

# 7 BUILDING CONVERSIONS

## CONVERTING EXISTING BUILDINGS WORTHY OF RETENTION

**GOAL:** To make sure that buildings that are no longer used or vacant are re-used wherever possible in order to preserve their contribution to settlements and the countryside and in turn making it a more sustainable option

There are many buildings throughout South Oxfordshire within settlements and in the countryside that are no longer used or are vacant. These buildings include farm buildings, factories, chapels, schools and mills. The reuse of existing buildings within South Oxfordshire is a key objective in terms of preserving their contribution to settlements and the countryside but also in sustainability terms. The embodied energy in a building's fabric is considerable. For example, it takes a lot of energy to demolish and rebuild existing buildings. With this in mind, the council seeks to encourage the re-use of buildings wherever possible particularly when the building makes a positive contribution to the character of an area.

Their conversion and re-use however must be done with great care in order to ensure that the essential character of the original building is not lost or that the contribution the building makes to the wider area is not compromised. This technical document examines the design approaches that should be adopted when converting a range of existing building types. It should be noted that conversion to residential use is not always the most appropriate solution, particularly where the building is listed or is situated in an isolated location in the open countryside. Compliance with building regulations is also a key consideration for any building conversion and may require significant alterations to the original building. In these cases the council may consider the conversion of the building as not appropriate or acceptable.



### Additional useful and interesting resources:

- National Planning Policy Framework and the development plan
- Validation checklist
- Planning Portal and Southvale Building Control Service
- Energy efficiency in historic buildings (Historic England, 2015)
- Historic England provides extensive guidance and information on working within the historic environment. Some of these include Conservation Principles; Conversion of Traditional Farm Buildings; Good Practice Advice Notes



Examples for existing building conversions (Wolverton and Wallingford)



### To inform your design:

Technical studies including (but not limited to) surveys on trees, habitats, species etc. where appropriate



### To communicate your design:

- Elevations if there are external changes and floor plans
- Block plan and/ or landscape plan



Conversion of an existing chapel in Kingston Blount



Converted farm buildings (Crowmarsh Battle Farm)



## ☒ TEST YOUR DESIGN:

All types of conversion should consider:

- 7.1 a structural report will need to be submitted with any planning application to demonstrate that the building is capable of conversion without substantial rebuilding or extension;
- 7.2 an assessment should be made as to the existing character and the impact of a proposed conversion on any special interest, as per the NPPF, and through the contextual analysis (see design guide);
- 7.3 the conversion must retain the character and appearance of the original building;
- 7.4 the introduction of conspicuous domestic features should be avoided;
- 7.5 existing openings in elevations should be used for windows and doors;
- 7.6 new windows or doors should be added sparingly and should not significantly alter the overall proportion of solid wall to openings;
- 7.7 a simple window design is usually most appropriate;
- 7.8 where additional floors are introduced, they should not cut across tall windows;
- 7.9 when appropriate, existing ecclesiastical fixtures and fittings should be retained wherever possible;
- 7.10 when appropriate, existing commercial or industrial fixtures and fittings should be retained wherever possible;
- 7.11 when introducing new materials, these should respond to established character and be compatible with both the existing materials and building type: for example; lime finishes, traditional weatherboarding, natural roofing and wall materials, etc.;
- 7.12 consider accessibility of conversions.

Meets criteria If not, reason for not meeting

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