

RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

07/0126

13.02.07

Mrs Gamble

Hole House Farm, Hole
House Lane, Lanchester

Conversion of Dairy to one
residential dwelling (Re-
submission)

Lanchester Ward

The Application

1. The application seeks Planning Permission for the conversion of a former dairy building at Hole House Farm, Hole House Lane, Lanchester to one dwelling. Hole House Farm is accessed by Hole House Lane which is a farm track which currently leads to the two dwellings that exist at the farm, Hole House and Stonelea.
2. The existing building lies to the south of the access track and is single storey of red brick construction with a corrugated metal pitched roof, there are a number of openings in the building which have been bricked up. The building measures approximately 13m in length by 8.4m in width and is surrounded by an existing stone wall.
3. No extensions are proposed to facilitate the conversion although the roof height of the building would be raised by 400 mm to accommodate a first floor. The roof would be replaced with slate.

History

4. An application for the conversion of the building to a dwelling was submitted in October of last year (reference 1/2006/0834/DM). The application was withdrawn before it was determined.

Policy

5. The following policies of the adopted Local Plan are relevant in determining this application

General Development Principles (GDP1)
Protecting the Countryside (EN1)
Preventing Urban Sprawl (EN2)
Conversion of Rural Buildings (EN4)
Development within Areas of High Landscape Value (EN6)
Sub-division and Adaptation of Existing Buildings to Residential Use (HO17)
Development and Highway Safety (TR2)

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 3 (SPG3 Conversion of Rural Buildings)

Lanchester Village Design Statement

Consultations

6. County Highways Development Control Officer- no highways objection is raised.
7. Durham County Council (Rights of Way)- there are no Public Rights of Way that would be affected by the development.
8. Durham County Council (Design and Conservation)- not in a Conservation Area but in the open countryside.

The preface to the Local Plan Policy regarding conversion EN4 states that buildings should make a 'valuable and positive contribution to the character of the area' before they are considered for conversion. In my view the barn does not make that contribution and the application should be refused in principle.

The building is a brick rectangle with no architectural features to make it special. In my view it is a utilitarian building that makes no contribution to the countryside. Furthermore I consider that it harms the setting of the farm house and associated barns behind it which are stone and have been very sensitively repaired and re-used.

I consider that the conversion has been well designed within the parameters of the existing building but that does not over-ride my principle objection that the building does not merit conversion in the first place.

It is recommended that the application is refused. The proposed dairy conversion does not make a valuable contribution to the countryside and its retention and preservation is not important to help maintain the elements which make up the countryside and therefore its conversion is contrary to Policy EN4 of the Local Plan.

9. Northumbrian Water- No objections.
10. Environment Agency- the Environment Agency objects to the application for the following reasons:

The application has been submitted with insufficient information to enable adequate consideration of the proposed means of foul drainage to be made. DETR Circular 03/99 puts the onus on applicants to demonstrate that non-mains sewage disposal systems will not cause adverse impacts to the environment, amenity and public health. Until a satisfactory assessment of the likely impact of the foul drainage proposal on the environment has been submitted to and commented on by the

Environment Agency, the Agency recommends that planning consent should not be granted.

The Environment Agency considers that, as a minimum, the planning application should contain the information requested on the attached form. It should be noted that this form only requests sufficient information to enable the Agency to formulate an opinion on our particular area of concern, being pollution prevention. As the Local Planning Authority you may wish to request additional information to address amenity and public health issues, as set out in DETR Circular 3/99.

A separate consent is required from the Agency under the terms of the Water Resources Act 1991 for any proposed sewage or trade effluent discharge to a watercourse or other controlled waters, and may be required for discharge to a soakaway. (Controlled waters include rivers, streams, underground waters, reservoirs, estuaries, and coastal waters).

If the matter on non-mains drainage can be resolved and you are minded to grant consent, then we recommend visiting www.pipenetworking.com for standing advice regarding general surface water drainage issues.

I have sent a copy of this letter to the agent/applicant and a copy of the subsequent decision notice would be appreciated.

11. Natural England- Based on the information provided Natural England advises that the proposal is unlikely to have an adverse effect in respect of species protected by law, subject to the following condition-

'No development shall take place unless in accordance with the mitigation detailed within the protected species report (A Bat and Barn Owl Survey of Hole House Farm, Lanchester RO2 Final 18/10/06, E3 Ecology Ltd) including but not restricted to adherence to timing and spatial restrictions; provision of mitigation as described within the report; adherence to precautionary working methods.

Reason- To conserve protected species and their habitat.'

The protection afforded to these species is explained in part IV and Annex A of ODPM Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation- Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System.

The applicants should be informed that planning permission, if granted, does not absolve them from complying with the relevant law, including obtaining licences required as described in Part IV B of the circular.

12. Durham Bat Group- Thank you for sending me details of this report.

DBG are pleased to confirm that the field work meets all guidelines and that we agree with the conclusions drawn and suggested mitigation.

Our only concern is that the plans that accompanied the report make no mention of mitigation. Unless the mitigation is included in the plans passed

by the LPA, there is a danger that the mitigation will not be enacted and that an offence could be committed.

Durham Bat Group will not release reports to clients until we have seen drawings and our reports include the necessary cross references.

To make progress, DBG recommend that the applicant be requested to provide details of the bat mitigation, either as an amendment to one of the existing drawings or as an additional sheet.

I hope this is helpful and would be pleased to answer any queries if needed.

13. Lanchester Parish Council- the decision was to reiterate the support of the application but once again, subject to a very strong recommendation that full account be taken of Para U4 on Page 24 of the Village Design Statement, also concerned at the proposed use of red bricks and velux rooflights in a residential development in the countryside.
14. Lanchester Partnership- This is a straightforward resubmission of the previous application to which we objected in November. The views we expressed then are still relevant notwithstanding the agent's submission seeking to play up the value of the building and justification for its retention.

The integrity of the building would be seriously damaged by the alterations to be made to it. The addition of the slate roof alone would completely change its external appearance whilst the changes to the fenestration, in particular lowering the cills to floor level, would further substantially alter its character so that it would bear no resemblance to any traditional rural building in the locality. There would be nothing left of its internal character especially as a result of adding a first floor within the roofspace. Far from retaining the intrinsic interest of the building, as suggested by the agent, it would be totally destroyed by the alterations. In any event, as a private dwelling, any such value it might have would be of no community value.

The supporting document seeks to claim advantage for the project from the possibility of home working and a possible geothermal heat pump. No evidence has been given in support of the practicality of the later proposition. Moreover, as the dwelling is for disposal on the market, not for occupation by the applicant, both suggestions can only be regarded as highly speculative.

Conversion of this building would not significantly benefit the rural economy, as its future occupation is not related to any activity on the farm or of any neighbouring land. The existing red brick building is a utilitarian structure of relatively modern origin and not characteristic of traditional farm buildings in the locality. It is wholly unattractive and disfigures its surroundings rather than helping to enhance the rural character of the landscape. Whilst unattractive it has an unassuming simplicity, which would be wholly destroyed by the alteration and domestication of it and the

surrounding curtilage creating an obtrusive feature in the attractive rural landscape.

We wish to reiterate the views expressed in our earlier representations stressing the conflict with Local Plan Policies EN1 and EN4.

We therefore ask the Council to refuse permission for the proposed development and ask for an opportunity to address the Committee if you are minded to recommend approval.

15. Neighbours have been consulted and a site notice posted. Two letters of objection have been received.

The occupier of Stonelea, Hole House Lane has commented as follows-

- At the present moment, as I understand it, the road to Hole House Farm belongs to us with access for Mr Gamble for one dwelling.
- A further dwelling house with access will be more detrimental to the road.

A resident of Lanchester has commented as follows-

- Policy EN4 of the Local Plan states that buildings need to make a valuable and positive contribution to the character of the area before being considered for conversion. This building is of no intrinsic interest and makes no contribution to the landscape, so this application should be refused in principle, as the Design and Conservation Officer recommended.
- The proposal to convert this building to residential is the least desirable change for rural buildings and does not comply with the requirements set out in Policy EN4.
- Significant extension to increase the height of the whole building to allow for accommodation on a new first floor to the existing single story building is required. The design of the building is not in keeping with its surroundings. It does not fit in with other buildings on the farmstead. It is not a traditional building, it is constructed of red brick which is alien to the character of the countryside. The proposal is to extend it using more red brick increasing its unattractive appearance.
- Existing door and window openings are to be altered, one new opening added, and the windows to the front lengthened, as well as a number of rooflights installed- all significantly increasing, instead of minimising openings.
- There would be an adverse impact on the setting of the building, on the other buildings on the farmstead and especially on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside. The building would be made more unsympathetic and conspicuous in the landscape.
- Creation of a residential curtilage around the building, with a drive and a courtyard, paths, disabled access ramp and associated residential paraphernalia, such as washing lines and patio furniture would further suburbanise the rural character of the location.

- Hole House Farm is situated in a most delightful part of the Browney Valley, a landscape considered to be of countywide importance. The area is valuable and attractive to local residents and visitors, walkers, photographers and nature lovers, who come to enjoy it for its specially high landscape value and wildlife corridor running along the river running through it.
- Hole House Farm, standing against the hillside amid open agricultural land and catching the afternoon sun, is seen in wide views from vantage points on the opposite slope of the valley.
- The old dairy detracts from the appearance of the farmstead and harms the rural landscape qualities of the area. Converting the building to a dwelling would make it more conspicuous and intrusive in public views of the landscape.
- The development should not be permitted because it does not benefit the rural economy or enhance landscape character. It is not sensitively related to the existing settlement pattern nor to the valuable wildlife resources of the area.
- The development would be contrary to criteria A of GDP1 because it does not incorporate a high standard of design which is in keeping with the character of the area, it is not appropriate to the site's location and the site's natural and built features have not been taken into account.
- The building is of no intrinsic interest and makes no positive contribution to the Area of High Landscape Value. The proposed development would not bring any benefit, economic or environmental, but on the contrary, would exacerbate the adverse effect the building already has on the appearance of the farmstead and the countryside. Planning Permission should be refused and the building demolished. This would achieve the desired effect of enhancing the special landscape qualities of the area.

Officer Assessment

16. The main issue to consider with regard to this application is whether the principle of the proposed conversion is considered to be acceptable. Other considerations are the impact upon the Area of High Landscape Value, the Lanchester Village Design Statement, bats and the views of the Environment Agency.

The Principle of the Development

17. Policy EN4 of the Local Plan refers to the conversion of rural buildings. The first part of the policy states that conversion will be granted economic or employment generating uses, recreation or tourist facilities, visitor accommodation. The policy goes on to state that if the buildings are not to be developed for these uses consideration will be given to conversion to residential use or a mix of uses. The Policy then sets out a number of criteria which the proposed development should meet.
18. The Design and Conservation Officer, Lanchester Partnership and one of the objectors have expressed concerns about the appearance of the

building and they do not feel that the building is worthy of conversion. They have referred to the first paragraph of the supporting text of Policy EN4 which states that-

'Derwentside contains a range of buildings in the open countryside, from barns to older industrial structures, which often make a positive contribution to the landscape and heritage of the District. Many of these buildings are under-utilised or have fallen into disuse as a result of changing needs and practices. Often these buildings, although not listed, make a valuable and positive contribution to the character of the area and, therefore, their retention and preservation is important to help maintain the elements which make up the countryside.'

Although this paragraph refers to the fact that many rural buildings make a positive contribution to the local environment, it does not state that only buildings of a certain quality can be converted under the terms of this policy. The policy itself does not require rural buildings to be of a specific standard before conversion can be considered. Therefore the policy does not rule out the conversion of more modern rural buildings. At the time the District Local Plan was adopted, this policy conformed to the guidance contained in PPG7. Furthermore, the more up to date guidance in PPS7 does not introduce a test that all residential conversions should be limited to buildings of architectural or historic interest or other buildings that contribute to local character.

19. The building to which this application relates is a simple stone building. The applicant has advised that it was formerly a dairy and was used to milk eight cows at a time. It is understood that the building was constructed before the Second World War and is typical of a farm building built at that time. The building could perhaps be described as 'neutral' in terms of its effect on the character of the area. The applicant has suggested that the comments of the objectors that the building is unattractive are entirely subjective. The applicant has also pointed out that permission has been granted for the conversion of other similar buildings in the District such as The Old Kennels at Beamish. Members will also be aware that permission was given for the conversion of buildings of a similar quality at Hollybush Farm, Lanchester.
20. Due to the actual wording of Policy EN4 Officers feel that it would be difficult to justify a refusal of permission for the conversion of the building on the grounds that the building is not 'worthy of conversion'. There may be other buildings that are unsuitable for conversion due to their scale and design, and certainly buildings that have a damaging effect on the landscape should not be retained for their own sake. In the forthcoming Local Development Framework consideration may need to be given to whether the Council's stance on conversions should be changed in order to only permit the conversion of buildings that make a positive contribution to the landscape setting or character.
21. Policy EN4 of the Local Plan encourages the re-use of buildings with a

presumption in favour of employment or business uses. In order to assess the potential for such a conversion it is expected that evidence will be submitted with the application to demonstrate that the applicant has made a reasonable attempt to advertise the building on the open market for appropriate uses. The applicant has provided information showing that the property has been actively marketed locally and that no offers have been forthcoming. It is therefore considered that the applicant has made reasonable efforts to secure an alternative use for the building.

22. Planning Permission can only be granted for the conversion of rural buildings if they are structurally sound and physically capable of conversion without significant rebuilding or extensions. A structural survey has been submitted which demonstrates that the building could be converted without any major structural work being required.
23. In order to create an upper floor to the building the ridgeline would be raised by 400 mm. Conservation style rooflights would be installed in order that the first floor of the building could be used to provide two bedrooms. The building is currently single storey and adding the first floor would lead to a 58% increase in the floor area of the building, which is clearly a sizeable addition to the building and objectors have expressed concerns with regard to this. However increasing the roof height by 400 mm would create the extension and this alteration would be hardly discernable to the eye. It would not alter the overall scale and character of the building. The additional floorspace would be created by a very minor alteration to the building which in Planning terms is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with policy.
24. In terms of the design of the proposed alterations these would blend in well with the existing building. The Design and Conservation Officer has commented that although she has concerns about the principle of converting the building, the conversion has been well designed within the parameters of the existing building. It is therefore considered that the external alterations to the buildings are acceptable.
25. The proposed development would not adversely affect the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties and the County Council's Highways Development Control Officer is satisfied that the proposed development would not raise any highway safety issues. The occupier of the neighbouring property has expressed concerns about the vehicular access and has stated that the applicant only has permission to take access to one property from Holehouse Lane. He has been advised that this is a civil matter between both parties although the applicant has been made aware of the se concerns and has advised that he will discuss these with the objector.

The Area of High Landscape Value

26. The application site lies within an Area of High Landscape Value where special consideration must be given to the application to ensure that

attention is paid to the landscape qualities of the area. The building is not particularly large and the proposed alterations would not significantly alter its visual appearance or result in a greater impact on the Area of High Landscape Value.

Lanchester Village Design Statement

27. The Parish Council have drawn attention to paragraph 4U of the Lanchester Village Design Statement. This states that-

'Where development is proposed adjacent to but outside an area of traditional development, the layout and design should accord with the traditional characteristics of the area, unless harmonisation with other neighbouring development is of greater importance.'

Although the building, which the applicant wishes to convert, is constructed of different materials and is of a different design to the other dwellings at the farm, it has existed for a number of years and blends in with the general grouping of the farm. It is not uncommon to find a variety of types of buildings on farm steadings, and the building does not form a particularly disharmonious feature in the locality.

Bats

28. The Durham Bat Group have indicated that bat mitigation measures must be incorporated on the plans submitted. The applicant has been advised of this and amended plans are awaited.

Environment Agency Comments

29. Members will note that The Environment Agency have objected to the application on the grounds that insufficient information has been provided with regard to the drainage. The application has been advised of this and it is understood that they will be able to resolve this with the Agency. Members will be updated further with regard to this issue at your meeting.

Conclusions

30. Although there have been some concerns expressed about the principle of developing this type of building, in terms of Local Plan Policy EN4 the application fulfils the policy criteria and refusal could not be justified. The conversion is considered to be acceptable in design terms and would not adversely affect residential amenity.

Recommendation

31. Conditional Permission subject to the Environment Agency withdrawing their objection and amended plans being submitted showing bat mitigation

measures.

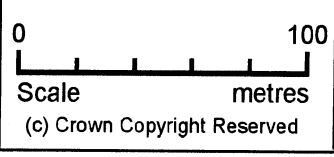
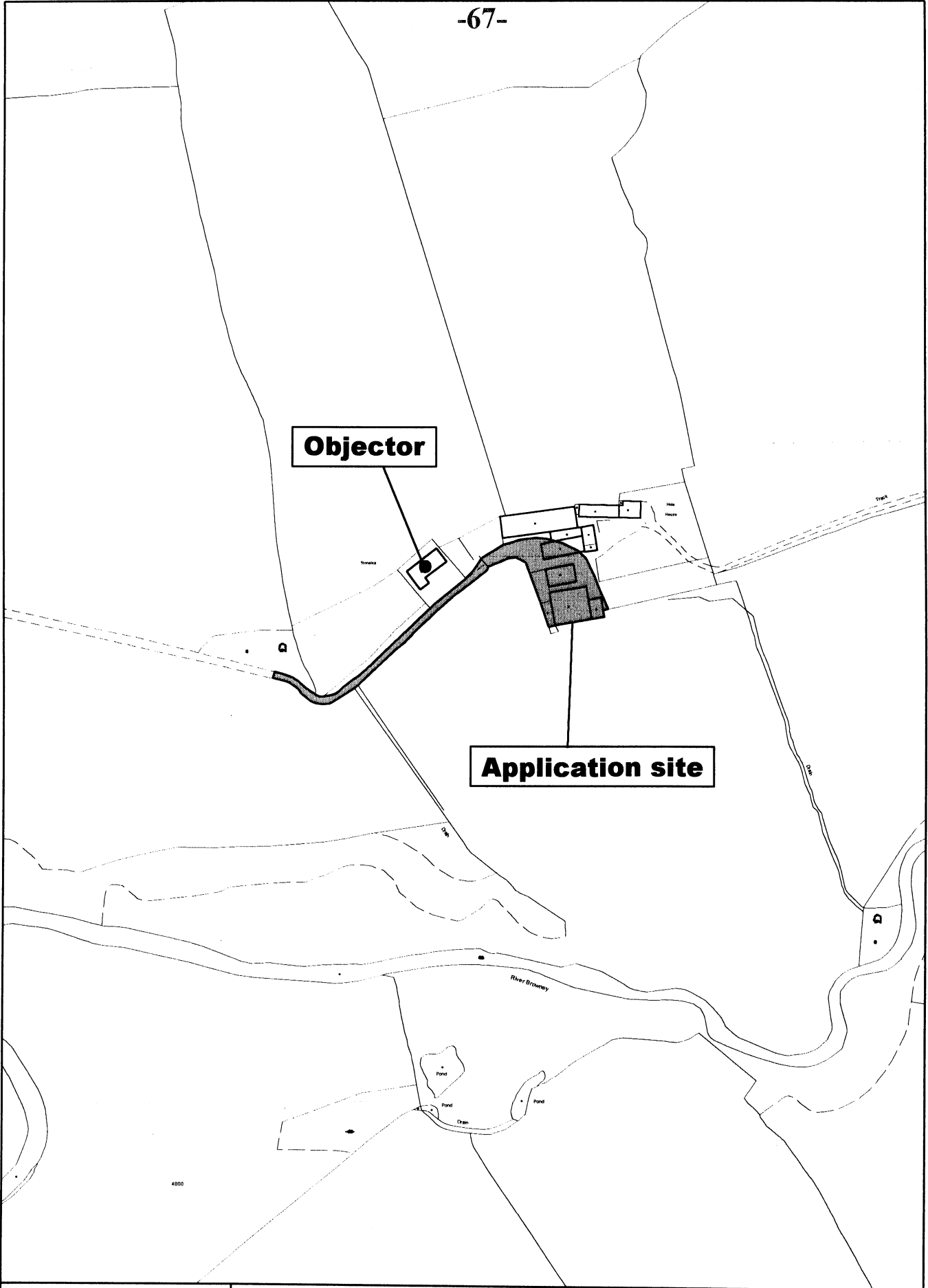
- Time Limit (ST)
- Approved Plans (ST01)
- Materials (AO3)
- Rainwater Goods (A13)
- Notwithstanding the description of the materials submitted with the application the roof shall be constructed of natural slate or other such material as may be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
- Reason- In the interests of the appearance of the development and in order to comply with Policies GDP1 and EN4 of the Local Plan.
- All windows, doors and roof light windows shall be of timber construction.
- Reason- In the interests of the appearance of the development and in order to comply with Policies GDP1 and EN4 of the Local Plan.
- Drainage (D04)
- No development shall take place unless in accordance with the mitigation detailed within the protected species report (A Bat and Barn Owl Survey of Hole House Farm, Lanchester RO2 Final 18/10/06, E3 Ecology Ltd) including but not restricted to adherence to timing and spatial restrictions; provision of mitigation as described within the report; adherence to precautionary working methods.
- Reason- To conserve protected species and their habitat

Reason for Approval

32. The decision to grant planning permission has been taken having regard to policies GDP1, EN1, EN2, EN4, EN6, HO17 and TR2 of the Derwentside District Plan and relevant supplementary planning guidance and material considerations, as detailed in the report to the Development Control Committee. In the view of the Local Planning Authority no other material considerations outweigh the decision to grant permission.

Report Prepared by Fiona Clarke, Principal Planning Officer

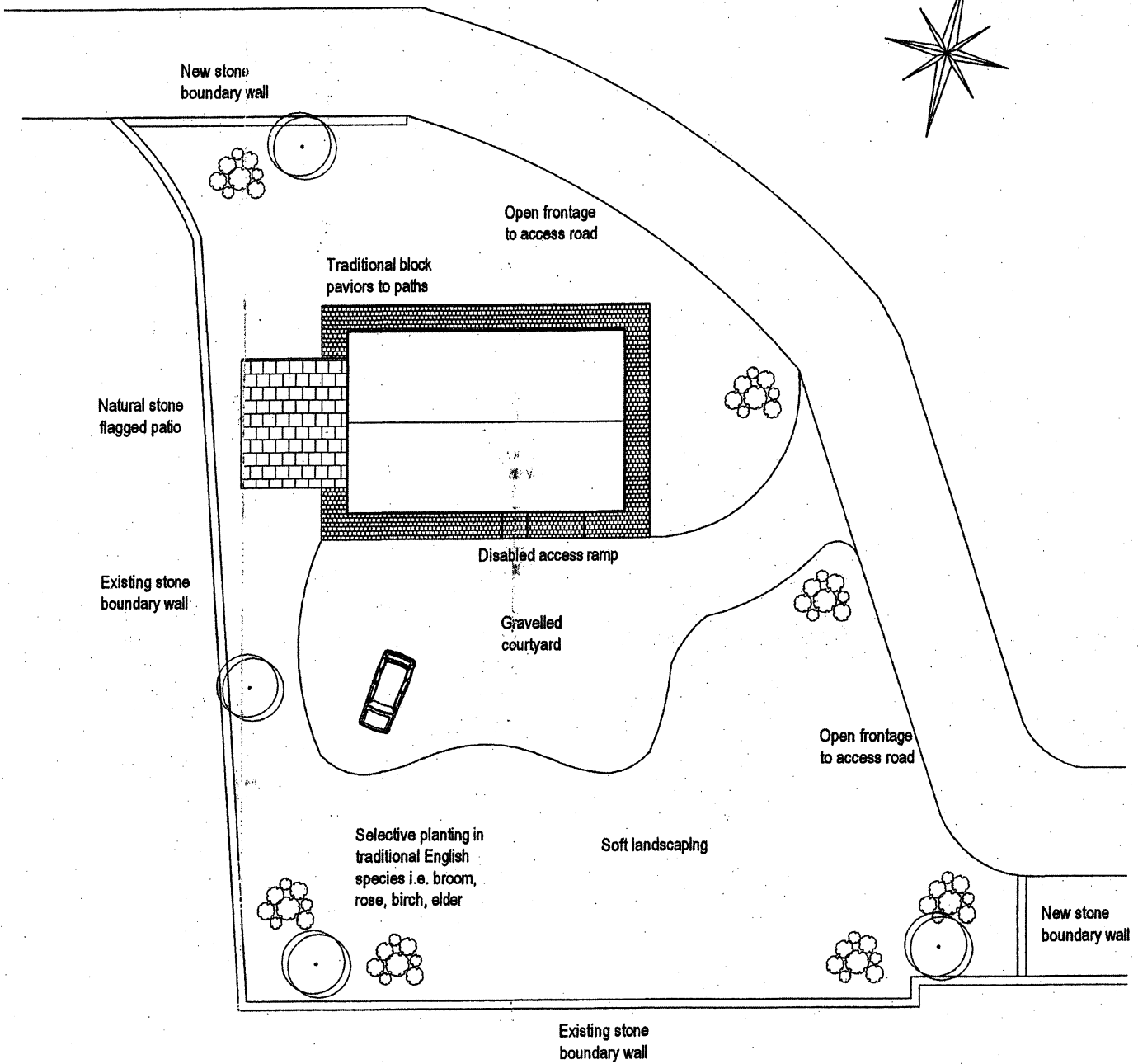
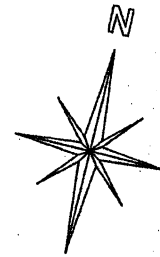
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Conversion of dairy into one residential dwelling
(resubmission)
Hole House Farm, Holehouse Lane
Lanchester

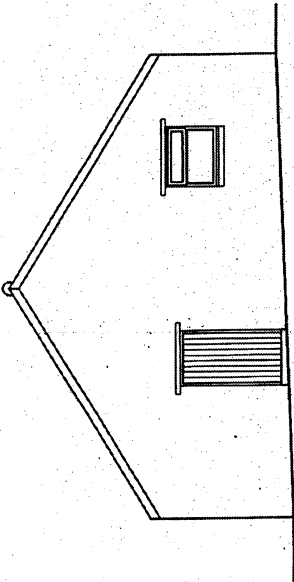
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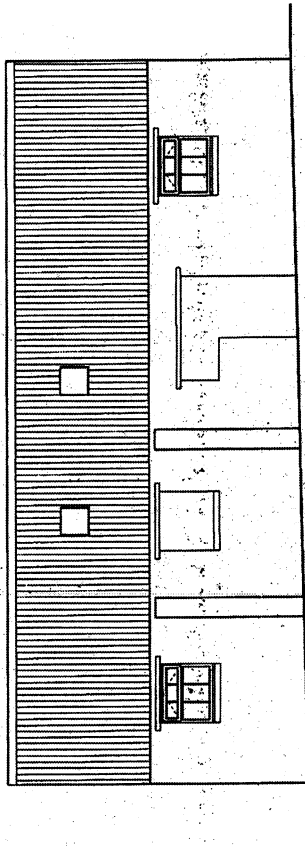


SITE PLAN

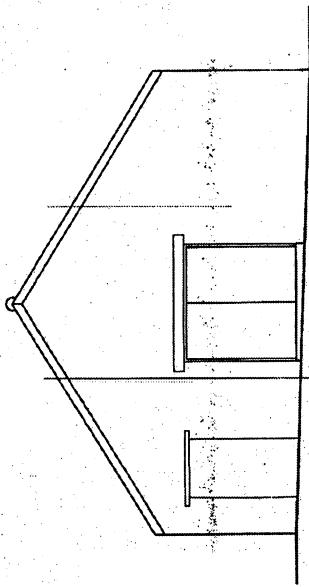
Conversion of dairy into one residential dwelling (Resubmission)
Hole House Farm
Holehouse Lane
Lanchester
07/126



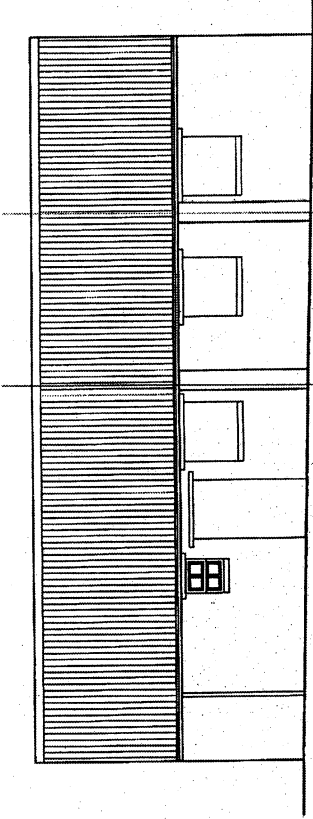
SIDE (EAST) ELEVATION



FRONT (SOUTH) ELEVATION

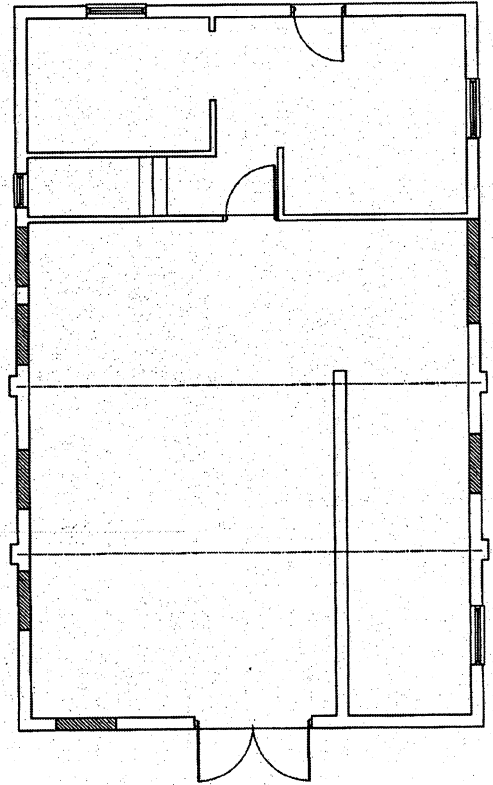


SIDE (WEST) ELEVATION



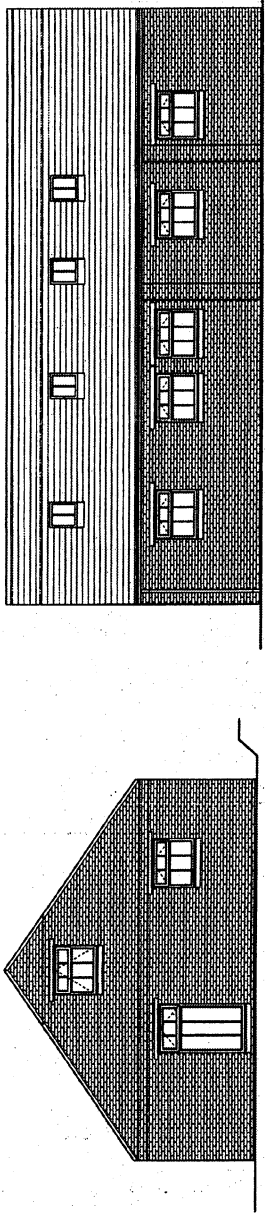
REAR (NORTH) ELEVATION

EXISTING PLANS



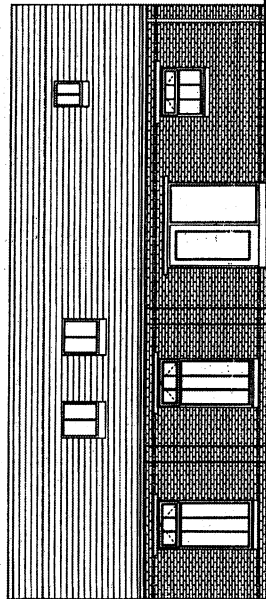
GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Conversion of dairy into one residential dwelling (Resubmission)
Hole House Farm
Holehouse Lane
Lanchester
07/126

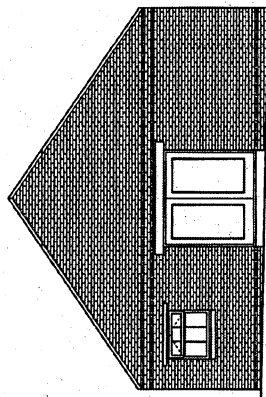


SIDE (EAST) ELEVATION

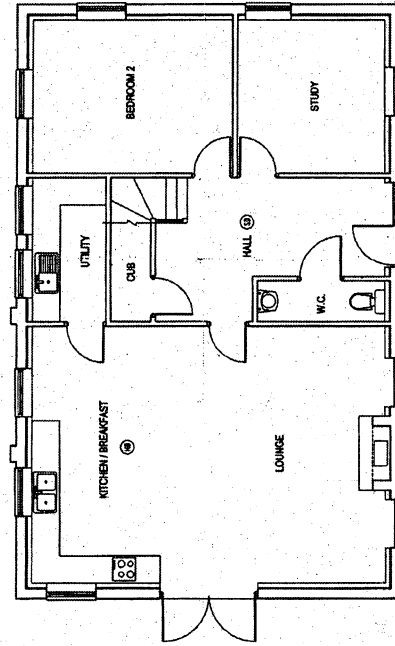
REAR (NORTH) ELEVATION



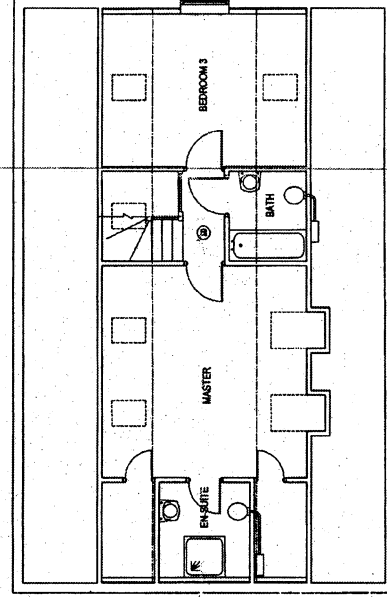
FRONT (SOUTH) ELEVATION



SIDE (WEST) ELEVATION



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

PROPOSED PLANS

Conversion of dairy into one residential dwelling (Resubmission)
 Hole House Farm
 Holehouse Lane
 Lanchester

07/126