

PRESS RELEASE

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REVISED PLANNING GUIDANCE OFFERS NEW HOPE FOR REJECTED HOME SCHEMES



Revised planning guidance on interior alterations to create homes from redundant agricultural buildings could bring fresh hope for both previously rejected and new schemes.

Conversions have been rejected in the past, or dismissed by owners at the outset, because they involved major interior alterations such as inserting extra floors but they were turned down largely because of confusing terminology, believes David Long, a partner at BCM Rural Property Specialists in Newport, Isle of Wight, and Winchester.

“There has been uncertainty about whether a building needing extensive internal alterations or additions was deemed as suitable for conversion under what is known as Class Q(b) of permitted development rules (PDRs),” explains Mr Long. “Local authorities tended to err on the side of caution and reject schemes that needed substantial work, even where this did not impact on the building’s exterior.

“But the Housing Ministry has revised the wording issued in March 2015 and now states: ‘Internal works are not generally development. For the building to function as a dwelling it may be appropriate to undertake internal structural works, including to allow for a floor, the insertion of a mezzanine or upper floors within the overall residential floor space permitted, or internal walls.’

“This means that buildings regarded as non-viable under the old guidance and those that failed the PDR planning hurdle can possibly have a more positive outcome from the planning process.

“However, what this doesn’t settle is the uncertainty that arose from what is known as the ‘Hibbitt’ case, where the local authority, a planning inspector, and a High Court judge all ruled that the work on an open steel-framed barn in Nottinghamshire went ‘well beyond what could reasonably be described as a conversion’. Those restrictions still apply.

“That doesn’t mean that such schemes are not sufficiently viable to gain permission outside the scope of PDRs. Here at BCM we recently gained permission to convert a steel framed open barn into a new home, leaving the existing structure intact and building inside it with supporting arguments on the barn’s suitability from a structural engineer.



“As with most development schemes, a careful approach and not necessarily relying on what the applicant thinks the rules should say but rather going with more detailed analysis of other possibilities can see a successful outcome.

“Owners of redundant agricultural buildings would do well to take a fresh look at possible schemes and seek expert guidance on their potential to get through the planning process either via PDRs or a full application.”

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