



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 October 2025

by **M Aqbal BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/25/3359766

Barn at Causilgey Farm, Tregavethan, Truro TR4 9EP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant approval required under Article 3(1) and Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Mr M Tomlinson against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref is PA24/02191.
 - The development proposed is Class Q conversion to form two dwellings and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The new provisions of Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended ('GPDO'), came into force on 21 May 2024. As this application was validated on 18 March 2024, it must be determined under the earlier Class Q provisions. I have therefore considered the appeal on that basis, and the updated provisions are not relevant to my assessment. Accordingly, all subsequent references to Class Q of the GPDO in this decision relate to the previous provisions.

Background and Main Issues

3. Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO when the application was made, set out that development is classed as permitted development if it consists of: (a) a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order; or (b) development referred to in paragraph (a) together with building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building referred to in paragraph (a) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule. This is subject to a number of situations where such development is not permitted, listed under paragraph Q.1, and, subject to compliance with Conditions, as set out under paragraph Q.2.
4. Paragraph Q.1 of the GPDO states that: 'Development is not permitted by Class Q if (i) the development under Class Q(b) would consist of building operations other than— (i) the installation or replacement of—(aa) windows, doors, roofs, or exterior walls, or (bb) water, drainage, electricity, gas or other services, to the extent reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse;'.
5. In addition, the Council advises that the appeal site falls within the Zones of Influence of both the Penhale Dunes Special Area of Conservation ('SAC') and the

Fal and Helford SAC, and that the proposal, when considered in combination with other plans and projects and in the absence of appropriate mitigation, would adversely affect the integrity of these Special Areas of Conservation.

6. Against that background, the main issues are:

- i) whether the proposed change of use constitutes permitted development pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO, having particular regard to:
(b) whether the building operations are reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse having regard to Class Q.1 (i); and, if the proposal is permitted development:
- ii) whether the development would be likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the Penhale Dunes SAC and the Fal and Helford SAC.

Reasons

Whether the proposal is permitted development

- 7. Based on Class Q, building works are allowed under the right permitting agricultural buildings to change to residential use, but the right assumes that the agricultural building is capable of functioning as a dwellinghouse. Building operations can include internal works and those that would affect the external appearance of the building; though it is not the intention to allow rebuilding work that would go beyond what is reasonably necessary for the conversion of the building to residential use. Therefore, only when the existing building is already suitable for conversion to residential use would it be considered to have the permitted development right.
- 8. My attention has been drawn to the Hibbitt case which relates to the difference between conversions and rebuilding dealt with under Class Q. This is important because if a development does not amount to a conversion it would fail to be development permitted under Class Q (b). The case suggests that an agricultural building may be so skeletal and minimalist that the works needed to alter it to be used as a dwelling would be of such a magnitude that it would be tantamount to a new build or rebuild. Ultimately, such considerations are matters of planning judgement for the decision maker.
- 9. The existing agricultural building comprises a metal portal framed Dutch barn. This is located adjacent to a single storey block building to the north-west which is linked to the Dutch barn via an intervening lean-to structure.
- 10. The Dutch barn incorporates a concrete base which supports the metal portal frame and the roof and walling, where these exist, they are clad with metal corrugated sheeting and some plastic sheeting. As such, the existing building is a simple utilitarian metal frame designed to carry lightweight sheets, presumably constructed to agricultural standards.
- 11. In summary, the submitted Structural Report concludes that the building is performing well under its load conditions and conversion works are not likely to jeopardise the existing structure, making the building suitable for conversion without any significant alterations or strengthening beyond that required to make it habitable. However, the Structural Report appears to be limited in scope, having been based only on visual inspection.

12. I am unpersuaded that the evidence before me demonstrates with sufficient certainty that the external shell of the building will, in practice, be retained exactly as described. The Structural Report contains vague assurances, such as that new openings will require framing “so as not to affect stability,” or that internal partitions “can be designed to provide additional support should it so be required.” Such statements lack the certainty and detail necessary to demonstrate that the existing building is structurally capable of conversion.
13. The appellant’s reliance on enforcement as a safeguard does not remove the risk of departure from the submitted details. Enforcement is reactive and cannot substitute for confidence at the decision-making stage that the proposal, as presented, is acceptable with regard to the Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO.
14. In particular, to facilitate the proposal the lean to structure would need to be demolished. Furthermore, the additional submitted evidence, drawings (006–009) illustrate the construction of a new timber-framed structure within the shell of the Dutch barn. These drawings also specify new foundations, raft slabs subject to engineer design. New structural walling is also likely to be required, including where the lean-to is demolished, and a new internal roof with a GRP waterproof covering is also specified. This is not simply the insertion of insulation or internal partitions; but is a kin to the creation of a freestanding structure within the envelope of the existing building.
15. The Planning Practice Guidance says that “Internal works are not development and therefore do not require planning permission. However, where building operations are proposed, these must fall within the scope of the permitted development right in question.” Class Q cases are intended to be straightforward, “light touch” matters where it is obvious that the building can change use from agricultural to residential without extensive rebuilding.
16. In this case, the scale of works proposed goes well beyond what could reasonably be described as internal alterations. The extent of the new internal framework and structural interventions effectively result in the creation of self-contained residential units within the shell of the Dutch barn. The requirement for such comprehensive reconstruction suggests that the Dutch barn, in its current state, is not suitable for conversion.
17. In light of the above, I am not persuaded that the proposal amounts to a genuine “conversion” of the existing building.
18. In any event, the likely demolition and proposed alterations to the floor of the Dutch barn and the additional structural works are not included in the list of permitted operations set out in the GPDO. Therefore, this would be operational development which goes beyond what would be reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse having regard to Class Q.1 (i) (i) of the GPDO. As such, the proposal does not constitute permitted development pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO.

Penhale Dunes SAC and the Fal and Helford SAC.

19. Because I have concluded that the proposal does not benefit from permitted development rights granted by Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO, it is not

necessary for me to consider the implications of the proposal on the Penhale Dunes SAC and the Fal and Helford SAC.

Other Matters

20. Because the proposal does not fall within the scope of permitted development rights under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO, it is not permitted development. Accordingly, it is not necessary for me to weigh any benefit of the two proposed dwellings against the provisions of the development plan or the Framework, notwithstanding the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

Conclusion

21. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Aqbal

INSPECTOR