

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Local Development Plan Policy 38

Farm Diversification

March 2015

Supplementary Planning Guidance

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been prepared as supplementary planning guidance, which is material planning consideration in determining planning applications for farm diversification. It is intended to assist applicants in presenting such applications to Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA). Applicants may also wish to take advantage of the paid pre-application consultation service to discuss diversification projects before a planning application is submitted.

2. Purpose of the Guidance

- 2.1 Farm diversification offers key benefits for the socio-economic growth of rural communities allowing the creation of commercial opportunities to provide rural employment that utilises existing resources and offers an additional income. Often diversification is key to maintain the viability of individual farm units and to enable the family unit to remain actively employed within the holding. Diversification schemes can also provide assured future for traditional farm buildings.
- 2.2 Not all diversification projects will require planning permission but usually projects requiring change of use of land from agriculture to another use and the erection or conversion of buildings for non-agricultural purposes will require planning consent. Please note diversification within agricultural practice does not require planning permission unless structures are necessary that are outside the applicants permitted development rights.
- 2.3 Diversification proposals of farms will generally be supported by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. They can vary greatly in range and scale and consequently their impact on the surrounding environment will differ from project to project. This document gives some practical guidance on the issues that will arise when determining a planning application.

3. National and Local Planning Policies

- 3.1 Planning Policy Wales states that local planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to farm diversification in rural areas, irrespective of whether they are served with public transport. In considering development proposals for farm diversification activities the National Park Authority (NPA) will expect consideration to be given in the first instance to the reuse of existing buildings. If this is not possible, a sensitively designed new building within the existing farm complex may be considered. Further national technical guidance is given in Technical Advice Note 6 “Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities”.
- 3.2 Given the nature of Agricultural development it is likely that most schemes for farm diversification will be located within open countryside locations as defined by the LDP Proposals Map. Within areas designated as ‘Countryside’, there is a

presumption against development unless there is a defined essential need for development. Protection of the countryside is the National Park Authority's first statutory purpose, and therefore it is essential that development in countryside locations is strictly controlled to manage adverse impacts on the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park. Proposals for development within countryside locations will be required to contribute positively to their countryside setting. All proposals for development within the countryside locations must demonstrate how they respond to countryside issues and how the scheme will contribute to achieving the Countryside 15 year Future Vision as set out below.

Countryside 15 year future vision

The countryside will remain as a living and working landscape that is internationally recognised for its outstanding natural beauty and cultural traditions of Welsh hill farming.

Essential rural practice will become more sustainable and diverse and the National Park Authority will have positively supported development that will have helped achieve these aims. The high value of the environment will have been capitalised upon. Farm diversification will enable a more secure future for the countryside, with tourism, local food production and, where appropriate, small scale renewable energy generation making our countryside a truly sustainable landscape.

All areas outside of Settlements (listed within levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the hierarchy) are designated as countryside locations. Policy CYDLPI sets out the forms of development that the National Park Authority will permit within these locations.

- 3.3 Accordingly, Policy CYD LPI of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan sets out the forms of development that the National Park consider appropriate in a countryside location.
- 3.4 Criterion 4 of policy CYD LPI makes provision for developments to enable Rural Enterprise and Farm Diversification
- 3.5 Policy 38 of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan relates specifically to farm diversification. The policy supports diversification schemes on a working farm which has been registered as an agricultural holding and the main business is agriculture (as defined by section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). The policy reads as follows:

Policy 38 Farm Diversification

Proposals for farm diversification will be permitted where:

- a) *the proposed diversification will be of an intensity of use appropriate to the environment and setting within the National Park and will have no significant detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of an adjacent town or village, either in*

its own right or through cumulative impact;

- b) functioning of surrounding agricultural land is not prejudiced;*
- c) adequate provision for the storage of materials/equipment is maintained*
- d) adequate parking provision is made to serve the needs of the diversification scheme;
and*
- e) any new buildings or conversions or existing buildings that form part of the proposal lie within or immediately adjacent to the group of existing buildings which make up the farm complex and are in accordance with Policy CYD LPI criteria 4 and Policy 23.*

3.6 In addition to the above, and dependent upon the form of the proposed development, all schemes will be subject to all relevant LDP and National Planning policy. The following may be relevant in the determination of farm diversification schemes, but please note this list is not exhaustive and applicants are advised to consult the LDP and engage in pre-application advice in the design of their scheme.

Planning Policy Wales (Welsh Government)

Technical Advice Note 6 Planning for rural Sustainability (Welsh Government)

Policy 1	Appropriate Development in the National Park
Policy 5	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
Policy 6	Biodiversity and Development
Policy 23	Sustainable Design in the Adaption and RE-use of Existing Buildings
SP9	Renewable Energy
CYD LPI	Enabling Appropriate Development in the Countryside
Policy 39	Equestrian Facilities
Policy 41	New Farm and Forestry Buildings
Policy 45	New Buildings for Holiday Accommodation
Policy 46	Non-permanent Holiday Accommodation
Policy 47	New or Extended Sites for Touring Caravans, Camper Vans and Tents
Policy 48	New or Extended Outdoor Activity Centres
Policy 63	Energy from Waste Development Schemes

4. Range of Diversification Projects

4.1 Diversification can be described as any proposal which seeks to supplement farm income on working farms. Usually diversification proposals fall into one of the following four categories:-

- Tourism
- Services
- Sport & Recreation
- Other

- 4.2 Most projects will require Planning Permission. The merits of the proposed diversification scheme, regardless of category will be determined in accordance with National Park purposes and duty.
- 4.3 Where the proposal requires the use of a building preference will be given to the sympathetic conversion of existing buildings and an applicant will have to demonstrate why it will not be practical to use an existing building in preference to new build. Where it has been successfully demonstrated that a new building is required this should be for the sole use of a diversification project and not for any other purpose. It should also be in scale with its surroundings and appropriately designed for its intended use. Well-proportioned buildings which take into account their setting and uses of materials are more likely to be acceptable. Many farming enterprises have sufficient space next to existing buildings to enable any new building to be properly assimilated into the farm complex without causing undue harm. The design, scale and location of a development and its potential impact on the environment will also need to conform with Policy I “Appropriate Development in the National Park
- 4.4 In some circumstances the Authority may request that a business/management plan is submitted in support of a farm diversification scheme. This may be necessary where the applicant needs to provide detail as to the future sustainability of any proposal, especially where new buildings are being proposed as part of the development scheme.

5. Planning Considerations

- 5.1 In addition to the policies within the Local Development Plan, other material planning considerations will be considered.
- 5.2 Scale - Most farming enterprises are located within attractive open countryside and many have existing large agricultural buildings. Therefore, any new building should be constructed sympathetically within the landscape and be of an appropriate scale to its setting and surrounding. As stated above, the conversion of existing buildings will be given priority over the construction of new build. Scale is also considered in terms of the type of development appropriate to the specific location. Some activities, due to its scale may generate large volumes of traffic, noise and general disturbance and it's important to consider the location and neighboring properties. Therefore the level of activity that is likely to be created should be appropriate to the site and its surroundings and this will be assessed as part of the planning application.
- 5.3 Access – Many existing farms are located in isolated locations with access along narrow country roads. It would not be appropriate to encourage additional traffic generation on a dangerous access or along approach roads that are totally unsuitable for the expected traffic generation. Accessibility by public transport would be an advantage but it is recognised that is not always possible in isolated locations. It is advised to consult the local Highways Authority to discuss access and highway considerations prior to the submission of a planning application. In some instances

traffic impact assessment may be necessary in accordance with the requirements of TANI8.

- 5.4 Siting and Design – Features of traditional farm buildings should be retained as part of a new design and in some cases an archaeological investigation may be required before conversion/building work commences and any findings recorded or retained. If it's not possible or practical to convert an existing building, siting a new building close to an existing group of buildings will minimise the impact on the open countryside and ensure the efficient use of existing services. If the ground chosen for the site of a new building structure is sloping, it helps to reduce its impact if the eaves and ridge are parallel to the ground contours. The design and type of materials to be used would depend on the use of the building, however the new buildings should be of traditional design and use local building materials to match those on the site as much as possible.
- 5.5 It may be possible to re-use local stone and slate from the site. The bulk and form of a new building can be lessened by breaking up the roof pitch, while dark grey, dark green, dark blue, black or brown roofs would harmonise and blend in within the landscape. Large areas of hard landscaping including areas of unrelieved tarmac are best avoided and should be considered sympathetically as part of the overall design. Soft landscaping including tree planting can lessen the visual impact from public viewpoint including footpaths and bridleways.
- 5.6 The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority will consider the overall impact of the development on the visual amenity of the surrounding area. This would include the impact from across valley views and from higher ground level. Good design, with the use of appropriate local materials will lessen the visual impact. If the proposal would involve the use of land for recreational purposes, then the impact on the landscape should be kept to a minimum.

6. Biodiversity

- 6.1 The conversion of an existing building or the use of land may impact on important environmental sites or protected species. In the case of conversion, many older farm buildings are potential habitats for bats and barn owls, which are protected by law. An appropriate survey would be required as part of the planning submission and if evidence is found to show their presence, the animals themselves and their habitats must be safeguarded. Mitigation measures and a schedule of works will be sought and can be discussed with the BBNPA prior to submission. A license will also be required from Natural Resources Wales to disturb or move the protected species during the construction phase. Further information can be obtained in the 'Best Practice in Biodiversity and Geological Conservation in Planning and Development'.

7. Historical Environment

- 7.1 Many older farm buildings are Listed Buildings. In the case of conversion, Listed Building Consent may be required depending on the level of work required to the building. In the case of a new build, full consideration must be given to the setting of

the adjoining Listed Buildings, by appropriate design and materials.

8. Residential Amenity

- 8.1 Although most proposals are unlikely to give rise to amenity issues, it is possible that noise, smell or traffic generation for example, to cause a nuisance to other residents living within the vicinity. Careful siting of an activity or building and effective landscaping could overcome such issues. It is also advisable to discuss a proposal with neighboring properties that could be affected, and explain in detail what the proposed plan on the site entails. This will avoid potential future misconceptions and help smooth the passage of a planning application.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 If having read this guidance you wish to discuss a project in more detail, you can enter into discussions by submitting a paid pre-application. Further detail in relation to the information required can be found in 'Pre-application Planning Advice Charges Guidance Note'. The BBNPA will work with applicant in bringing forward satisfactorily proposal which can benefit their business and the wider rural economy.