

Katie Towner [via email]

Planning

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

11 March 2025

**Objection to Planning Application: Birchentree Barn, Cowgill, Dent
Full planning permission for change of use of barn to C3 residential use; installation of domestic
sewage treatment system; provision of new access track, parking area and domestic curtilage**

Dear Ms Dinsdale

Friends of the Dales wishes to object to this application for a barn conversion. The barn is in poor structural condition which would require extensive rebuilding and thus does not meet the criteria of Policy L3 in the Local Plan.

This application, in terms of the poor condition of the barn, is **identical to S/01/324A** to which we strongly objected to in May 2022. That application was initially approved, against Officer's Recommendation. After the required period of reflection that decision was rightly changed to refusal.

Key to that refusal is the statement in the decision notice that "Given the amount of demolition and rebuild involved, the proposed development would be tantamount to the erection of a new dwelling in the open countryside, and as such the proposal is contrary to Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (2015-2030) Policies SP3, L2 and L3, the first Statutory Purpose of the National Park and guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (principally para. 176)."

The previous Officer's Report clearly identified that the application failed to meet criteria in Policy L3. The proposed works would "seriously compromise the historic interest and character of the building" as the proposal involved significant demolition and rebuild. The Local Plan allows for conversion of suitable traditional buildings (to local occupancy housing or holiday lets) as an exception to the general strategy of restricting new housing in unsustainable locations *only* if this results in a conservation benefit – ie securing the traditional building and its contribution to the landscape etc. In this case the significant demolition and rebuild negates that conservation benefit.

The applicant has not submitted any evidence to indicate that the poor condition of the barn, as identified in the Structural Report carried out prior to the previous application, has now improved. Thus the same test against criteria in the Local Plan Policy L3 will give the same result.

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That previous Report also identifies (as of about 1 year ago) a significant number of allocations in the Local Plan for local housing; affordable and local occupancy dwellings under construction in Sedbergh; and around 13 permissions granted for barn conversions in the Parish.

The applicant quotes, in part, the Housing Policy of Friends of the Dales in their Planning Statement. **This should not be taken as any endorsement of this application and we would like to add context to the quotes extracted from our policy.**

We also say that “We accept that many former agricultural buildings are no longer suitable for such use, and that conversion for residential use is sometimes a viable option. However, we believe that control of the location and design of such conversions is crucial to the continuing attractiveness of the Dales. The potential adverse visual impacts and ‘sub-urbanisation’ of the landscape must be resisted by the Planning system.” **Policy L3 is one example where the Authority can apply that resistance appropriately.**

We also have a policy on Built Heritage. In that we make the case that significant funding should be available through **farming support schemes** for the conservation and maintenance traditional farm buildings; and that where conversion is permitted to save a building at risk that must not be at the expense of the historic interest. It may be that there is a suitable scheme that the applicant can access.

Members will also be aware that that all relevant authorities, including themselves, have a new responsibility under s245 LURA (2023) to *further the purposes of the national park*. Under the recently published guidance from DEFRA, that includes considering the Management Plan (currently out for consultation) and the Sandford Principle.

We urge refusal of this application as it fails to meet the policy on the conversion of traditional farm buildings.

Yours sincerely

Chair, Policy and Planning Committee
On behalf of Friends of the Dales

Friends of the Dales is a working name of the Yorkshire Dales Society which was founded in 1981 and is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Friends of the Dales is free of political and financial affiliations. We work to ensure that the Government, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, and other relevant agencies deliver their obligations to care for the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales, an internationally important area. We do this by considering major planning applications and policy development affecting the Yorkshire Dales and adjacent areas. We offer a year round programme of walks and talks so that everyone can enjoy and learn more about this beautiful area and why it needs protection. We have a membership of around 1,300 individuals, families, businesses and organisations.