

Barn conversions in the Yorkshire Dales



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A bit about me

- Originally trained as a Landscape Architect, moved into landscape conservation; worked for private practice, Countryside Commission
- Landscape Conservation Officer, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority 1986 - 1991
- Member, YDNP Authority 1998 – 2008
- In between times, self-employed landscape consultant and practising artist
- Landscape specialist, Natural England 2006 - 2014
- Trustee, Friends of the Dales since 2015
- Research project with FOTD and PLACE on barn conversions

National Park designation

to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage;

to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public

in taking forward the national park purposes, to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park

Local Plan (adopted 2016) purpose is 'to help deliver sustainable development'

Special qualities

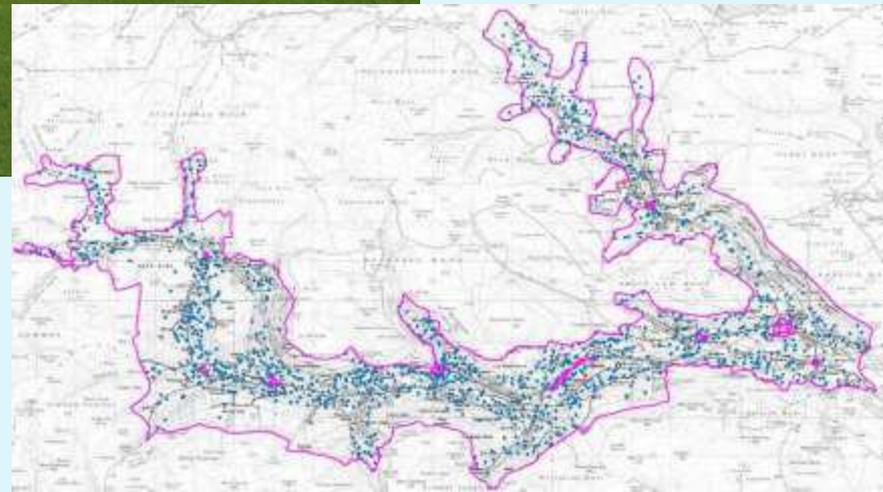
- A traditional pastoral landscape created by livestock farmers (and miners!) over several centuries.
- This historic landscape is acknowledged as internationally important and includes:
- an intricate network of drystone walls (as well as hedgerows in Lower Bishopdale, Dentdale and Sedbergh) that create a patchwork of enclosures across valleys and valley sides;
- traditional stone-built field barns, the density of which in some parts of the National Park - notably Swaledale, Wharfedale and Wensleydale - is unique



Barns in the Dales

- Maintain, conserve, adapt (re-purpose), manage decline (record)
- Over 4500 barns
- Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Barns & Walls Conservation Area
- Environmentally Sensitive Area
- Higher Level Scheme, followed by Countryside Stewardship
- Into the future – Brexit?

Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Barns & Walls Conservation Area



Environmentally Sensitive Area 1998 - 2004

- 445 buildings renovated over 245 holdings:
- £3.53m in grants
- 40,000 sq m usable floorspace created
- 95% of repaired buildings put back into use
- Cycle of decline resumes?



Issues

- Population static and unbalanced; 26% are over 65, and 15% are under 15
- Low unemployment, but low wage economy
- Relatively high house prices (arising from external demand)
- 22% of housing stock is second homes or holiday lets
- Shops, post offices and schools closing; centralisation of services, industry and retail out of area
- 6000 traditional buildings, many in poor condition
- Historic interest goes well beyond Listed Buildings

Change of policy for converting barns

August 2013 “Greater flexibilities for change of use” consultation proposed that, without planning permission, you should be able to:

- convert up to 3 buildings to a house on each agricultural unit;
- carry out all physical development necessary, including demolition and rebuilding on the same footprint.

Pointedly included National Parks

All NPs concerned, but Yorkshire Dales affected the most; managed to bring Minister up to Swaledale to understand the issue

‘...the government expects NPs ... to take a positive and proactive approach to sustainable development, balancing the protection of the landscape with the social and economic wellbeing of the area’

In the Yorkshire Dales, this coincided with the update of the Local Plan

Settlement hierarchy

- Local service centres: Sedbergh, Hawes, Reeth, Grassington (Ingleton and Settle)
- Service villages: from Airton to West Witton, including Langcliffe, Horton, Long Preston, Stainforth
- *Previous Local Plan: conversions within these and 29 small villages were restricted to local need only*

Policy debate

Options:

- put a levy on house price, allow sale on open market and put funds raised towards conservation work within the NP
- permit conversion only for local occupancy or holiday lets

Officers recommended option 1

Members chose option 2

Early days

- Estimated 4500 field barns (beyond villages/farmsteads)
- Barns within 25m of a road maintained by NYCC/CCC = 451
- Say 25% come forward = 113 over a 15 year Local Plan period (7 or 8 p.a.)
- Always anticipated an early rush
- Policy 'given weight' from October 2015; Local Plan adopted 2016

It is not a housing policy!...

- Housing target of 55 new dwellings per annum
- Reliance on conversions
- Lack of developer interest (small sites, remoteness, complexity, therefore marginal viability)
- Conversion projects tend to be slow, unpredictable in timescale
- In the 3 years since decisions were taken under the new policy, only 3 completions, with others underway
- Not yet possible to **see** the effects of the new policy
- Not yet possible to know how many local people are benefiting

It's a conservation policy

- **Conservation policy** ie. aims 'to secure long term future of traditional buildings in a manner that conserves their intrinsic value'
- Supported by Traditional Farm Buildings Toolkit



The three linked policies

- Policy L1 considers conversion of traditional buildings that are designated as Listed Buildings or are considered to be 'heritage assets' despite not being designated
- Policy L2 is a strategic spatial planning policy (ie. it governs where development 'should go'). It allows traditional buildings to be changed to residential and employment uses in certain locations (in existing settlements, building groups, or suitable roadside locations)
- Policy L3 considers the details of the conversion works. Proposals will not be allowed where they undermine the architectural and historic character of the traditional building and its landscape setting.
- A proposal to convert a traditional building to a new use must satisfy the requirements of **all three policies**.

What does 'roadside' mean?

Physically adjoins metalled public highway

Physically adjoins metalled private road that joins with a public highway

(Roads must have had a sealed metalled surface prior to 1 July 2014)

Buildings that do not physically adjoin, but are in close proximity to such routes, or that are served by an established (since at least 1 July 2014) unsealed road or track, will be considered, subject to the impact on the landscape.



What does 'local occupancy' mean?

- i) Existing residents of the National Park establishing a separate household, purchasing a property for the first time, downsizing to a more manageable home, or requiring more space for a growing family
- ii) A head of household who is or whose partner is in or is taking up full-time permanent employment or self-employment, within the National Park (or in another part of a parish split by the National Park boundary). Where a person is employed in a business that operates in multiple locations, their employment activities should take place predominantly inside the National Park
- iii) A household that has a child at a school within the National Park
- iv) Householders currently living permanently in a dwelling which is either shared (but not self-contained), overcrowded, or is otherwise unsatisfactory by environmental health standards and which is within the National Park (or in another part of a parish split by the National Park boundary)
- v) Elderly or disabled persons requiring sheltered or otherwise more suitable accommodation who already live permanently within the National Park (or in another part of a parish split by the National Park boundary)
- vi) Persons having to leave tied accommodation within the National Park (or in another part of a parish split by the National Park boundary)
- vii) Former residents of the National Park (or of another part of a parish split by the National Park boundary) whose case is accepted in writing by the National Park Authority

The categories set out in criteria i), iv), v) and vi) will apply only to persons who have resided permanently in the National Park for the preceding three years. Category vii) will apply to residents who have resided in the National Park for a minimum of 10 years

If, after a period of 12 weeks, a qualifying household is not forthcoming, then the area will be widened by substituting 'National Park' with 'area of the National Park and constituent district council'

Where are we at?

- Over 100 applications since Oct 2015
- 5 refused – of which, one approved on appeal
- 59 approved
- Of which, 9 approved against officer recommendation (FOTD objected to 6 of these)
- 3 completions

Some approvals



Completion Skirbeck



Mitchell barn, Thorpe



Mitchell barn - converted



Low Oxnop, Swaledale



Refused - Eshington Lane, near Thoralby



Lane to Eshington barn



Appeal - Tug Gill Lathe, Starbotton



‘Against officer recommendation’?

- Legally adopted Local Plan goes thru extensive public consultation –
 - Organisations and public invited to put forward issues and concerns
 - Draft Plan out for consultation
 - Revised Plan out for consultation
 - Examination in public to resolve outstanding issues
 - Formal adoption by NP Authority

Will always be some issues that require **judgement** – giving weight to one aspect over another – this is the role of the Planning Committee

AOR - Shoemaker Barn, Grinton



AOR - Bouldershaw, Arkengarthdale



AOR - West Gate Lathe, Hartlington Raikes



West Gate Lathe from B6265



AOR - Pike Barn, Ashes



AOR - Barn north of Burtersett Road, Hawes



Landscape context of barn near Burtersett



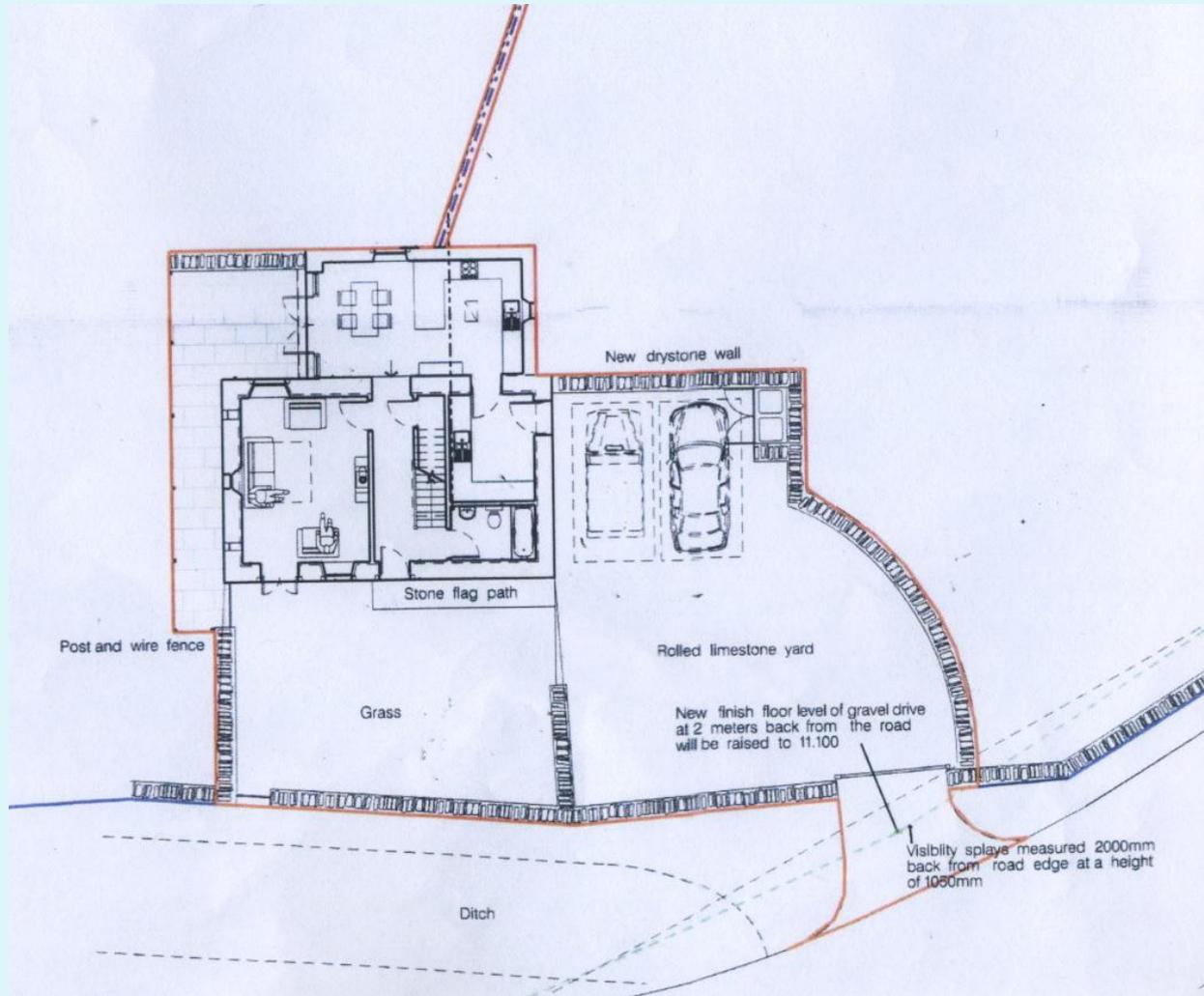
AOR - Mike Barn, Lanacar Lane



AOR - Oughtershaw



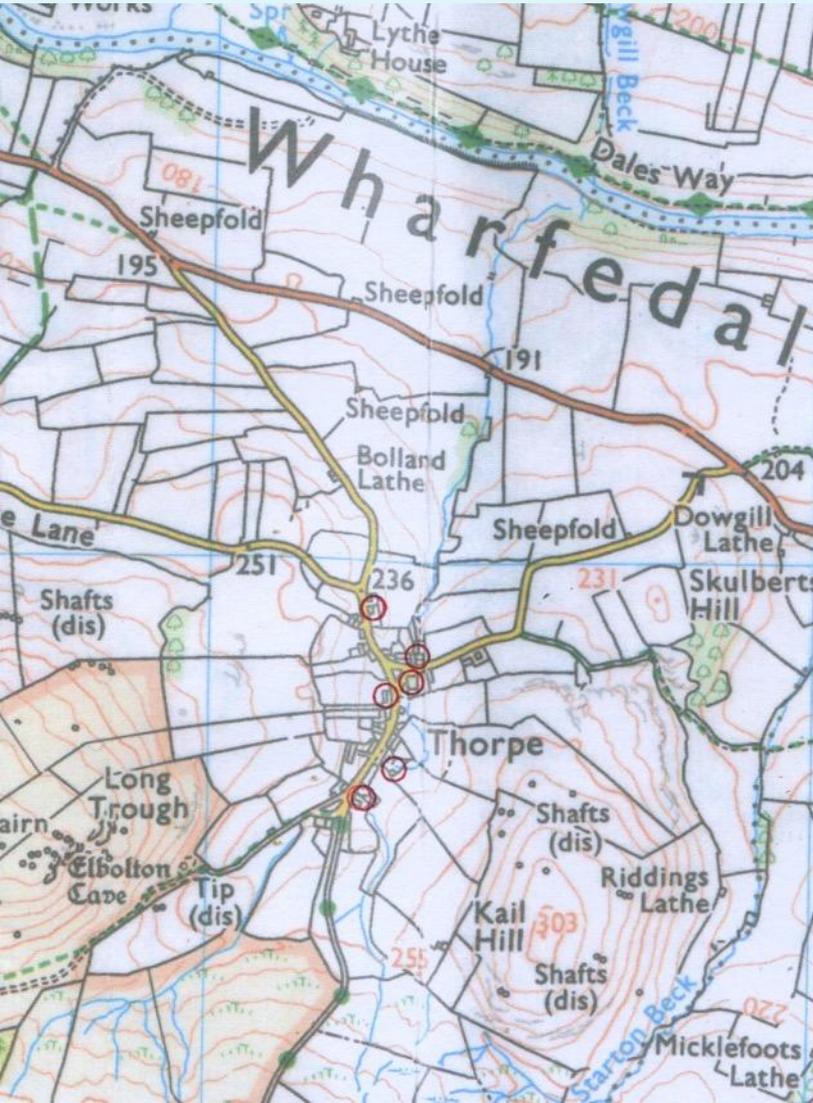
Oughtershaw proposed plan



Approved - Rylstone



Hotspot - Thorpe



6 approvals:

Rejuvenating a small village?

Conserving a range of traditional buildings?

More traffic on narrow roads?

More children at local school?

More demand on services?

Approved – Crookadyke, Kettlewell



Curtilage...



Issues

- Conserved buildings, or adverse impact on historic character of buildings?
- Changing landscape character?
- Rejuvenating communities, or yet more holiday lets?
- Supporting local trade, supply chains, boosting local economy?
- Extra traffic, demand on services - 'sustainability'?
- Meeting local housing need? 'affordability'? Helping local people in to housing market?
- Barriers to providing genuinely affordable housing – is this a solution?
- Taking pressure off green field sites?
- Need to review annual housing target?
- Increase in new agricultural buildings?
- Can't as yet **see** the effects of the change in policy...
- Can't yet assess benefits to local people – homes

and finally...

- Questions?
- With thanks to:
 - Friends of the Dales
 - Yorkshire Dales NP Authority planners
 - PLACE – People, landscapes and cultural environment