk house barn style accommodation associated with cycling, fishing and bird watching in the District. When supporting these types of proposal we will impose planning conditions to restrict occupation, normally with a maximum of 28 days occupation by any individual or family in a 12 month period to ensure that the accommodation meets the needs of genuine holidaymakers.

## **Residential Conversion**

4.10 Proposals for the residential re-use of rural buildings of significant historic and/or architectural value will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the building is unsuitable for employment or tourist accommodation use, or that there is no demand for such uses. Government and local planning policy seeks to strictly control residential development outside settlements. Proposals will be assessed against the five criteria of Policy HS16 of the South Holland Local Plan 2006 set out in Appendix A. We will require applicants to go through the following process before we consider proposals for residential use:

- (1) In the case of buildings designed for or capable of being used for agricultural purposes, the building should be advertised for sale or lease for a minimum of 6 months for agricultural use;
- (2) If no sale or lease is secured during the above 6 month period planning permission should be sought for (i) Class B1 (Business) and/or Class B2 (Industry) use and (ii) short stay holiday accommodation, unless it can be demonstrated to our satisfaction that either of these options would be unacceptable in terms of highway safety, traffic generation, harm to the amenity of local residents, or the character of the building or its setting in the wider landscape;
- (3) Once planning permission is secured for Class B1 and/or Class B2 use and/or short stay holiday accommodation the building should be advertised for sale for a period of 12 months for these purposes.

Before the building is offered for sale or rent we will require the submission of an assessment of price by a suitably qualified and

experienced Chartered Surveyor or Chartered Valuer to demonstrate that the price is commercially realistic. We may also seek an independent assessment. We will require details of the proposed marketing strategy and will expect the building to be actively marketed in the press at District level a minimum of once per month as well as details displayed for public view in the relevant agency throughout. In the case of Listed buildings we may require the building to be advertised regionally or nationally by an appropriate specialist agency. If at the end of the prescribed periods the building has not been sold or leased we will require the submission of a statement setting out levels of interest and offers made to demonstrate to our satisfaction that genuine attempts have been made to sell or lease it.

- 4.11 In the case of Listed buildings it is preferable to find a new use related closely to that of the original or one which is compatible with the building. Sometimes this will preclude residential conversion.

### **Planning Applications**

- 4.12 Planning applications should be accompanied by the information set out under the heading Structural Condition above together with scaled drawings showing the existing and proposed layout and elevations of the building with proposed changes to the physical fabric marked clearly (preferably in red). The application should also include details of the proposed extent of curtilage to be associated with the building, boundary treatments and indicative landscaping proposals.

### **Listed Buildings**

- 4.13 A number of farm and other rural buildings in the District are Listed in their own right and many others are Listed because they are curtilage structures to a Listed building (in other words, some buildings are Listed

because they are or were outbuildings in the grounds of a Listed building). Proposals for alternative uses for these buildings will be very carefully assessed.

4.14 Listed buildings are statutorily protected and national legislation and guidance protects them from harmful change. There may be circumstances where conversion to an alternative use may be unacceptable in principle given the unsympathetic works these changes would involve. Where a new use is proposed the applicant will need to demonstrate that it will not detract from the fabric, interior or setting of the building. Stringent criteria are applied to listed buildings and where consent is granted any features of special interest must be preserved. This can result in the need to retain and repair historic fabric including lime plasterwork, lath and plaster, lime ash floors, original boarded floors, hard decorative floor surfaces such as herringbone tiled floors, as well as internal and external features and large open spaces within the building, even if these are not mentioned specifically in the list description. Other features that are also likely to be retained are large floor beams, roof structures, date stones, original windows, doors, shutters and ironmongery, external and internal staircases and ventilation slits and holes.

4.15 Listed Building Consent will be required in addition to planning permission and applications should be supported by an impact assessment showing how any proposed changes will affect the special interest of the building. This must include full details of the following:

- Loss of historic fabric;
- Impact of Building Regulations requirements;
- Impact of Fire Regulations requirements.

4.16 If the requirements of the Building and/or Fire Regulations would impact detrimentally upon the special interest of a listed building then it is unlikely that consent will be granted.

4.17 We will require proposals for the re-use and conversion of a Listed building to be prepared by suitably qualified and experienced specialists. We would recommend the use of RIBA or RICS Accredited Conservation Specialists and contact details are included at Appendix B to this guidance. A justification statement will also be required showing why any proposed alterations are necessary and desirable.

## **5.0 PART B – RE-USE OF BUILDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL VALUE**

5.1 Much of the guidance set out in Part A of this guidance also applies to the re-use of more modern rural buildings. Modern agricultural and rural buildings can offer opportunities for new employment uses that provide jobs for local people and benefit the rural economy. These alternative uses can also reduce the need for new building in the open countryside. Where it can be demonstrated that the alternative use will bring these benefits then proposals will normally be supported subject to satisfying the guidance and criteria set out below.

### **Alternative Uses**

5.2 It would be extremely difficult to set out in this guidance every type of use that a rural building could be put to and such a list could be unduly restrictive. Individual business uses compatible with their rural context such as agricultural machinery repair, a timber yard or livery stables that compliment the rural economy will be more favourably considered than schemes which attempt to create mini-industrial estates or uses that

generate significant volumes of traffic such as haulage yards or distribution depots. Commercial uses should generally be low key and capable of assimilation into the wider landscape. Proposals involving extensive areas of hard surfacing, outside storage, parking of large numbers of vehicles, or the development of additional buildings are unlikely to be acceptable. Where the buildings are related to an existing house there may be opportunity for uses such as livery yards or riding schools. Modern rural buildings are unlikely to be suitable for tourism related uses. Much will depend upon the size of the particular building, its location, the nature of the local road network, and proximity to other uses and local residents. Buildings close to settlements with good road links will offer greater opportunity than those in remote locations.

5.3 Planning permission will not be granted for the re-use of more modern rural buildings for either residential accommodation or tourist accommodation.

5.4 In summary, proposals should satisfy the following criteria:

- There should be no harm to the amenity of local residents;
- There should be no harm to the character and/or appearance of the local landscape;
- The roads serving the site should be capable of accommodating the traffic that will be generated by the proposed use without prejudicing highway safety;
- The use should be compatible in terms of levels of general activity with the character of the area in which it is set;
- The building should be of permanent construction;
- The use should be low key and small in scale to ensure that it does not undermine the achievement of sustainable communities in local

settlements. Uses employing large numbers of staff in isolated locations not served by public transport will not be acceptable;

- The proposal should not involve the development of additional buildings;
- The building should be structurally sound and capable of re-use without significant alteration or reconstruction.

## **DESIGN ISSUES**

- 5.5 Conversion schemes, particularly those involving traditional buildings, need to be sensitively and sympathetically designed to ensure that the character and intrinsic architectural quality of the building is retained. The end result should be a building that retains the same overall appearance. Residential conversion schemes can be damaging and often people want the idea of living in a barn but the reality of living in a modern house. This can be very difficult to achieve without compromising the building and inevitably harms the original fabric and character, resulting in an uneasy compromise. However, very successful conversions can be achieved with a flexible and imaginative approach which maximises the unique features of the original building. For example, a large airy room with an open roof and exposed trusses can create a spectacular interior. Conversion must respect and retain the essential character of the original building.

### **Roofs**

- 5.6 The original storey and eaves height, shape, pitch and cladding of the roof should be retained (unless the roof has been clad in inappropriate materials in which case replacement is appropriate). Raising the height of the eaves or roof to give additional storeys will not be acceptable. Existing roof timbers should be retained.

- 5.7 Pantiles are the most commonly used historic roof covering in the District with many locally hand made examples. Where possible, existing pantiles should be re-used, or new natural clay pantiles where the existing pantiles are in very poor condition. Hand made pantiles will be required for Listed buildings.
- 5.8 Welsh slate was introduced to Lincolnshire during the mid-nineteenth century with the development of the railways and can be found on some buildings in South Holland. It is likely that remaining pre 1850 buildings with slate roofs would originally have had pantiles. Existing slate roof coverings should be re-laid to the original pattern wherever possible. New roof coverings should be of natural slate, preferably indigenous to this country. Lead flashings must also be fixed in a traditional fashion.
- 5.9 Where the original covering is missing and evidence to reinstate authentically does not exist, natural pantile or slate should be used. We will advise on which is more appropriate, based on the age and style of the building.
- 5.10 The use of concrete pantiles, interlocking tiles and artificial slate will not be acceptable.

### **Rooflights**

- 5.11 The limited use of roof lights to provide lighting to a loft space or mezzanine level may be acceptable. They should be of a narrow vertical format and laid flush with the roof. Roof lights should not exceed 600mm in width and will preferably have a vertical subdivision unless very narrow. The use of traditional metal roof lights is encouraged.

### **Dormer Windows**

- 5.12 Dormer windows can harm the appearance and character of a traditional rural building giving it an over-domestic feel. They will rarely be acceptable unless the building contains such features as part of its original construction.

### **Chimneys and Flues**

- 5.13 The introduction of chimneys will not be acceptable unless it can be demonstrated that the building originally included such features, for example in the case of seasonal workers accommodation. As an alternative, it may be possible to have a short plain black metal flue coming through the lower slope of the roof in an inconspicuous location.

### **Walls**

- 5.14 Walls to traditional farm buildings are most likely to be constructed of red brick in South Holland. Brick walling must be retained and carefully repaired using a cement free lime mortar. The use of render or painted, coloured finishes is likely to be unsuitable.
- 5.15 Where small areas of damaged or perished brickwork exist these should be repaired by carefully removing the original bricks and turning them or they should be replaced with bricks of matching size, colour and texture and must replicate the original bond. The typical brickwork bond locally is Old English Garden Wall bond which is commonly found on outbuildings and walls dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Flemish or English bonds are also evident and indicate a building of greater status or quality as more bricks are required. The use of English bond may indicate a building dating from the early eighteenth or even late seventeenth century.

We can advise on sources of reclaimed bricks.

## **Repointing**

- 5.16 All historic buildings constructed before the mid 19th century would have a lime mortar, often in an 'off white' or buff colour. Full repointing is unlikely to be necessary. Where loose mortar exists, this should be carefully raked back using a hand tool (mechanical tools can easily damage old brickwork). Any repointing should be undertaken using a mortar which matches the colour, texture and style of the original. New pointing or re-pointing should be carried out using cement free lime putty and sand mortar with slightly recessed joints. Any small areas of rebuilding must be undertaken using a cement free hydraulic lime/sand mixture. The mortar should never be proud of, buttered over or deeply raked out from the brickwork.

*(Please note: listed building consent is likely to be required for repointing listed buildings)*

## **Windows and Doors**

- 5.17 Windows and door openings should be retained unaltered whenever possible. New or replacement windows and doors should be of timber construction and never PVCu. Careful design will be required in order to co-ordinate the internal room layout and any new inserted floors with the existing openings. Most traditional rural buildings have few door and window openings compared to the overall area of wall. The pattern and type of openings are important features, varying from large arched openings for threshing floors or cart sheds to small slit vents and pigeon holes for barns and other buildings.
- Too many new openings will spoil the appearance of the building. They should be added very sparingly, and in a way that maintains the original character of the building. In some cases it may not be

acceptable to introduce any new openings, particularly in Listed buildings.

- Original windows nearly always have a strong vertical proportion and this emphasis should be maintained or introduced into new openings.
- Tall openings should retain their original character and proportion. Used as doorways or glazed to the ground, such openings can provide the opportunity for light and airy interiors. A recessed glazed screen could be used, sometimes in the form of a pair of doors. If it is necessary to fill the lower part of a tall narrow opening, it should be treated as a partially glazed door of the stable type.
- Large openings such as those in threshing barns should have specially designed glazed screens with robust timber mullions giving a strong vertical emphasis. Alternatively, a frameless glazing system may be considered. Where light is not required it may be possible to consider infilling openings with recessed vertical timber boarding in the Lincolnshire style. Vertical timber boarding may also be acceptable in some openings if there is no evidence of original doors or shutters. Horizontal timber boarding is not normally acceptable.
- Original shutters and doors should be retained and repaired. Where beyond repair they should be replaced in timber in the same style as the original. They may also be reinstated where evidence shows that such features once existed. These features can be pinned open but also give added security if and when needed.
- Careful design is required where an inserted floor runs across an existing opening. Whenever possible the original fenestration pattern

should be retained unaltered. This may be achieved by isolating the floor from the window joinery, and creating an internal separation.

- Ventilation slots can be successfully glazed with fully recessed invisible frames.

### **Eaves and Verges**

- 5.18 Traditional farm buildings tend to have clipped eaves with no fascia board. Some traditional buildings, especially early to mid eighteenth century, may have a raised brick parapet and/or tumbled gables. Such features should always be retained and repaired. Many traditional farm buildings in the District have dentilled brick eaves detail. Standard modern box eaves with projecting fascia, flat soffit and projecting bargeboard details should not be used.

### **Rainwater Goods**

- 5.19 Where original rainwater goods exist, these should be retained if they are in good condition with any missing sections replaced in the same material and profile wherever possible. Additional rainwater goods or drainage/soil pipes should be kept to a minimum and be sited in inconspicuous locations. New rainwater goods should be of cast iron or aluminium construction. Plastic will not be acceptable on Listed buildings. A traditional and inexpensive detail is for guttering to be supported on metal rise and fall brackets and guttering should be coloured black or lead grey.

### **Finish and Colours**

- 5.20 Historic details such as shutters would normally have been left to age naturally. A matt dark stain, such as walnut is often appropriate for such details (not brown or orange/brown). Sometimes, paint has been used historically and can occasionally be an appropriate finish depending upon

the age and style of the building. If a paint finish is considered to be appropriate, bright strong colours should be avoided.

### **Internal Features**

- 5.21 The internal room layout should be designed so that the original structure, openings and features can be retained or adapted thereby minimising the need for internal and external change. The design of the building and the position of existing openings should dictate the internal room layout rather than these features being amended or added to in order to accommodate specific numbers of rooms or a preferred layout.
- 5.22 The insertion of floors or subdivision of internal spaces may not be appropriate in large volume buildings such as barns, especially if Listed.

### **Extensions**

- 5.23 We will not normally permit extensions to traditional rural buildings. In the case of residential proposals, Policy HS16 specifically requires a building to be of sufficient size to provide a reasonable standard of amenity for future occupiers without the need for extension.

### **Garages and Workshops**

- 5.24 Garages and workshops should normally be provided within the existing building rather than in new buildings or extensions as these can harm the appearance and character of the existing building and/or the wider landscape.

### **Setting and Curtilage**

- 5.25 The design of external areas is often of equal importance to the conversion of the building. However well a conversion is carried out, inappropriate treatment of the external spaces can ruin the effect. Proposals should include details of the treatment of the area around the

- building. Attractive and useable external spaces should be created with traditional walls or hedges to link and delineate these spaces. The buildings, spaces and enclosing features should be designed together to create a harmonious whole.
- 5.26 Existing trees and hedges, and original walls and gates should be retained. Domestic features such as railings, trellising, rope swags or chains, or solid timber fences to boundaries should be avoided. Post and rail fencing with native hedge and tree planting is the preferred treatment although brick walling may be appropriate in some circumstances.
- 5.27 You should aim for a simple, open and uncluttered appearance, in keeping with the traditional Fenland landscape.
- 5.28 The size of the garden area to a residential conversion scheme will be restricted to prevent the creation of a manicured appearance to the setting of the building. Hard landscaping within a courtyard is more appropriate with pots and troughs providing an appropriate alternative to flower beds. The use of tarmac, coloured concrete slabs and pavers which are alien in colour and character should be avoided with natural coloured gravel used instead for surfacing and drives.
- 5.29 Great care must be taken with parking areas which should be sited in inconspicuous locations or screened using enclosing walls or hedges. Plan to site refuse storage, oil tanks and parking areas with a mind to the wider landscape.

### **Permitted Development Rights**

- 5.30 Where planning permission is granted for residential use we will withdraw the rights normally given to householders to add extensions and alter their property by, for example, changing or adding windows, as well as for the

erection of garden buildings, workshops or garages and the erection of walls and fences. This will ensure that the character and appearance of the building is preserved in the long term.

## **6.0 WILDLIFE**

6.1 Rural buildings and farm buildings in particular have traditionally been the home of a wide range of species. Bats and barn owls are protected species within the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981. It is an offence to destroy or obstruct the roosts of bats and barn owls, and English Nature must be informed if you intend to refurbish a building used by other species. We can offer advice in this matter.

## **7.0 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE**

7.1 We are always happy to offer detailed pre-application advice on proposals for the re-use of rural buildings before detailed plans are prepared. This can avoid the costs incurred in preparing plans where planning permission is unlikely to be forthcoming. Contact details are provided in Appendix B of this guidance.

## **8.0 PLANNING CONDITIONS**

8.1 Where permission is granted planning conditions will be imposed to control a range of matters such as hours of use and limits on vehicle numbers on commercial schemes, together with conditions relating to schedules of repair, materials of construction, landscaping, boundary treatment, external surfacing and other areas detail.

## APPENDIX A

### **Policy HS16 – Conversion of Redundant Rural Buildings to Residential Use**

Proposals for there-use or adaptation of existing buildings outside defined settlement limits to residential use will only be permitted where all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- 1) The Council is satisfied that the building is unsuitable for employment use or that there is no demand for suitable employment use in the locality.
- 2) The building is of permanent and substantial construction and is capable of conversion without significant rebuilding.
- 3) The building is of architectural or historic merit, makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the landscape and conversion can be achieved without adversely affecting that merit.
- 4) The design of the scheme, materials of construction and detailing are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building.
- 5) The building is capable of conversion to provide a reasonable standard of residential amenity without the need for significant extension or alteration.

Permitted development rights for the future extension and alteration of buildings converted to residential use and for the erection of curtilage structures will be withdrawn. Special regard will also be had to the landscaping and boundary treatment of such development.

### **Policy EC4 - Farm Diversification Including Re-use of Redundant Rural Buildings**

Proposals for farm diversification projects will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria are met:

- 1) The proposed activity is compatible with agricultural operations on the farm and would not prejudice the efficient functioning of surrounding land uses.
- 2) Existing or redundant rural buildings are utilised wherever it is practicable to do so.
- 3) Where a proposal involves utilising existing buildings which are of architectural or historic merit, the design, materials and detailing of any

alterations or additions must be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building.

- 4) It does not result in excessive expansion and encroachment of building development into the open countryside.
- 5) It does not result in an unacceptable traffic impact on roads servicing the site.
- 6) The development would not result in an adverse impact on neighbouring residential properties or the local landscape and environment.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Contacting the Council for Advice**

We are happy to offer **free** detailed pre-application advice on proposals for the re-use of rural buildings before detailed plans are prepared. This can avoid the costs incurred in preparing plans where planning permission is unlikely to be forthcoming.

Please contact the Council's Conservation Officer on 01775 761161 to arrange an appointment. The Council's contact details are set out below;

South Holland District Council  
Council Offices  
Priory Road  
Spalding  
Lincolnshire  
PE11 2XE

Council opening times: Monday to Thursday - 8:30am to 5:15pm; Friday - 8:30am to 4:45pm

Telephone : 01775 761161  
Fax: 01775 710772  
Email: info@sholland.gov.uk

### **Accredited Conservation Specialists**

The Council requires proposals for the re-use and conversion of listed buildings to be prepared by suitably qualified and experienced specialists. We recommend the use of RIBA or RICS accredited conservation specialists who can be sourced from either of the following;

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors  
RICS Building Conservation Forum  
12 Great George Street  
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### **Specialist Suppliers - Traditional Building Conservation**

The Building Conservation Directory is a useful document to source specialist suppliers, consultants and craftsmen in relation to traditional building conservation, refurbishment and design. The document is published by;

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