



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2025

by **C Livingstone MA(SocSci) (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/25/3373761

Lawsons Farm, Whittonstall, Northumberland DH8 9JW

- 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 & Mrs Almond against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
- The application Ref is 25/01355/AGTRES.
- The development proposed is prior approval for change of use from agricultural buildings to 2 No residential dwellings.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs in relation to this appeal was made by Mr and Mrs Almond against Northumberland County Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Background and Main Issue

3. 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) (GPDO 2020), planning permission is granted for (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) together with (b) building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building, subject to limitations and conditions.
4. The Council refused the application under Part 3 Class Q.(c) of the GPDO 2024 as scale of operational work required to alter the use of the building would be beyond building operations reasonably necessary.
5. Therefore, the main issue is whether the proposed development meets the requirements of Class Q, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the GPDO, such that it would constitute permitted development.

Reasons

6. GPDO Class Q. (b) permits building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building. Paragraph Q.1(i) restricts these to 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; and (ii) partial demolition to the extent reasonably necessary to carry out building operations allowed by paragraph Q.1 (i)(i).

7. Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') sets out that the permitted development rights under Class Q assume that the agricultural building is capable of functioning as a dwelling. Accordingly, building operations which are reasonably necessary to convert the building, which may include those which would affect the external appearance of the building and would otherwise require planning permission, would be permitted. Therefore, it is only where the existing building is already suitable for conversion to residential use that the building would be considered to have the permitted development right.
8. The Council considers the building operations would go beyond what is considered reasonably necessary to convert the building to residential use. The *Hibbitt*¹ judgment refers to the building being capable of conversion to a residential use without works that would be a complete or substantial rebuild to the effect that it would result in the creation of a new building. What represents a conversion or rebuild is not defined and thus is a matter of planning judgement on a case-by-case basis.
9. The appeal buildings are two open-fronted barns, with a curved profiled metal-clad roof and metal cladding on three elevations. Exposed open steel columns support the roofs of each barn and both have a hardcore floor.
10. The provided Structural Appraisal² is based on a visual inspection from ground level, to determine the structural condition of the buildings. It concludes that the buildings are suitable for conversion without significant amendments to the existing structure. However, it also states that the existing foundations 'could be considered relatively shallow by modern standards'. Additionally, the inspection report confirms that no covered, unexposed or inaccessible areas of the building were examined, so it cannot be confirmed that all areas are free from defects.
11. Although the inspection report identifies evidence of corrosion to some of the roof sheeting on the larger barn, identified on plans as barn B, I saw myself that it varies in condition. I saw that roof panels are, in places, corroded and that light and moisture can enter the structure through gaps between the sheets, or through corroded sheeting itself. Given the condition of the roof sheeting on barn B, it is probable that large areas of the roof will require replacement or repair if not replaced in its entirety. Similar levels of corrosion are found on the cladding of one of the side walls of barn B.
12. The individual elements proposed, such as the cladding, roof replacement, and installation of new exterior walls, windows and doors is permissible, and some of the works are internal and are therefore not development requiring planning permission. However, it is necessary to consider the whole of the works involved and whether it would still amount to a conversion of the building, as opposed to a rebuild.
13. Therefore, while I acknowledge that the supporting frame, and some cladding may be currently sound, it nevertheless remains that building works and demolition will also encompass new external walls, cladding of existing external walling, potentially the total replacement of the roof of barn B and the total replacement of the floor of both barn A and barn B as well as other works. Overall, the full extent of works that are required to facilitate their use as a dwellinghouses goes beyond

¹ Hibbitt and Another v SSCLG & Rushcliffe Borough Council [2016] EWHC 2853 (Admin)

² Structural Appraisal, Billinghurst George and Partners, dated 10th April 2025

what could reasonably be described as a conversion and would be so extensive as to comprise rebuilding.

14. I find that building operations proposed necessary to create two new dwellings from the appeal buildings would not fall within the scope of what is permissible under Part Q. Accordingly, the appeal scheme would not be permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the Order.
15. It follows that further assessment of other restrictions, limitations and conditions of Class Q, Part 3 is rendered unnecessary as it would not alter the outcome of the appeal.

Other Matters

16. The appellant sets out a lack of harm and benefits from the proposed development and several representations were submitted in support of the scheme. However, my determination is restricted to the scope of the permitted development right relied upon, which does not allow for a balance with other considerations, if, as in this case, the proposal falls outside of the permitted development rights.
17. My attention has been drawn to two examples of barn conversions that were allowed at appeal³. Based on the evidence before me, the structure and floor of each example is different from the barns in the appeal scheme. Further to this, as detailed above, what represents a conversion or rebuild is not defined and thus is a matter of planning judgement on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal is not permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the GPDO. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Livingstone

INSPECTOR

³ APP/P2935/W/24/3351502 and APP/P2935/W/25/3368310