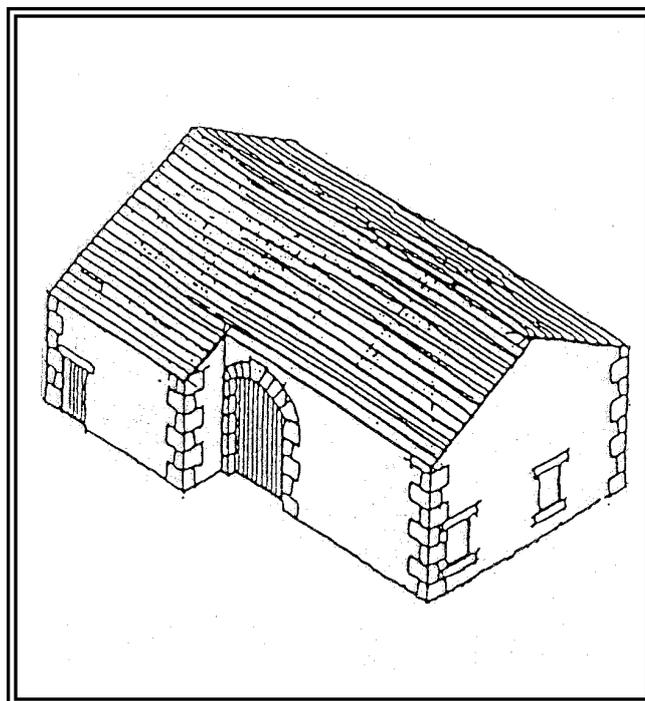




BLACKBURN
with
DARWEN
BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

The Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside



**BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN
BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN**

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

This is one of a series of supplementary planning guidance notes prepared by the Council to raise awareness of good design and to improve the quality of new development.

The following titles are available from the Council's Technical Services Department at Blackburn and Darwen Town Halls.

Residential and Other Related Uses

1. New Residential Development
2. Extensions for Detached and Semi-detached Houses
3. Extensions for Terraced Houses
4. Community and Other Uses within Residential Areas
5. Residential Institutions

Conservation and Design

6. Listed Buildings
7. Conservation Areas
8. Outdoor Advertisements and Signs
9. Shopfront Design and Security
10. Industrial and Warehousing Buildings

Rural Areas

11. Agricultural Buildings
12. The Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside
13. Village Appraisals

Natural Environment

14. Landscaping and Wildlife Habitat Creation
15. Species Protection

THE CONVERSION OF BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

This note gives detailed policy and design guidance for those considering converting an existing building in the countryside to another use. Its main aims are to:

- assist the diversification of the rural economy by encouraging the consideration of commercial or business uses before residential use
- ensure that works do not result in a substantial rebuild of structures
- ensure that conversions are sympathetic to the character and rural setting of the building

Changing patterns of agriculture in the countryside have resulted in the amalgamation of many farm units and these, together with increased technology and new farming methods, have left many buildings unused or obsolete. Similarly, changing lifestyles have left other types of buildings vacant. An accompanying increase in public awareness of the contribution made by such buildings to the character of the countryside has resulted in increased pressure for their preservation.

Applications for the conversion of such buildings to alternative uses have consequently increased in the rural areas of the Borough. Many such applications have involved considerable or complete reconstruction, resulting in total loss of character of the buildings to the detriment of the countryside. The need therefore to control such uses is seen as paramount to ensure future developments are more in keeping with current attitudes and expectations for the rural area.

The conversion of barns and other buildings in the countryside to alternative uses will be considered subject to criteria set out in Policy RA6 of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Local Plan. The design of new development in the countryside needs careful consideration and should be in accordance with Local Plan Policy RA11. Before conversion to dwelling houses is considered it must be shown that conversion to industrial and commercial uses is not viable. Conversions to industrial and commercial purposes will be permitted where:

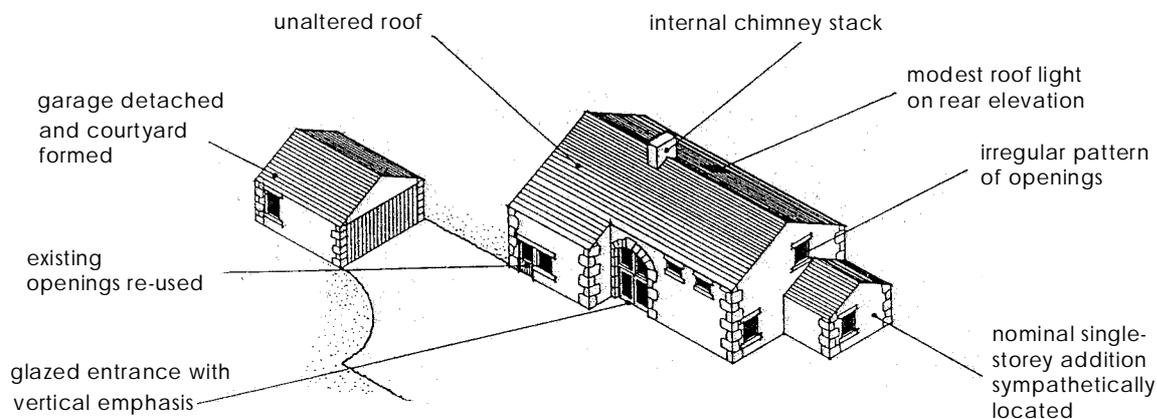
- the building is shown to the satisfaction of the Borough Council to be structurally sound;
- the development will not require unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on the provision of infrastructure;
- conversion works are in keeping with the style of the building and respect the character of the landscape. Works should use matching materials and retain any existing features. Where buildings are of architectural or historical merit, works should be of traditional materials and design.
- the building is of sufficient size to be capable of conversion without requiring substantial extensions or alterations (no more than 20 square metres);
- satisfactory means of access, parking and servicing can be provided and mains services are available for connection into the scheme;
- the development, including any ancillary structures or its curtilage does not detract from the character of the landscape; and

THE CONVERSION OF BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

- the Council is satisfied that any agricultural building was originally created for genuine purposes. Recent buildings, albeit of traditional stone construction and appearance will not be accepted since such circumstances can be readily manufactured and undermine the integrity of genuine conversion proposals. In the case of such early conversion the history of the building will be investigated by the Council's Planning Service.

Structural alterations

The building must be capable of conversion without the need for demolition and/or rebuilding more than 30% of the surface wall area of the building. This may include the total rebuilding of not more than one of the external walls. Re-roofing of the building is acceptable in addition to the rebuilding of the walls, providing the shape and height of the roof are not altered.



Acceptable conversion scheme.

Structural survey

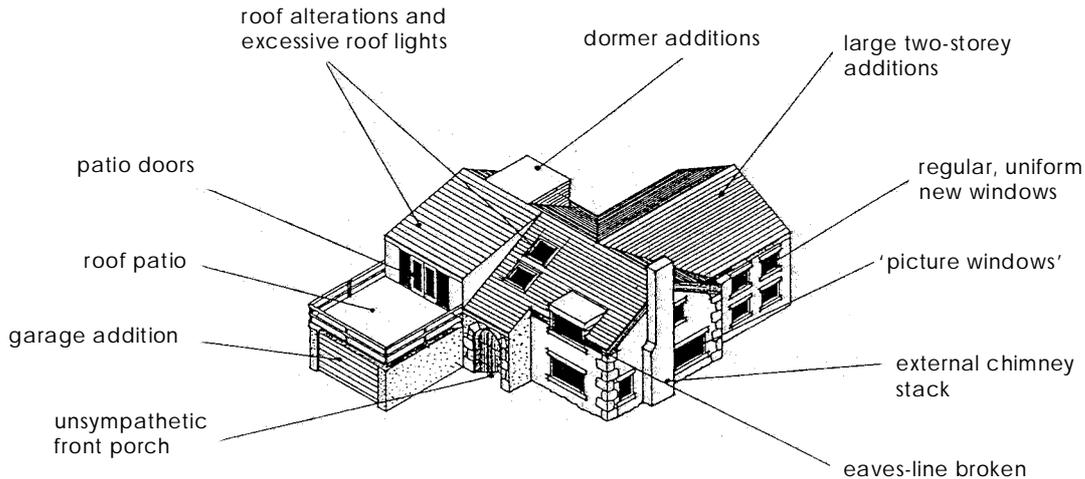
The Council will require applications to be accompanied by a written structural survey of the building undertaken by a competent person, usually a structural engineer and by a scaled drawing highlighting all the areas of the building which would require rebuilding.

This information is considered necessary to assess the capability of the building to accommodate the proposed conversion and to assess the scheme in terms of the amount of structural alterations.

Extensions

If the conversion proposal involves an extension of the existing building, you will need to refer to Local Plan Policy RA8. The building must be capable of conversion without the requirement for the addition of any two storey extension, or single storey extension which will increase the ground floor area by more than 20 square metres.

Two storey extensions detract from the traditional form of any rural buildings which are traditionally of a simplistic form.



Unacceptable conversion scheme.

Roofs

A conversion proposal should not involve any additions or alterations to the shape or height of the roof of the building.

Re-roofing can be accepted as part of the upgrading and conversion of the building to accommodate a new use. Where existing roofing materials are slate or stone flags, any re-roofing materials should be similar. Modern tiles would not be appropriate in these circumstances. Roof lights within the existing plane of the roof are acceptable. However, features such as dormer windows are not traditional and would not be acceptable. Similarly, the eaves height and gradient of the roof contribute to the special character of such buildings and should remain unaltered.

Chimney stacks are acceptable above the ridge height where this is an internal stack.

Doors and windows

Proposals for conversion should make maximum use of existing openings. New openings should be kept to a minimum and be of traditional design and character. Other distinguishing features should be retained, for example, jambs or lintels.

The re-use of existing openings would help to retain the character of the building and help to reduce the impact of new building works on the structural stability of the building. New window openings will be expected to be minimal in size, should not be of uniform size and should form an irregular pattern of openings. Larger openings should be of a traditional mullioned design with stone surround. Features such as patio doors will not be acceptable.

The Council will expect external timber to be painted rather than stained.

Curtilage

It is often the case that rural buildings do not have a readily defined curtilage. The curtilage to any proposed conversion should be minimal, relate to the position of the building to be converted and should follow traditional boundaries where possible.

An excessive curtilage can detract from the rural setting of a building. Features such as hedgerows, stone walls, footpaths or other features can be used to provide a natural curtilage to a building. Extension of the curtilage into a formerly green field should be avoided where it detracts from the character of an area.

The size of curtilages should be no larger than necessary and should be kept to a minimum. The size will be judged on its impact on the character of the landscape in the vicinity and the surrounding countryside.

Boundary treatments

Boundaries should be defined by the use of stone walling or hedging. Hedging must be of a traditional type which would not include rows of conifers or Leylandii. Ornate entrance features will not be acceptable. Gateways should be in traditional styles.

Access

Access to the building must be capable of being provided without the need for new lengths of track across open fields or alterations to the point of access which would detract from the character of the area.

Garages and other outbuildings

In the case of residential conversions, where the opportunity exists, garages should be provided as an integral part of the main building. Where this is not possible or where the introduction of a garage door would create an unacceptable opening in a wall, garages should be free-standing. Every planning application should show how garaging is to be provided.

Outbuildings, including garages, should be of traditional materials which match the main building and sited so as not to detract from the character of the building. Two storey outbuildings will not be accepted.

Services

If a mains electricity supply is not already on site, any new supply must be underground so that no further overhead lines are necessary. Other services which are normally brought to the site by overhead lines such as telephone or cable television must also be underground. A water supply must be easily available.

At the time an application is drawn up, consideration needs to be given to the siting and screening of tanks or other structures, including septic tanks. Oil and gas tanks should be unobtrusively sited and where necessary, screened by landscaping.

Wildlife

Many rural buildings provide a nest or roost for legally protected species such as birds or bats. In this event, applicants will be expected to undertake works that will not endanger the protected species or nest/roost site. Developers are encouraged to have buildings surveyed for legally protected species by a suitably qualified person, prior to preparing conversion plans and to submitting a planning application so that their presence may be taken into account from an early stage. Where there is the

potential for retaining a nest or roost, the Council will encourage this by imposing a condition on any permission granted, by requiring a developer to incorporate appropriate design features. These may take the form of bat or bird boxes, or suitable sections of undisturbed loft space.

Where a barn (or similar building) conversion is proposed, the developer should have the building(s) in question surveyed for bats and barn owls by a competent person (who should be suitably licenced). Such a survey should be carried out during the period June to September (inclusive). The results of any such survey should be submitted to the planning authority as supplementary information to the application.

In addition, the developer should be made aware that the granting of planning permission does not legally permit the killing, injury or disturbance of bats or barn owls. If any protected species are found whilst work is in progress, work should be stopped immediately and English Nature contacted for advice on how to proceed.

Detailed guidance is set out in a separate guidance note, "The Natural Environment 2: Species Protection".

DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Submitting an application

The Council will only accept the submission of an application which provides full details of the proposed works and addresses all the issues set down in this guidance. Applications must be accompanied by a structural survey and an elevational plan highlighting the area for rebuild.

Detailed submissions should include the following information (in addition to the structural survey):

- existing elevations
- proposed elevations
- typical cross section
- a plan showing the curtilage and position of any garaging (where appropriate)
- existing and proposed floor plans

Further information

It would be useful for applications to contain details of the schedule of works to be followed during construction. In the past, conversions have encountered significant planning problems brought about by insensitive treatment of the conversion. The Council recommends the following sequence for the successful conversion of any building:

- Construction of an inner leaf of block work.
- The support of existing external walling through the use of wall ties to the inner leaf.
- New openings should not be punched through until the inner leaf is constructed and the walls properly supported.
- Additional support to roof trusses by replacement of internal block walling.
- Existing stonework to be rebuilt only after the structure has been secured and formation of the new openings started.

It should be noted that the removal of any wall to below a third of its original height will require total removal and new footings to be provided under the requirements of the Building Regulations. This does not accord with the principle of any conversion scheme granted pursuant to a planning approval and may result in unauthorised building work. Sensitive treatment of the conversion in line with this advice should help to avoid such a situation. In addition, early notification to the Council's Building Control Section will help to minimise any such risk.

Should permission be granted, conversion work will be required to start within two years instead of the usual five years. This is because the structural condition of an uninhabited building may deteriorate in that time and more rebuilding may be necessary than has been granted consent.

Where permission is granted, permitted development rights will be removed in order to control the effect of further development on the character of the building and the locality.

In line with the Council's commitment to environmental care as outlined in the Greenwatch Strategy, applicants should be aware of the statutory protection given to bats and owls. Please note that the responsibility for the protection of bats and owls lies with the applicant or developer and it is up to developers to satisfy themselves that bats, owls and roosts will not be harmed by their operations.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

Further information is available from:
Development Control Group ☎ (01254) 585638
Forward Planning and Transportation Group ☎ (01254) 585356



BUILDING CONTROL

- Once you have received Planning Approval you will then need to consider obtaining Building Regulation Approval - Can we help?
- ◆ We are happy to give informal pre-submission advice.
 - ◆ We will deal with your plans quickly.
 - ◆ Our approach is flexible and can be tailored to meet your particular requirements
 - ◆ We will provide a same day inspection service.

For more information telephone (01254) 585747