



Top 5 Things to Know Before Starting a
Barn Conversion



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Understand the Planning Rules

Converting a barn isn't as simple as it might first appear. Many barns are located in the countryside or within green belt areas, and this means planning permission rules can be more restrictive than for other types of homes.

You might benefit from Class Q permitted development rights, which allow certain agricultural buildings to be converted into dwellings without full planning permission.

However, these rights come with strict criteria about the barn's existing use, structure, and surroundings.

Barn Conversions: A Guide to Class Q Permitted Development (Updated August 2024)

Class Q is a provision within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2018 that allows for the conversion of agricultural buildings into residential dwellings without full planning permission.

Instead, a prior approval application must be submitted to the local planning authority, with a determination period of 56 days. It is important to note that Class Q applies only in England.



Types of Buildings Permitted:

- Buildings must have been in agricultural use on or before 24th May 2024.
- If the agricultural use began after that date, 10 years must pass before eligibility.
- Commonly qualifying structures include barns, cowsheds, and grain stores.
- Buildings used for non-agricultural purposes (e.g., stables, storage) do not qualify

Number of Dwellings Allowed:

- From May 2024: Up to 10 dwellings (each max 150sqm), within 1,000sqm of total floor area.
- Rear extensions are allowed up to 4m if the hardstanding existed before 24th July 2023 (or 10 years prior).
- Until 20th May 2025: Previous rules allow up to 5 dwellings based on floor space combinations.

Restrictions:

- Class Q does not allow enlarging the building (except the new extension provision).
- Not applicable to buildings in the curtilage of a Listed Building, Conservation Area, or National Landscape (formerly AONB).
- Careful site appraisal, a strong architectural design, expert reports (e.g., structural, ecological), and early consultation with the local authority all help enhance your application's success.





Structural Integrity is Key

Barns vary enormously in their construction. Some are brick, some timber, others steel or concrete. Before any design work can proceed, you'll need to know:

1. Is the structure sound enough to be converted?
2. Will it need underpinning, additional support, or a new roof?
3. Can the layout accommodate insulation and modern services?

A structural survey is essential. Our team works closely with structural engineers to evaluate what can realistically be achieved and what reinforcements will be needed.







Respect the Character, but Design for Modern Living

One of the joys of a barn conversion is preserving original features — exposed beams, stonework, large open volumes — while creating a comfortable, functional home.

Smart barn conversions:

- Retain the essence of the building.
- Introduce natural light creatively through rooflights or glazing within existing openings.
- Embrace open-plan spaces while maintaining warmth and acoustics.

We specialise in blending the old with the new to ensure the building's soul remains intact while offering 21st-century performance.







Budget Realistically for the Unexpected

Barn conversions are not typically cheaper than new builds. Hidden costs can include:

- Foundations and structural reinforcements.
- Upgrading utilities (electricity, water, sewerage).
- Insulating to modern standards.
- Specialist glazing or bespoke joinery.

We recommend setting aside at least 10-15% contingency in your budget.

Our team helps clients price their projects accurately and spot cost risks early on.





Think About Sustainability and Futureproofing

A converted barn should not only look good – it should perform well. Building in sustainability from the start is smart planning:

- High levels of insulation and airtightness.
- Underfloor heating paired with air source heat pumps.
- Solar panels or battery storage.
- Rainwater harvesting and wildlife-friendly landscaping.

With the right design, your barn can be a low-energy, low-impact home that meets future standards.

If your barn holds heritage value, we work closely with conservation officers and heritage consultants to preserve its story and character.





Case studies





Ford Farm Barn development.

The site, once a farm, was bought for potential development. Obtaining planning permission involved extensive effort and discussions with our client and the planners. The innovative design emulates traditional farm buildings, reflecting local agricultural history.







Brancote Farm development.

A high end residential development of Class Q barn conversions designed to reflect the site's agricultural character. The ambition was to restore and renovate the buildings in such a way that allowed an entirely new use, but retained the agricultural character of the existing site, enhancing its ecology and biodiversity.







Family Dwelling Conversion.

This carefully designed barn conversion, set within the Green Belt, creates a sustainable family home that respects its rural setting. Featuring solar panels, underfloor heating, high-performance glazing, and brise-soleil shading, the dwelling combines traditional charm with modern environmental design – a place for family life to thrive, now and into the future.







Lower Farm development.

Set in the heart of the Staffordshire Green Belt, the redevelopment of Lower Farm transforms a former poultry site into a thoughtfully designed rural scheme. The project centres around the conversion of a Grade II listed timber-frame barn and adjoining brick and block structures into characterful residential dwellings and office space, preserving the site's historic fabric while introducing sensitive new uses.

Complementing the conversions, the scheme proposes the replacement of existing egg production barns with new self-storage buildings, carefully designed to match the original footprints and volumes — a strategic move to address planning constraints in this protected landscape.

Balancing heritage with vision, the design aims to deliver sustainable, contemporary living within a timeless rural setting, paving the way for future development opportunities on site.







The Blue Bell Restoration

This exciting barn conversion project breathes new life into a traditional agricultural structure, transforming it into a vibrant new home for the local pub and restaurant. Retaining the charm and character of the original barn, the design blends rustic heritage with a welcoming, contemporary interior to create a unique destination for the community.

The conversion sensitively adapts the existing building to provide spacious dining areas, a fully equipped kitchen, and flexible gathering spaces — all while maximising natural light and showcasing the original features. Once complete, the venue will serve as a warm and atmospheric setting for locals and visitors alike, rooted in its rural surroundings but ready for modern hospitality.







Bespoke Barn Conversion.

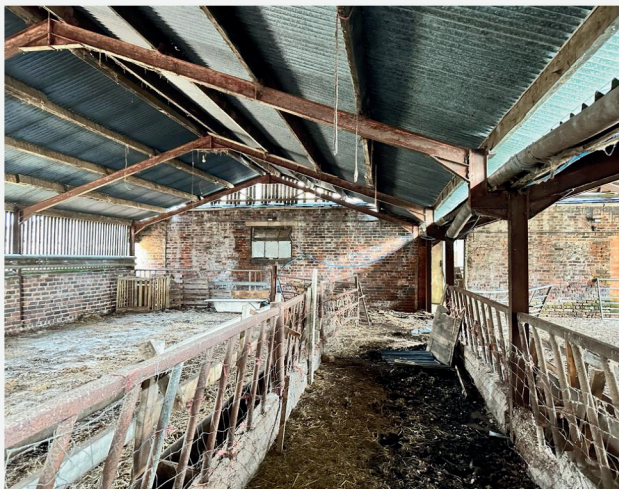
This barn conversion project reimagines a traditional agricultural structure as a bespoke, contemporary home tailored to modern family life. Nestled in the countryside, the design takes full advantage of the setting — blending rustic charm with light-filled interiors, open-plan living, and carefully considered detailing.

The new home has been shaped around the client's lifestyle, with flexible spaces for everyday living, entertaining, and working from home. Sustainability is at the heart of the design, with options such as underfloor heating, high-performance insulation, and renewable technologies being explored to enhance comfort and reduce energy use.

A distinctive home full of character, crafted to meet the needs of today — and ready to adapt for the future.





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Surveying.

We use the latest laser scanning technology to survey sites to gather detailed and highly accurate point cloud data from which we base our design work.

Some of the benefits of choosing laser scanning for your project include:

- Reduces project times due to the extremely fast method of collecting huge amounts of data.
- Superbly accurate as the laser scanner perfectly maps the area leaving little room for error.
- The scan data can be produced in a variety of formats including point clouds meshes and 3D models.
- Traditional 2D outputs can also be produced from scan data including topography, floor plans and elevations etc.
- Beneficial for complex buildings for which a high level of detail is required.
- We can deliver highly detailed outputs with high accuracy and precision.
- The scan data can be worked on later without needing to return to site to check dimensions, saving on times and additional costs.





3D visulations.

We use innovative 3D visualisation technology to bring your project to life before you spend on construction.

It really helps to understand how your project will look in the early design stages.

We want you to be completely comfortable with how your new spaces, will look and feel, even down to the detailed specifications, before we move forward to planning, technical design and commencing the build.

3D visualisations help to bridge the gap between the concept and the completed project.

Our team can produce a variety of 3D visuals that are tailored to your requirements.

We offer.

- Static 3D images.
- Panoramas - Using a mouse or a mobile swipe the screen to move the 3D visual for a panoramic view.
- 3D walking tours in a video format.
- Virtual reality.
- 3D printed models.



Need Help Getting Started?

We've helped many clients turn unloved barns into exceptional homes. Whether you're exploring the idea or ready to begin, Croft Architecture can guide you with confidence.

Book a free discovery call today:

www.croftarchitecture.com

hello@croftarchitecture.com

01785 248542

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Call 01785 248 542

Email enquiries@croftarchitecture.com

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