

Conversion and Re-Use of Buildings in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - Final Draft

Published by:
Rossendale Forward Planning Team
February 2010



آپنی یف اسیب آتھیئر سار سٹنکسب بڈ ہر فئر آھپای، اڈیو کآسےٹے اآھبا ائرےجی آھڈا انآ کون باھای پےتے آن آھلے انوگھ کرے آماڈےرکے آنالے آمرا اآتسآ آھشی منے آار بابلسآ کرر ب۔

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Pre-Text and Background Information

Rossendale Borough Council has adopted a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide additional guidance on the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside.

It has been produced in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended) and Government guidance as contained in Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12): Local Spatial Planning, which states that a planning authority may prepare Supplementary Planning Documents to provide greater detail on the policies in its Development Plan Documents.

The SPD was subject to a formal six-week period of public consultation from 7th September to 16th October 2009. All representations received during this period have been considered, and where appropriate the SPD amended. A Consultation Document accompanies this SPD showing the changes that have been proposed and how the Council has responded to these changes.

The document has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in its earlier stages. The SA considers the implications of the SPD from social, economic and environmental perspectives, by assessing the SPD and other reasonable and relevant options against available baseline data and sustainability objectives. A copy of the SA Report can be viewed via the council's website at www.rossendale.gov.uk/ldfconsultation

Any queries regarding this SPD, the Rossendale District Local Plan or Rossendale's Local Development Framework should be directed to the Forward Planning Team on 01706 252417.

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1 Introduction

Rossendale Borough Council has adopted a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that expands on the saved policies in Rossendale’s Local Plan (adopted 12th April 1995) to provide detailed policy for those considering converting an existing building in the countryside to another use.

This SPD is aimed principally at applicants, their architects, agents and all others involved in the preparation and planning of applications for the re-use and conversion of buildings in the countryside. It contains the general principles and more detailed design guidance that the Council will use to assess development proposals.

This SPD does not have the same status as the development plan but, once adopted, will be an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Whilst the guidelines will provide clarity on the key issues that will be taken into consideration by the Council when assessing applications for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside, it is important to recognise that **all proposals will be considered on their individual merits**, having regard to the relevant policies in the Local Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy, national guidance (PPG’s, PPS’s and Government Circulars) and any other material planning considerations.

The Conversion and Re-Use of Existing Buildings in the Countryside SPD will supplement the following policies of the Rossendale District Local Plan:

- DS 5: Development Outside the Urban Boundary and Green Belt
- E 4: Tree Preservation
- HP 2: Listed Buildings
- DC 1: Development Criteria
- DC 4: Materials

The provisions of this SPD will be implemented primarily through the development management process and the determination of applications for planning permission. It is strongly advised that proposals are discussed with Rossendale Borough Council’s Planning Unit in advance of a formal planning application being submitted (contact details are provided in section 6).

The Council will carry out appropriate notifications and publicity for each application to convert an existing building in countryside in accordance with the statutory requirements for the advertising of planning applications, taking into account the nature of the proposed development and its relationship to those who might be affected. Nevertheless, it is still advised that applicants should consult neighbouring properties themselves prior to submitting a planning application.

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2 Context

Over recent decades the agricultural industry in England has experienced significant changes which have resulted in the amalgamation of many farm units. These changes, together with the increased use of technology and new farming methods, has resulted in a significant reduction in agricultural related jobs and has left many buildings unused or obsolete. Similarly, changing lifestyles and changes to the manufacturing industry now means that there are a number of other redundant or semi-redundant buildings in the countryside that are no longer used or required for their original purpose. This has resulted in pressure to convert these buildings, mainly to residential use and, as a result, the number of applications received by the Council for the conversion of such buildings has increased markedly.

The Borough is defined by a series of interlocking valleys dissecting open moorland, which has determined how the district has grown and developed over the years. A series of closely linked small towns line the valley floors, the largest being Rawtenstall and Bacup. Expansive long distance views are available from the uplands with the Right of Way network forming an important leisure resource both for local people and from further afield. Rossendale forms part of the broader South Pennine Landscape Character Area defined by Natural England which includes the West Pennine Moors stretching west towards Chorley plus large elements of Calderdale, parts of Burnley, Pendle and Bradford Districts. The Borough's uplands have been extensively quarried over many years and continue to be so. Many of the buildings in the Borough are built from the local sandstone which gives the towns and villages in the area a distinct identity.

The Council generally supports the re-use of buildings in the countryside provided that they are of a suitable quality and that the proposed use is appropriate. It is recognised that these buildings contribute to the character of the countryside and represent a valuable asset. The conversion or re-use of which may have an important part to play in meeting the needs of local businesses and contributing to the aim of achieving sustainable economic development. Furthermore, the re-use of these buildings can make a valuable contribution to providing housing to meet the needs of the local community and also reduces the need for new buildings in the countryside.

Nevertheless, proposals to convert or re-use buildings in the countryside often raise a number of significant planning issues. A key question is whether the proposed use is appropriate and sustainable in terms of its location and access to public transport and local services.

Design issues are another important consideration. Applications frequently propose considerable or complete reconstruction, resulting in total loss of character of the buildings to the detriment of the countryside. The use of inappropriate materials or internal layouts which necessitate extensive modifications to the exterior of a building can also result in a poor relationship with the original building and surrounding area. Design issues are also important when considering the treatment and use of land surrounding a building.

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Consequently, in order to carefully manage future developments, the Council considers that it is necessary to produce an SPD to provide additional guidance on the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside.

Large parts of the countryside in Rossendale are also designated as Green Belt. The general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in Green Belts but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. National planning guidance dictates that such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. The re-use of buildings should not prejudice the openness of Green Belts. Nevertheless, proposals to extend an existing building in such areas will be strictly controlled to ensure that they do not impact upon the intrinsic character and openness of the Green Belt.

The guidance contained within this SPD will relate to the areas of the Borough that are designated as countryside and Green Belt.

The following aims have been identified for this SPD:

- 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; and
- Ensure that conversions are sympathetic to the character and rural setting of the building.

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3 Policy Framework

NATIONAL POLICY

Planning Policy Statement 1

Planning Policy Statement 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* provides information on the protection and enhancement of the environment and how planning can contribute towards sustainable development. It requires planning authorities to prepare robust policies on design and access to ensure that developments are sustainable, durable, adaptable, accessible, make efficient and prudent use of resources, respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness, address the needs of all in society, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 aims, amongst other things, to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another and assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in Green Belts but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. PPG2 states that such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances.

PPG2 recognises that the re-use of buildings should not prejudice the openness of Green Belts and should not be regarded as inappropriate development provided that

- it does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt;
- strict control is exercised over any extension of re-used buildings, and over any associated uses of land surrounding the building which might conflict with the openness of the Green Belt;
- the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and
- the form, bulk and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.

Planning Policy Statement 3

A key objective of PPS3 is providing high quality housing that contributes to the creation and maintenance of sustainable rural communities in market towns and villages. It recognises that conversions of existing housing can provide an important source of new housing and it encourages Local Planning Authorities to develop positive policies to identify and bring into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty homes strategies.

Planning Policy Statement 4

In terms of relevance to this SPD, PPS4 sets out policy aimed at planning for economic development in rural areas, and guidance for dealing with associated applications. The following policies are particularly pertinent for this SPD:

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Policy EC6

EC6.1 – LPAs should “ensure that the countryside is protected for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, the wealth of its natural resources and to ensure it may be enjoyed by all”.

EC6.2c – LPAs should “support the conversion and re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside (particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages) for economic development”.

EC6.2d – LPAs should “set out the permissible scale of replacement buildings and circumstances where replacement of buildings would not be acceptable”.

EC6.2f – LPAs should “set out the criteria to be applied to planning applications for farm diversification, and support diversification for business purposes that are consistent in their scale and environmental impact with their rural location”.

EC6.2g – LPAs should “where appropriate, support equine enterprises, providing for a range of suitably located recreational and leisure facilities and the needs of training and breeding businesses that maintain environmental quality and countryside character”.

Policy EC12

EC12.1 - “Re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations and for some types of building”.

EC12.1b – LPAs should “support small-scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages, or other locations, that are remote from local service centres, recognising that a site may be an acceptable location for development even though it may not be readily accessible by public transport”.

EC12.1c – LPAs should “take account of the impact on the supply of employment sites and premises and the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the area, when considering planning applications involving the loss of economic activity”.

EC12.1d – LPAs should “approve planning applications for the conversion and reuse of buildings in the countryside for economic development, particularly those adjacent or closely related to towns or villages, where the benefits, where the benefits outweigh the harm in terms of:

- i. The potential impact on the countryside, landscape and wildlife.
- ii. Local economic and social needs and opportunities.
- iii. Settlement patterns and the level of accessibility to service centres, markets and housing.
- iv. The need to conserve, or the desirability of conserving, heritage assets.
- v. The suitability of the building(s), and of different scales, for re-use recognising that replacement of buildings should be favoured where this would result in a more acceptable and sustainable development than might be achieved through conversion.

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Planning Policy Statement 7

Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* aims to raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas, promote more sustainable patterns of development, improve the economic performance of rural areas, and promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors. It provides support for the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside where this would contribute to sustainable development objectives.

Paragraph 17 of PPS7 details a number of criteria that proposals for the re-use or conversion of existing buildings in rural areas should take into consideration. These include:

- The potential impact on the countryside, landscape and wildlife;
- Specific local economic/social needs and opportunities;
- Settlement patterns and accessibility to service centres, markets and housing;
- The suitability of different types of buildings, and of different scales, for re-use; and
- The need to preserve, or the desirability of preserving, buildings of historic or architectural importance or interest, or which otherwise contribute to local character.

When considering planning applications, PPS7 states that re-use for economic development purposes will usually be preferable, but residential conversions may be more appropriate in some locations, and for some types of building. Planning authorities are therefore encouraged to set out in Local Development Documents their policy criteria for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential and any other purposes, including mixed uses.

PPS7 goes on to state that '*Local planning authorities should be particularly supportive of the re-use of existing buildings that are adjacent or closely related to country towns and villages, for economic or community uses, or to provide housing in accordance with the policies in PPG3, and subject to the policies in paragraph 7 of this PPS in relation to the retention of local services*' (paragraph 18).

Annex A of PPS7 recognises that there will be instances where the nature and demands of agricultural or forestry work necessitate one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. This is listed as one of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development may be justified. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that it will be essential that all applications for planning permission for new occupational dwellings in the countryside are scrutinised thoroughly with the aim of detecting attempts to abuse.

It should be noted that the economic development sections of PPS7 have been replaced by PPS4, published December 2009.

Planning Policy Statement 9

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A key objective of PPS9 is to ensure that local planning authorities take the value of biodiversity into account when determining planning applications and aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity interests.

Guidance is provided on the protection of species. Rural buildings may provide important breeding and resting places for a variety of wildlife, including species which receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions protected by law. Accordingly, this guidance contained within PPS9 may be particularly relevant in some instances when new uses are being proposed for buildings in the countryside.

Local Authorities are required to ensure that these species are protected from the adverse effects of development, where appropriate, by using planning conditions or obligations. PPS9 goes on to state that planning authorities should refuse permission where harm to a species or their habitats would result unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15

PPG15 (1994) acknowledges that generally the best way to secure the upkeep of a historic building is to keep it in active use – adding that “The best use will very often be the use for which the building was originally designed” (Para. 3.10). However, it is recognised that new uses may often be the key to a building’s preservation.

Nevertheless, it is also noted that judging the best use of a historic building is one of the most sensitive assessments that a planning authority has to make, with the aim being to identify the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior, and setting of the historic building. This relates particularly to listed buildings.

PPG15 states that although many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate a new use, some may be sensitive even to slight alterations. It is asserted that consent should not be given for the total or substantial demolition of any listed building without clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or find viable new uses; that preservation in some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable; or that redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

REGIONAL POLICY

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West was published on 30th September 2008. It constitutes part of the development plan for Rossendale Borough Council. There are number of policies of the RSS that are particularly relevant to this SPD.

A key spatial principle of the RSS, as set out by **Policy DP2**, is the objective of building sustainable communities by, inter alia, fostering sustainable relationships between homes, workplaces and other concentrations of

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regularly used services and facilities and by improving the built and natural environment, and conserving the region’s heritage.

Policy RDF2 refers to need for plans and strategies to maximise the economic potential of the Region’s rural areas, improve access to affordable rural housing and enhance the value of our rural environmental inheritance. It goes on to state that exceptionally, new development will be permitted in the open countryside where it is an extension of an existing building or involves the appropriate change of use of an existing building. Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to set out criteria for permitting the re-use of buildings in the countryside in line with PPS7.

Policy W1 encourages planning authorities to give positive support to the sustainable diversification and development of the rural economy through the growth of existing businesses and the creation of new enterprise.

Policy EM1 seeks to ensure that the regions natural, man-made and historic assets are identified, protected, enhanced and managed.

LOCAL POLICY

The principal policies within the Rossendale District Local Plan (1995) that is supplemented by this SPD are Policy DS 3: and DS 5: Development Outside the Urban Boundary and the Green Belt. This SPD will provide additional guidance on how these policies will be implemented. **Policy DS 3** states that:

Within the Green Belts planning permission will not be given except in very special circumstances, for the erection of new buildings and for the change of use of other buildings other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, or other uses appropriate to a rural area. The change of use of a redundant building may be permitted within the terms of national Green Belt policy. The green belts are shown upon the proposals map as listed below:-

- **Between Haslingden and Baxenden**
- **Between Waterfoot and Stacksteads**
- **Between Haslingden and Rawtenstall and Edenfield**
- **To the East, West and North of Whitworth**
- **To the South and West of Edenfield**

Reasons

One of Rossendale’s major assets is the attractive countryside consisting of the moorland and the green necklace of farmland, which forms the attractive settings for the towns: it dominates the views from within them. This countryside is under the greatest pressure to development, particularly on the fringe of the urban areas. It felt necessary, therefore, to give it added protection, especially in the open breaks between the towns, to ensure the continued existence of such a major asset, by their designation as Green Belts.

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Whilst it will be necessary to ensure that only acceptable new development of the categories specified are permitted in the Green Belt, never-the-less the re-use of buildings will not generally prejudice their open character. There are within the Green Belts many redundant buildings which often pre-date the Town and Country Planning system and the Green Belt designation, the appropriate government advice (particularly PPG2 and PPS7) indicates how the question of converting or redeveloping such buildings should be considered. Whilst the semi – derelict or potential dereliction of these buildings is not a sufficient reason for going against Green Belt policies and allowing development, because then other buildings would no doubt soon start to deteriorate if that were the way to get permission for development. At Lodge Mill at Turn such conditions exist which will need to be considered as part of a comprehensive scheme with particular attention being paid to access, servicing and landscaping issues.

Land between the urban boundary and the Green Belt boundary will need to be specially protected from development.

Policy DS 5 states that:

Outside the urban boundary and the Green Belts, shown on the Proposals Map, development will be restricted to that needed for the purposes of agriculture, forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area, or the rehabilitation and re-use of buildings providing they comply with policy DC 1.

Reasons

The Boroughs countryside is an asset that provides an attractive setting for built up areas. It is also important to protect the intrinsic value of rural environments for appropriate leisure pursuits and to help in the promotion of tourism.

It is considered advantageous for environmental and economic reasons to allow some existing buildings in the countryside to be converted to new uses. In some other cases, such as at Loveclough Fold there are substantial isolated rural developments where it might be appropriate to consider (in accordance with the appropriate normal advice and the normal development control policies) the redevelopment of the site.

When a proposal is submitted for the development of one of the categories of the development appropriate to a rural area (e.g. an agricultural building) it will, where appropriate, be assessed in relation to PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. Particularly both the functional and financial tests will be applied in respect of proposals for new farm buildings.

Policy DC.1 states that:

The Council aims to ensure that all new development is in accordance with the district plan. In general, all development proposals will be expected to provide a high standard of building and landscape design, to contribute to environmental quality, and not to be detrimental to existing conditions in the surrounding area. After taking into account any likely future extension, developments should not take more land

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than is reasonably necessary, nor should they prejudice the future development of any wider area. All applications for planning permission will be considered on the basis of the following criteria:-

- a) Location and nature of proposed development, including its relationship to existing and other land uses
- b) Size and intensity of the proposed development;
- c) Relationship to existing services and community facilities;
- d) Relationship to road and public transport network;
- e) Likely scale and type of traffic generation;
- f) Likely level of air, water and other environmental pollution, including noise nuisance and the possible creation of any risk or hazard to surrounding land uses;
- g) Likely effect of existing trees and other natural features of the development site;
- h) Arrangements for servicing and access to proposed development, including access for pedestrians, disabled people and emergency services;
- i) Car parking provision;
- j) Sunlighting, daylighting and privacy provided;
- k) Density, layout and relationship between buildings;
- l) visual appearance and relation to surroundings;
- m) Landscaping and open space provision;
- n) The needs of watercourses;
- o) The impact upon man-made or other features of local importance.

Reasons

The list of criteria will be used in considering all development proposals, but obviously they will not be equally important in all cases. In some cases, other factors may also need to be taken into account, and these are explained in the Policy Sections which follow.

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4 General Guidance

4.1 Conversions of Buildings in the Countryside

The conversion of an existing building in the countryside will be permitted where:

- **The building is shown to the satisfaction of the Council to be structurally sound; and**
- **Conversion works are in keeping with the style of the building and respect the character of the natural and man-made landscape, protecting and enhancing it where possible; and**
- **The building is of sufficient size to be capable of conversion without requiring substantial extensions or alterations; and**
- **Satisfactory means of access, off-street parking, bin storage and servicing can be provided and mains services are available for connection into the scheme; and**
- **The development does not require the removal of, or damage to, significant or prominent trees, hedges, watercourses, ponds or any other natural landscaped features; and**
- **The development will not require unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities on the provision of infrastructure; and**
- **The development would not have an unacceptable impact on nature conservation interests or protected species; and**
- **The development is sustainable in terms of its location and access to public transport and local services; and**
- **The Council is satisfied that the building was originally created for genuine purposes.**

Although the Council is generally supportive of the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside, it is recognised that certain buildings may not be suitable for conversion and re-use.

The conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that the building is structurally sound and can be converted without major rebuilding or reconstruction. In order 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, the Council will usually require planning applications to be accompanied by a structural survey assessing the ability of the building to accommodate the intended use. The survey should be undertaken by an independent Chartered Structural Engineer with experience of preserving traditional buildings and should incorporate scaled drawings highlighting all the areas of the building which would require rebuilding.

Large, modern agricultural buildings will generally be unsuitable for conversion, and the Council expects such buildings to be removed when they are no longer required. Other smaller modern buildings will also normally be inappropriate for conversion, even if they are of permanent or substantial construction.

To protect the character of the building and the surrounding landscape it is essential that all conversion works are undertaken sensitively. In particular, the

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use of incongruous materials or the removal of existing features can detract from the character of the building, and the loss of prominent trees, hedges and other natural landscape features can adversely impact upon the visual quality of the landscape. Whilst substantial extensions may often have an unacceptable impact on the openness and visual quality of the countryside.

It is important to ensure that proposals do not cause an unacceptable level of danger to both pedestrians and users of roads. In all cases, the Council will expect the building subject to conversion to have a safe access with adequate visibility splays and sufficient off-road parking.

Rural buildings can potentially provide important breeding and resting places for a number of species protected under a range of legislative provisions, such as bats, barn owls or nesting birds. If the presence of a protected species is suspected, the applicant will normally be required to submit a survey undertaken by a suitably qualified person to detail whether the species is present and what measures are proposed to avoid potential harm. Where harm to a protected species or their habitat would result the proposal will usually be refused unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm. Additional guidance on biodiversity and protected species is provided in section 6.3.

Accessibility should be a key consideration in all development decisions. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that in rural areas, access by means other than the car will be more limited than in urban areas. Accordingly, it will not always be possible to apply the same transport and accessibility criteria to proposals in the countryside as in the urban areas of the Borough. However, when assessing proposals to convert a building in the countryside, regard will be had to the sustainability of the location of the proposed conversion.

Where a proposed conversion involves a relatively new building, including those of traditional stone construction and appearance, the Council's Planning Unit may investigate the history of the building to establish whether it was ever used for the purpose for which it was claimed to have been built and ensure that it was not constructed with the hope of obtaining planning permission for a use that would otherwise be unacceptable.

4.2 Conversions to Residential Use

In addition to meeting the criteria listed above, proposals to convert an existing building in the countryside to residential use will need to demonstrate that:

- **Every reasonable attempt has been made to secure business/commercial re-use and that these uses are not viable; or**
- **The building is unsuitable for business use; or**
- **The residential conversion is required to meet a proven need for a dwelling for a full-time agricultural or forestry worker.**
- **The building (or group of buildings) is of permanent and substantial construction and is of a form, bulk and general design in keeping with its surroundings and can be converted without extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension.**

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By minimising the need for sub-division and the need to create new windows and door openings, the conversion of a building to a business use is more likely to retain the original character and appearance of the building than a residential conversion. Furthermore, the conversion of buildings in the countryside to residential use is often less compatible with long-established planning policies, and the principles of sustainability, which seek to direct new housing to established settlements where facilities exist without residents needing to rely on the private car.

Consequently, it is the preference of the Council that existing buildings are maintained in appropriate employment uses, and that conversion to residential use is only considered once it has been established, to the satisfaction of the Council, that existing or alternative non-residential uses cannot be sustained. This approach is consistent with national planning guidance, as set out in Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7), which states that the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside for economic development purposes will usually be preferable.

The Council however recognises that there may be some properties that are not suitable for business-use due to their character, location and impact (especially in relation to residential properties), access difficulties or constraints on the surrounding road network. It is also acknowledged that there will be instances where the conversion to business use is not viable.

All planning applications to convert an existing building in the countryside to residential use will normally be required to submit a report undertaken by an independent Chartered Surveyor to demonstrate why business uses would not be suitable or viable. Details should be provided of conversion costs, the estimated yield of the commercial uses and projected eventual income. Evidence should be presented of the efforts that have been made to secure business re-use during the previous 12 month period. Consideration could also be given to whether there are a significant number of vacant purpose-built and converted premises in the area with better proximity to local centres and services, which would be more suitable to prospective tenants.

Evidence to Support Conversion to Residential:

- Conversions costs for employment uses versus residential;
- Estimated yield of commercial uses and projected eventual income;
- Marketing history of the building for employment uses for a period of no less than 6 months;
 - Site notices, newspaper adverts, estate agent bills and invoices, no and frequency of information requests from interested parties/ number of visits
- List of other vacant / available purpose-built and converted premises in the area with better proximity to local centres and services for both residential and employment uses

PPS7 recognises that there will be instances where the nature and demands of agricultural and forestry work make it essential for one or more people engaged in the enterprise to live at, or very close to, the site of their work. Converting existing buildings to cater for agricultural or forestry workers in cases of proven

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need can negate the requirement to erect a new building for this purpose and thereby contribute to the ethos of sustainable development. Consequently, where the Council is satisfied that there is a genuine need to provide a dwelling for a full-time agricultural or forestry worker it will not be necessary for the applicant to consider whether the building is suitable for business use. Additional guidance on agricultural, forestry and other occupational buildings is can be found in Annex A of PPS7.

4.3 Proposals to Alter or Extend Previously Converted Buildings

The fact that a previously converted building is in residential use at the time of any subsequent application to alter or extend that building does not imply that the subsequent application will be treated on the same basis as any application for the alteration or extension of buildings originally built specifically for residential purposes. The Council will assess very carefully all proposals to alter or extend previously converted buildings, to establish if such proposals would have been acceptable had they formed part of the original conversion scheme.

4.4 Permitted Development Rights

Where planning permission is granted for conversion to another use, it is likely that permitted development rights for subsequent extensions, alterations, outbuildings and, if located with a farm complex, additional buildings will be removed.

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5 Detailed Guidance

The following guidance is equally applicable to conversions for economic or residential uses of buildings in the Countryside.

5.1 Structural Alterations

The building should be capable of conversion without the need for demolition and/or rebuilding of 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.

Not all buildings in the countryside are suitable for conversion or adaptation to new uses. Some existing buildings are badly designed or poorly constructed, many having been erected before planning controls existed or by using agricultural permitted development rights.

For a rural building to be appropriate for re-use, it must be a permanent and substantial structure and should not require significant rebuilding or extensive alteration. Major rebuilding frequently erodes the character of the building and results in the loss of important features which give the building its distinctive identity. Generally, buildings which have fallen into substantial disrepair, such as those which have no roof or are structurally unsound, are unlikely to be considered suitable for conversion or re-use. Exceptions may however be made, especially where the building is Listed or is of particular architectural or historic merit.

In order to assess the capability of the building to accommodate the proposed conversion without significant structural alterations, applicants will usually be required to submit a structural survey undertaken by an independent Chartered Structural Engineer with experience of preserving traditional buildings. The survey should use appropriate scaled drawings to highlight the areas of the building which would require rebuilding.

5.2 Extensions

The building must be capable of conversion without the need for significant extension. The addition of any extension which exceeds the volume of the original building by a third (30%) will normally be considered to be unacceptable.

Any garaging or storage that is required should normally be provided by the adaptation of existing buildings on the site.

The Council consider that most buildings should be preserved in their original form, unless material considerations dictate otherwise. As a consequence, buildings should be large enough for conversion without the need for substantial new extensions.

If an addition to the building is necessary, extensions should be a subsidiary element of the original building, which can be achieved by keeping the

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extension small scale, simple and unobtrusive. Each proposed extension will be considered on its own merits. Nevertheless, large extensions can detract from the traditional style of rural buildings which are conventionally of a simplistic form.

5.3 Roofs

Where practicable proposals should:

- **Retain the eaves height and gradient of the original roof; and**
- **Undertake any required re-roofing using materials to match the original.**

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

Proposals to convert or re-use an existing building in the countryside should pay particular regard to the roof form and pitch. In order to retain the character of the existing building, proposals should not involve any additions or alterations to the shape or height of the roof of the building.

Re-roofing will normally be acceptable as part of the upgrading and conversion works. Nevertheless, the use of inappropriate or unsympathetic materials can detract from the appearance of the building and will not normally be permitted.

5.4 Doors & Windows

Proposals for conversion should make the maximum use of existing openings. New openings should be kept to a minimum and be of traditional design and character.

The introduction of roof lights will only be acceptable where they are essential to provide light to rooms, are positioned as unobtrusively as possible and would not have a disproportionate coverage. Features such as dormer windows and patio doors will not normally be permitted.

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

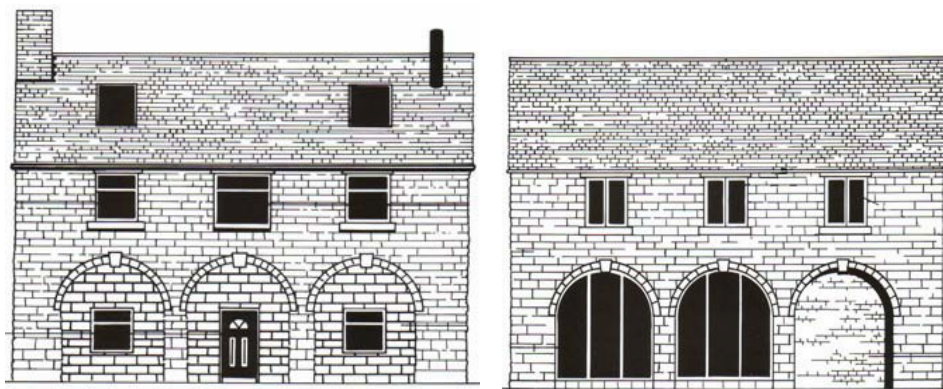
The re-use of existing openings helps to retain the character of the building and reduces the impact on the structural stability of the building. If any new openings are considered essential they should be minimal in size and ideally located in rear elevations or any other location where their introduction would not be detrimental to the overall character and appearance of the building.

All new and replacement windows and doors should match the existing as far as possible in order to ensure that the character of the building is preserved. All windows and doors should normally be painted in a dark colour, rather than stained, as stain is not a traditional finish.

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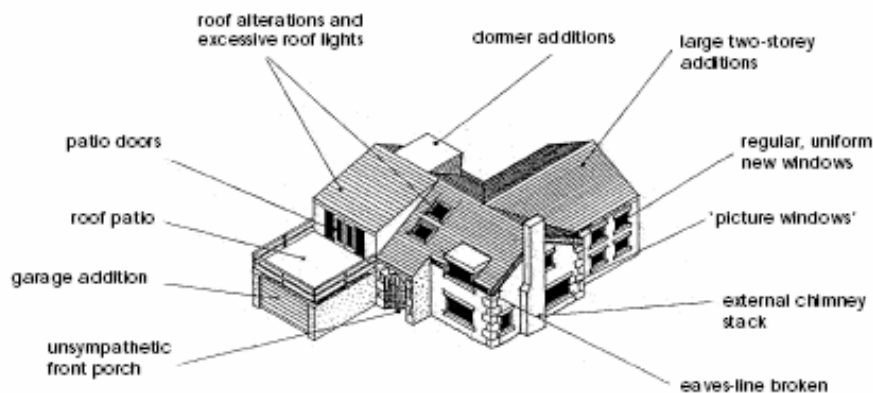
Although the presumption will normally be against the insertion of new roof lights, they may be used if it can be demonstrated that their insertion will not detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the building. Roof lights should be used sparingly and ideally should not be sited on prominent roof slopes. They must always be recessed into the roof so as to not project above the roofline and form an overly conspicuous feature on the building.

Dormer windows are not traditional features in most buildings in the countryside. The introduction of dormer windows interrupts the roof form and profile and introduces a domestic appearance which is usually inappropriate to the character of such buildings.



Poorly converted building

Sensitively converted building



Unacceptable Conversion Scheme

5.5 Curtilage

All curtilages created should be confined to the areas immediately surrounding the building.

The creation of domestic curtilages which extend into the countryside to provide extensive areas for garden use, external storage, hard standing, car parking etc will not normally be acceptable either as part of a conversion scheme or as a later amendment to the scheme.

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Rural buildings often do not have a readily defined curtilage and all applications should include a plan showing the extent of the proposed curtilage.

An excessive curtilage can detract from the rural setting of a building and, as a result, have a negative impact on the character of the area. Consequently, the Council consider that the curtilage to any proposed conversion should be no larger than necessary and should relate to the position of the building to be converted and respect the position of established boundaries where possible.

5.6 Boundary Treatment

Existing traditional boundary treatments should be retained and extended where appropriate.

Boundaries should normally be defined by stone walling or hedging. Hedging must be of a traditional type and rows of conifers of Leylandii will not normally be acceptable.

Ornate entrance features will not be acceptable.

The treatment of boundaries should reflect the building's rural character. Less traditional features, such as ornate walls, wooden-panel fencing and the planting of inappropriate species can detract from the original character of the countryside.

Full details of proposed boundary treatments should be submitted with any planning application.

5.7 Access

Satisfactory access to the building must be capable of being provided without the need for new lengths of track or road or alterations to the point of access.

The use of gravel will be preferred to tarmacadam for access roads in order to avoid lending an urbanised character to the countryside, and to promote sustainable drainage.

The creation of lengths of track across open fields can detract from the character and rural appearance of the area and should be avoided. Wherever possible existing access routes should be followed.

In all cases, the building subject to reuse must have a safe access. Proposals should allow for the safe manoeuvrability of vehicles entering and leaving a property. Therefore, the Council will ensure that all buildings that are proposed for conversion or re-use are capable of being served by an access with adequate visibility splays. The Council will normally require visibility splays of 2.4m x 2.4m in pedestrian routes. Proposals that would cause an unacceptable level of danger to pedestrians or users of roads will normally be refused.

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5.8 Services and Infrastructure

Proposals will not be permitted where they would require unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities for the provision of infrastructure.

If a mains electricity supply is not already on site, any new supply should be underground so that no further overhead lines are necessary, unless there are no reasonable alternatives. Other services that are normally brought to the site by overhead lines, such as telephone or cable television, should also be underground.

The building must be capable of being serviced with water and sewerage/drainage to the satisfaction of the Council.

Oil, gas and other service tanks should be sited unobtrusively and, where necessary, screened by landscaping.

To be considered to be suitable for conversion a building must be capable of being serviced with the required infrastructure without unnecessary expenditure by public authorities and utilities.

Overhead service lines can be visually intrusive and detract from the appearance of the open countryside. This detrimental impact on visual amenity can be reduced significantly by routing service lines underground. However, it is recognised that there may be important economic and environmental factors to consider when determining whether it is feasible or desirable to install cables underground.

At the time an application is drawn up, consideration also needs to be given to the siting and screening of tanks or other service structures, which can be visually obtrusive and detract from the character of the building and surrounding area.

5.9 New Materials

The original materials used in the construction of the building should be retained and restored where practicable. Where this is not possible, new materials must be natural and match the existing in all respects.

If inappropriate materials have been introduced since the building was built then the conversion should include the reinstatement of the original materials.

The use of traditional materials to attempt to make a building suitable for conversion where it does not contribute to the character of the area will not be acceptable.

The use of external facing materials that are incongruous with the design, colour and texture of the original building can detract from the appearance of the building itself and the surrounding area. Consequently, to help preserve the

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character and architectural integrity of the building, proposals should usually seek to retain as much of the original fabric of the building as possible.

Alterations to existing fabric must be kept to the minimum necessary to facilitate the new use and should be carried out using appropriate high quality, natural materials that match the existing building in order to ensure that the building's character is not lost during the course of conversion.

The use of modern substitute materials, such as concrete roof-tiles or uPVC windows and gutters, will not be permitted where it would degrade the character and appearance of the original building.

5.10 Landscaping

Proposals should retain open areas without introducing new fencing or walls. Prominent trees and other landscape features that make a contribution to the character of the area should be retained.

Where necessary and appropriate, existing natural paved surfaces and other hard surfaces should be retained and repaired.

The introduction of new soft landscaping to be used for domestic purposes will not normally be acceptable.

A building may not be suitable for conversion to a particular use if associated activities or inappropriate boundary treatments would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the countryside. In particular, the conversion of buildings to residential use has the potential to fundamentally alter the appearance of a building in the landscape through the creation of domestic gardens and the erection of fencing or walls.

Proposals should not have a detrimental impact on significant and prominent trees, watercourses, ponds and other natural landscape areas which make an important contribution to public amenity and the environment. Applicants should also be aware that trees may be covered by a Tree Preservation Order and that the felling or lopping of such trees without the consent of the Local Authority is an offence.

A detailed landscaping scheme will need to be submitted and approved which shows how the character of the immediate area surrounding the building/s is to be retained.

5.11 Internal Alterations

Proposals to convert an existing building in the countryside should seek to:

- **Retain significant internal features of historic interest; and**
- **Ensure internal partitioning does not mask existing features and, in particular, does not split arched and vaulted roof supports; and**
- **Retain any large single storey volumes without the insertion of new floors or partition walls.**

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It needs to be ensured that alterations do not result in the erosion of the architectural character of the building. Accordingly, every effort should be made to retain original features that contribute to the building’s character.

Many rural buildings were designed with open plan interiors. Consequently, sub-division of these internal spaces with new walls and partitioning can fundamentally alter and adversely affect the character of these buildings. Such spaces do not lend themselves to the type of sub-division typical of purpose built dwelling houses and the insertion of partitioning should be kept to a minimum. It will rarely be acceptable to insert a first floor in a building which is open from ground to the roof, along the entire length of the building.

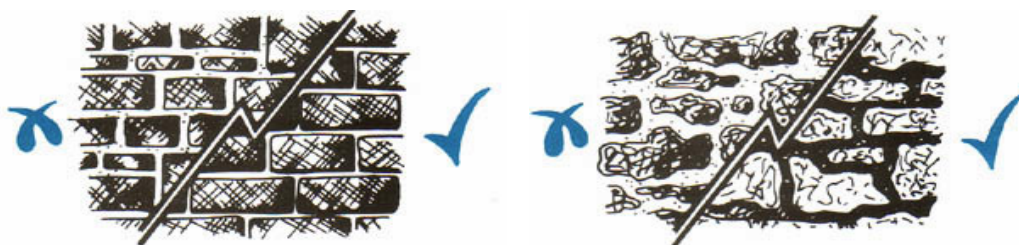
5.12 Repointing

Repointing work should normally be carried out using a lime mortar mix in line with the Guidance issued by the Society of the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Joints should be finished flush with the brick stonework and then brushed back to expose the edges of the brick / stonework.

Existing joints should be raked out by hand and no bolsters or cutting discs should be used.

Re-pointing on a large scale can fundamentally affect the character of the building. Consequently, it should be confined to localised areas requiring repair and should be done with lime based mortars and traditional methods in order to preserve the character of the building.



5.13 Satellite Dishes, Television Aerials & Lighting

Satellite dishes and television aerials should be sited away from prominent elevations and not above the ridgeline. If the proposal involves the conversion of more than one building, consideration should be given to the potential for sharing a single satellite dish and television aerial mast sited in an unobtrusive position.

Additional lighting should be kept to a minimum and should use lamps of a simple design.

In order to minimise impact on the character of the building and its setting satellite dishes, television aerials and other necessary installations should be positioned in such a way that its effect on the outside appearance of the

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building is reduced as far as possible. All satellite dishes and television aerials should be removed when they are no longer needed.

Poorly sited, excessive and inappropriately designed lighting can have a detrimental impact on the countryside. External lighting should be kept to an absolute minimum commensurate with need. Where any additional lighting is required, simple modern lamps should normally be used rather than mock period type lanterns as these are historically misleading.

An overall lighting scheme may be requested as part of the original proposals.

5.14 Pipework

All existing rainwater goods in cast iron should be retained or replaced with matching items in cast iron or other suitable cast metal products. The replacement of cast iron rainwater goods with uPVC, for example, will not normally be acceptable.

Vent and soil pipes should be sited internally and should not project above the level of the roof space.

Appropriately designed and coloured ridge and tile vents should be used to disguise the ends of the pipe.

The use of inappropriate pipework materials that are out of keeping with the original building can have an unacceptable impact on appearance of the building. Similarly, the insertion of new pipework can form prominent features that erode the character of the building. Accordingly, original guttering should be retained where appropriate, repaired where necessary or replaced with pipework of simple, traditional design. All new pipework must be located so as to blend in with the building form and be sited as inconspicuous as possible.

5.15 Surrounding Features

Existing walls, fences, drinking troughs and other features associated with the use of the building should be retained in situ wherever possible. Any new features should respect the character and appearance of existing features on the site.

Proposals for small scale domestic renewable energy generation facilities will be considered separately on their own merits, and must not adversely affect the rural character of the natural or historic human landscape.

Walls, fences, drinking troughs and other features associated with the use of the building can make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the site. Wherever possible such features should be retained and protected from demolition/removal, in order to ensure that the Borough's heritage is preserved.

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6 Other Considerations

In addition to the general principles and detailed guidelines outlined above, applicants should also take the following issues into account.

6.1 Designing out Crime

Crime and fear of crime can have a significant impact on the quality of life of individuals and the wider community. When developing proposals for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings in the countryside, applicants should consider measures to discourage crime, for example by using natural surveillance and defensible space – and adopting the principles of the Secure By Design initiative. Crime prevention measures should not however be at the expense of the overall design quality. Nevertheless, proposals that are considered to have a negative impact on crime prevention will not be permitted.

6.2 Neighbour's Consent

If a proposal encroaches onto neighbouring land, including foundations and overhanging of gutters, the neighbour's permission will be required before work can begin. Where this is the case an applicant must serve notice on the owner and provide a Certificate B with any planning application to confirm that this has been done. Copies of the relevant certificates and notices can be obtained from the planning unit or its web-site. The service of notice is a notification procedure only and does not imply that the grant of planning permission would also grant a legal right to encroach onto land that is not within the ownership of the applicant.

6.3 Biodiversity and Protected Species

The Council is committed to ensuring that proposals for the conversion or re-use of existing buildings do not have an unacceptable impact on biodiversity. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 sets out the "*Biodiversity Duty*" under which "*every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity*". Hence, impact upon biodiversity will be an important material consideration in the determining of planning applications.

Species such as bats, which frequently use roof spaces as roost or hibernation sites, barn owls and nesting birds are all protected by law under a range of legislative provisions. Rural buildings may often provide important breeding and resting places for these and other protected species. Accordingly, proposals for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings, particularly barns and other traditional buildings, could potentially impact upon protected species.

The Council will ensure that these species are protected from the adverse effects of development. If the presence of a protected species is suspected, the applicant will normally be required to submit a survey undertaken by a suitably qualified professional in advance of the application being determined. The survey should detail measures to be implemented to safeguard any protected species from potential harm. Where appropriate, planning conditions or obligations will be used to ensure that these measures are implemented.

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Where harm to a protected species or their habitat would result the proposal will usually be refused unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm. In order to safeguard Barn Owl Habitats, applications will be processed in accordance with "Barn Owls and Rural Planning Applications - a Guide." (Barn Owl Trust), where appropriate.

6.4 Listed Buildings

A number of buildings in Rossendale have special architectural features or historical associations that have led to them being designated as a Listed Building or a building of local importance.

In such cases, stricter planning controls apply in order to preserve, protect or enhance their special character. Listed Building Consent will be required for any proposed alterations to a Listed Building.

If you are unsure whether a building is listed, please enquire at the Council's offices. If the building is listed you are strongly advised to discuss any proposed conversion with the Council's Conservation Officer (contact details provided in section 7) prior to submitting a planning application.

Regardless of listing status, the Council expect any conversion of buildings in the countryside to incorporate high quality design, and contribute towards the preservation of the rural character of the area.

6.5 Sustainable Design

Sustainability is a key issue and a national priority. The conversion and re-use of buildings can have a range of environmental impacts, for example through water use, energy consumption, waste generation and the use of polluting materials. At the centre of sustainable design is the aspiration of creating buildings that meet the needs of building users whilst minimising effects on the environment. In line with national and regional guidelines and policies, the Council will promote and support the use of sustainable materials and technologies in proposals for the conversion and re-use of existing buildings – including the incorporation of water saving devices and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS).

6.6 Storage of Refuse Bins/Containers

With the growing requirement to segregate refuse in order to increase rates of recycling there is a need to keep a number of waste bins and recycling containers. If these are not kept out of public view they have the potential to look unsightly. Such bins and containers should not be kept in a prominent frontage location where this would have an unacceptable impact on the street scene.

6.7 Personal Circumstances

Personal circumstances, such as a disability, may make it difficult to provide the necessary facilities within the standards set out in this document. The Council may interpret these standards flexibly in such circumstances. Considerations of personal circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

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6.8 Coal Resources and Coal Mining Legacy Issues

A large proportion of the countryside within Rossendale Borough is located within the coalfield and therefore has the potential to be affected by the legacy of former mining activities. In accordance with PPG14, development proposals within this area should incorporate an investigation of mining conditions and include mitigation measures, where appropriate, to ensure that the development is safe and stable. In addition, in line with guidance in MPS1 and MPG3, consideration should be given to whether developments would result in the unnecessary sterilisation of shallow coal resources and, if so, whether it would be feasible or appropriate to remove the coal in advance of such development.

It should be noted that permission must be obtained from the Coal Authority for any development or site investigation works which intersect, disturb or enter into any coal seams, coal mine workings or coal mine entries (shafts and adits). Failure to obtain Coal Authority permission for any such works is trespass, with the potential for court action. Further information can be obtained from the licensing and permissions section of the Coal Authority's website at: www.coal.gov.uk/services/permissions/index.cfm

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7 Further Advice & Contacts

To find out more about planning or building control issues before making a formal submission the following addresses and contacts may be useful.

Planning Unit Address & Web-Site

Rossendale Borough Council
One Stop Shop, Lord Street
Rawtenstall
Rossendale
BB4 7LZ

Development Control

Telephone 01706 232580
Email planning@rossendalebc.gov.uk
Website <http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=385>

Forward Planning

Telephone 01706 252417
Email forwardplanning@rossendalebc.gov.uk
Website <http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=374>

Building Control

Telephone 01706 252522
Email buildingcontrol@rossendalebc.gov.uk
Website <http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=358>

Conservation Officer

Telephone 01706 238642
Email planning@rossendalebc.gov.uk

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8 Implementation, Monitoring & Review

Implementation

The provisions of this SPD will be implemented primarily through the development management process and the determination of applications for planning permission. The SPD does not have the status of the development plan, but will be an important material consideration in determining applications for planning permission.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of the SPD will be assessed each year in Rossendale's Annual Monitoring Report. This will identify whether there have been any problems in implementing the SPD and assess whether it is having its intended effects. The key indicators will be:

- Number of planning permissions granted for residential re-use of buildings in the countryside.

Review

The assessment of the SPD's performance in the Annual Monitoring Report will help to identify whether there is a need for the SPD to be reviewed. If a need for review is identified, then a timetable for this process will be included in Rossendale's Local Development Scheme as resources permit.

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