

36/2004/012

G S BOLTON

**CHANGE OF USE OF HOLIDAY UNIT TO FORM PRIVATE DWELLING AT  
LOVELLS FARM, DARK LANE, STOKE ST GREGORY.**

35364/27664

FULL PERMISSION

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**PROPOSAL**

Planning permission was granted in 1999 for the conversion of a detached barn into holiday accommodation. The holiday unit was completed in June last year and has been available for holiday use since then. The barn is situated to the northeast of a range of barns previously attached to Lovells Farm, which, now provide parking and a small holiday unit. This proposal is for the change of use of the barn from a holiday unit into a permanent dwelling. The access for the dwelling lies to the west of the building and there are several parking spaces available for use. In 2003 planning permission was granted for the provision of a small domestic curtilage to the rear of the barn and the proposed dwelling would use this.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

TOURISM OFFICER domestic tourism in the south west is experiencing a decline and research has shown that this is due to the cost of UK holidays, increase in interest rates, poor weather and cheaper options abroad, within the Taunton Deane Area visitor guide 33 self catering cottages are listed competing for the same customers through both the guide and web site, the 2004 season has been the quietest since the period prior to the foot and mouth outbreak, in Stoke St Gregory and North Curry the number of self catering cottages containing 2 bed rooms and upwards has now reached saturation point and demand appears to have peaked with numbers of enquiries and bookings in decline. Whilst I would normally expect a new business to be offered for at least 2 seasons in the case of this application the barn was the second on the site and I do not consider that demand is sufficient to support the retention of the barn for holiday use.

PARISH COUNCIL The buildings should not be separated from the farmhouse, the business has not been established for long enough to assume there is no need for holiday accommodation in the area, if granted this proposal would encourage dwellings in buildings that would not have been considered suitable for conversion, or in the open countryside.

19 LETTERS OF SUPPORT have been received from the local community raising the following points:- the barn has been attractively refurbished, in keeping with the area and would help to provide permanent support for a range of local services and facilities; there is a garden and plenty of space for cars to park; there is already a wide range of tourist accommodation in the area; the one bed-roomed unit will be retained and this appeals to the type of people who are attracted to the area (hikers, birdwatchers, walkers etc); the barn is in a sustainable location with a bus that passes the property

and only a 10 minute walk to the village centre; there have been a large number of barn conversions into dwellings in the area ; there are plenty of holiday units in the area; the barns form an attractive addition to Dark Lane.

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review the following Policies are considered relevant:- Policy STR1 requires all proposals to be sustainable development, Policy STR6 Development outside Villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel, Policy 49 Transport requirements of new development requires proposals for development should be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure, or, if not, provision should be made for improvements to infrastructure to enable development to proceed. In particular development should: provide access for pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and public transport; provide safe access to roads of adequate standard within the route hierarchy and, unless the special need for and benefit of a particular development would warrant an exception and not derive access directly from a National Primary or County Route. Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit the following policies are relevant:- S8 Outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape character of the area and(B) accords with a specific Development Plan policy or proposal; (D) supports the vitality and viability of the rural economy in a way which cannot be sited within the defined limits of a settlement. EC3 Outside the defined limits of settlements, the conversion of buildings to small tourism will be permitted, provided that: (A) the building proposed to be converted is of permanent and substantial construction, and: (1) has a size and structure suitable for conversion without major rebuilding, or significant extension and alteration; and (2) has a form, bulk and general design in keeping with its surroundings; and (3) is sited near a public road; (B) and the proposal would: (1) not harm the appearance, nature conservation and historic heritage or surroundings of the building; (2) be compatible with the rural character and landscape quality of the area, taking account of any visual improvements proposed; (3) not harm the residential amenity of neighbouring properties or highway safety and adequate arrangements can be made for the provision of services; (4) not lead to a dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality. Policy H9 refers to the conversion of barns to residential use. This policy is similar to the above policy except for the following criteria The barn is unlikely to attract a suitable business re-use; and is sited near a public road with convenient access by foot, cycle or public transport to a settlement.

The original barn comprised significant amounts of block work and would not have conformed to policy H9 as it required significant alteration to be in keeping with the traditional character of the area. In considering the current proposal the converted barn would now comply with the requirements of policy H9 as it has a traditional character that reflects the area. Furthermore I am awaiting additional evidence from the applicant that indicates that the tourism use is not viable and I consider that this proposal now complies with policy H9.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The original barn comprised a rear and side stone wall with large area of block work and a lean to structure to the front. To convert this barn to a residential property would have required significant alterations to the barn that I consider would have been contrary to Local Plan policy H9. The applicant applied for a tourism use where the economic benefits have led to the conversion of some barns (like this one) that require a greater amount of alteration. This barn was therefore converted to a holiday unit and available for rent from July 2003. The conversion has been undertaken to a high standard and as a result the building has a more traditional appearance. Normally the Tourism Officer would require holiday lets to be marketed for at least two years to prove there was insufficient demand to retain the unit for that use. In this case his knowledge of the over supply in the area and the success of the existing one bed roomed unit on the site has resulted in support for the loss of this holiday unit. I consider that the barn conversion now complies with policy H9 and the proposal is considered acceptable.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, parking, removal of permitted development rights for windows, extensions, walls and fences and ancillary buildings.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION: The proposal results in the re-use of a building in the countryside in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policy H9.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.**

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356467 MRS J MOORE**

NOTES: