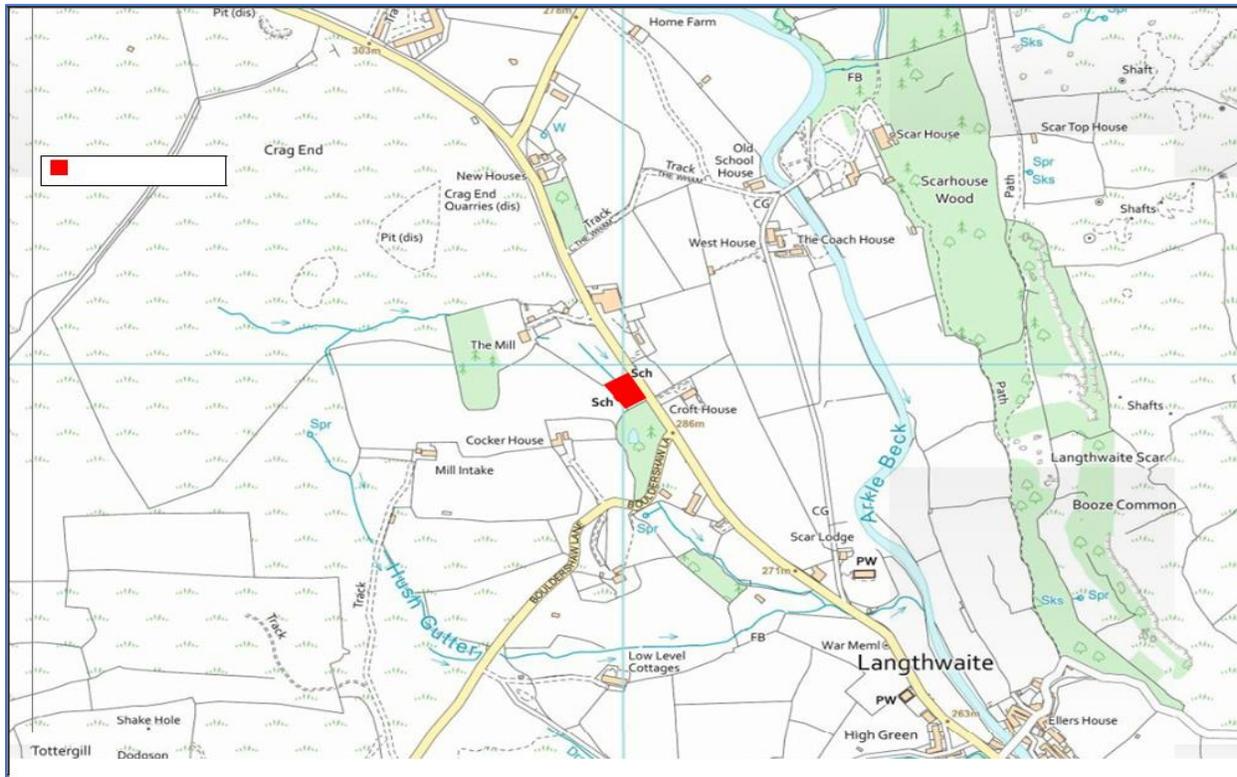


YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Committee:	Planning	Parish:	Arkengarthdale
Date:	19 October 2021	Officer:	Andrew Bishop
Applicant:	Mr M Stephenson	Application No:	R/01/29E
Site Address:	Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School, Langthwaite, Arkengarthdale, Richmond, North Yorkshire, DL11 6EN		
Proposal:	Full planning permission for change of use to a single dwelling, including Bed & Breakfast use (2 bedrooms), erection of car port with studio/classroom space above and installation of air source heat pump		



REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

1. This application is reported to the Planning Committee for the following reason: in the opinion of the Head of Development Management it is in the best interests of the Authority that the application is considered by the Planning Committee.

APPLICATION SITE

2. The former Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School is a traditional single storey school building built of coursed stone and stone slates located next to the Arkengarthdale Road between Langthwaite and the CB Inn. The building is set in walled grounds with a small curtilage to the front and the larger flat playground area to the rear of the building. To either side of the road frontage is an access gate through the wall. The double gate access to the south being wide enough for vehicles to access the rear hardstanding. There are still small play sheds, raised beds and play equipment at one end of the playground. There is a lean-to roof along part of the rear elevation with an open central section. A detached single storey stone outbuilding is located close to the rear boundary wall of the site beyond which are steeply rising pasture fields. Public footpath number 20.78/41 follows the track immediately outside of the south-eastern boundary of the site. This track separates the school from a conifer plantation. There are several residential properties to the south beyond the plantation, the closest of which is Croft House at a distance of approximately 42m. There is a farmstead on the hillside above the school and dwellinghouses and the CB Inn to the north.

PROPOSAL

3. Full planning permission for change of use of the former school buildings to a single dwelling, including Bed & Breakfast use (2 bedrooms), the erection of a car port with a studio/classroom space above and the installation of air source heat pump.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4. The following applications have been determined recently:

R/01/29D full planning permission for alteration of rear window to create access door to outside classroom, with steps and handrail, alteration of two doors to create windows and re-positioning of stone steps. Conditional approval 2013.

R/01/29C full planning permission for i) erection of single storey extension to side of entrance lobby to create cloakroom; ii) erection of lean-to extension to rear to create staff room, covered play area and access to loft conversion and ii) conversion of loft to create new classrooms and storage. Conditional approval 2010.

CONSULTATIONS

5. The comments of statutory and non-statutory consultees are summarized below:

Area Ranger (Swaledale & Arkengarthdale) – The applicant/agents should be aware that the Public Footpath 41 (Public Right of Way) is present parallel to the southern walled boundary. Should any work or reconstruction of this boundary wall be required then due consideration will need to be made to keep members of the public safe and the footpath open and clear of obstruction. Although the development is not likely to directly affect the right of way the construction company should bear in mind where they park their vehicles and/or store materials

so as not to cause any obstruction to the PRoW or restrict Open Access rights. As such an Informative should be added to the Decision Notice.

Wildlife Conservation Officer – No objection, advise mitigation for the loss of potential roosting opportunities

Trees & Woodlands – No objection to the application. The periphery of the root plate of some of the woodland edge trees may be affected and care should be taken if lifting the tarmac at this end of the property, however, the likelihood of the presence of roots here is low due to the impenetrable nature of the substrate.

Fire Officer – Richmondshire – No objection

CEHO - Richmondshire DC – No objection

CTO - Richmondshire DC – No comments received

Highways – Richmondshire – No objections

Cllr R Good, Lower Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Ward – No comments received

Clerk to Arkengarthdale PC - Arkengarthdale Parish Council have no objections to the proposed plans for the school building itself but are in agreement with concerns expressed by the CB Inn over a lack of parking spaces to accommodate clients' vehicles for the proposed business activities at the school premises. Councillors strongly advise that sufficient off-road parking is provided within the school footprint. The CB Inn would like to make clear that its nearby private car park has capacity for CB Inn customers only. However, Councillors want to address the Consideration of Community Assets document, which refers to C9 of the Yorkshire Dales National Park Local Plan 2015-2030. (See full Parish Council response on Intranet).

Building Conservation Officer, YDNPA – No objections

PUBLIC RESPONSES

6. Responses have been received from 3 sources including The Upper Dales Community Land Trust and objections are made on the following grounds:

- loss of registered Asset of Community Value
- contrary to Local Plan policy C9 and National Park Management Plan
- affordable housing for young people better for social wellbeing
- lack of on-site parking impact on CB Inn.

ASSESSMENT

Key Issues:

- Principle of the development
- Statutory duty
- Impact on heritage assets
- Highway safety
- Impact on protected wildlife species
- Parish council comments

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

7. The proposal is to convert the former traditional school buildings to a residential and business use which would result in the loss of an existing community facility. North Yorkshire County Council closed the Arkengarthdale Church of England Primary School in 2019 due to low and falling pupil numbers. The management of the site then reverted back to the Parochial Church Council and it has stood empty since that date.
8. The Arkengarthdale School Building Community Group, supported by Arkengarthdale Parish Council, had the site registered as an Asset of Community Value (Richmondshire District Council reference ACV 009 registered 21/10/2019). This triggered a six-month moratorium that restricted the building to community uses only. The Community Group was unable to raise the funds needed to buy the building by the deadline of 12 June 2020. The Parochial Church Council therefore sold the site on the open market to a private buyer. Richmondshire District Council, as the authority charged with maintaining the register has confirmed that the site is no longer listed as an Asset of Community Value under the Localism Act 2011.
9. For planning purposes, the former school is still a community facility, until a permission is implemented for another authorised use. Local Plan Policy C9 deals with the loss of existing community assets. An alternative development will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - “a) the current use is no longer needed or a suitably located replacement facility of at least equivalent standard has been secured; and
 - b) the land or building could not fulfil, or is not needed for, an alternative community use”.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) at Paragraph 84 in the section of Part 6 dealing with ‘Supporting a prosperous rural economy’ says that planning decisions should enable ‘the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities...’.
11. The NPPF at Chapter 8 ‘Promoting healthy and safe communities’ states in Paragraph 93:

“93. To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;”
12. The County Council considered that the current use of the site as a school was no longer required due to the number of pupils in Arkengarthdale having declined to just five. Those pupils were moved to the school in Reeth. The site is therefore unviable for retention as a school serving the local community.
13. When the school closed the Parochial Church Council considered the possibility that the site could be run for community uses. As there were very few and infrequent community activities, meetings and events that would use the building and these could be relocated elsewhere. The

nearby CB Inn, the Red Lion at Langthwaite and Parish Church are available for community uses within Arkengarthdale. Reeth is 3.5km from the school and has a range of premises that are available for group activities and public events such as Reeth Memorial Hall and Hudson House Information Centre. It was therefore concluded that maintaining the school site as a community building would be unviable economically.

14. The County Council and Parochial Church Council have therefore provided the independent evidence that confirms that the site is not needed or viable for retention as a school or as a community building. The insufficient demand for the use of the building would not bring in sufficient income to cover its monthly running costs.
15. The applicant has supported the application with a Business Plan. This demonstrates that besides the creation of a local needs dwelling for a family living and working in the dale the business would help visitors enjoy the special qualities of the National Park. It would bring in couples, families and small groups who would enjoy activities in the local countryside and on-site. This would generate local employment and support businesses in the area that provide accommodation and the means to undertake outdoor activities.
16. Guest accommodation on-site would be marketed all year but restricted to just two bedrooms and up to 6 guests. The activity package will also be offered to up to four additional guests, who will be encouraged to book accommodation nearby. The activities on-site would take place in a studio/classroom space above the proposed car port. An equipment store would allow storage of wetsuits, walking and safety equipment.
17. Although some objectors understand that retaining the school was unviable they are nonetheless concerned at its loss. They consider that the loss of the school site as a community facility is contrary to Policy C9 and the NPPF. It has been suggested that the former school site could be converted to affordable housing. Affordable housing does not fall within the category of being a community use as it would not retain a community meeting place or sport and social building for the public. Such a proposal would itself require justification as part of a planning application and would require substantial changes and extensions to the former school buildings. It is to be noted that an application made by the Upper Dales Community Land Trust in 2018 for 4 affordable homes on land next to the Arkengarthdale Methodist Chapel is only awaiting the completion of a S106 legal agreement.
18. As there is no need for the site to be retained as a school use and retention as a community facility is unviable the proposed residential and business use of the site is not contrary to Policy C9 or the NPPF.
19. The traditional buildings making up the former school are constructed of stone and are considered to be a non-listed heritage asset. Their position beside a public road puts them in a suitable roadside location for a change of use to a dwelling and business premises under the Local Plan's conservation policies L1, L2 and L3. The proposed development would re-use the redundant or disused buildings and give them a worthwhile economic use to ensure their future conservation.

STATUTORY DUTY

20. The former school site is located within the Upper Swaledale & Arkengarthdale Barns & Walls Conservation Area. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines conservation areas as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 72 places a duty on planning authorities in that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area" when it considers proposals for development in the conservation area.

VISUAL IMPACT

21. The front of the vacant buildings, when viewed from the Arkengarthdale Road, are typical of a 19th Century rural school set within its walled grounds. The front elevation has had a small lean-to addition. The proposed development would not result in any alterations to the front elevation. One new window would be inserted into the north facing side elevation of the rear lean-to.
22. The rear elevation has a modern lean-to addition and alterations to a doorway in the past as the needs of the school evolved over time. It is proposed that the open central section of the lean-to be closed off with glazed sliding doors. A PVC window would be made into a door, the timber panelling to a closed-up doorway replaced with stone and 2 roof lights and 2 solar panels added to the roof. The proposed works to the rear would have a minor impact upon the building's overall character and significance, and no features of particular heritage significance would be altered as part of the works. There is little fabric of significance inside the building which would be affected by the conversion.
23. The proposed carport building would be located in the south-western corner of the site. It would have an oak frame and stone flagged roof. There would be room for 2 cars and covered log and bin storage at ground level. The dual-pitched roof would come down to ground floor eaves height so that the upper-level studio would be wholly within the roof space and accessible by an external staircase. The tarmacked space in front of the car port would be kept open for the parking and turning of vehicles. The northwest corner of the former playground would be laid out at one end with planting and an orchard.
24. It is considered that the proposal would conserve the character of the former school building and grounds with the use of appropriate traditional materials. The Building Conservation Officer has no objection to the proposals. It is considered that the proposals would maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the Upper Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Barns and Walls Conservation Area.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

25. The proposal would see use made of the existing southern access into the former school grounds from the highway. Vehicles can get past the end of the building to access the off-road parking at the rear of the building. Two car parking spaces would be within the proposed carport. There would be space for vehicles to turn and leave again in a forward gear.
26. The Parish Council has expressed the concerns of the CB Inn that there is a lack of parking spaces to accommodate the vehicles for the proposed business activities. They would like to

see the number of off-road parking spaces increased otherwise they may try and use the CB Inn's private car park.

27. It is noted that when the premises operated as a school, teachers and parents parked along the highway in front of the school. The gates were kept closed so that there was no off-road parking on the school premises. The proposals would provide off-road parking which was not available for the school use of the site.
28. The Highway Authority does not have any objections to the number of off-road car parking spaces shown. It recommends that a condition is applied to a planning permission requiring that the access, parking, manoeuvring and turning areas be constructed in accordance with the details on the applicant's site layout drawing. It is therefore considered that the proposals are acceptable in highway safety terms.

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

29. The proposed use as a dwelling and business involving limited numbers of people on site would not be likely to have any adverse impact on the residential properties and public house in the surrounding area. The Richmondshire Environmental Health Officer does not consider that the proposed development would cause a nuisance to residential amenity and has no objections.

ECOLOGY

30. The application is accompanied by a Bat, Breeding Bird, and Barn Owl Survey. The activity surveys confirm that there is no evidence of bats currently using the building. The ecologist and Senior Wildlife Conservation Officer recommend a condition to require the installation of a bat box into the proposed car port. This would compensate for the loss of any potential roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bats and represent biodiversity enhancement.

PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

31. Arkengarthdale Parish Council has no objections to the proposed works to the former school building and their other objections regarding the community building and lack of car parking have been discussed above.

CONCLUSION

32. The loss of the school has already been considered and accepted by the education authority. They decided that there is not sufficient need and that alternative provision was available within a reasonably short distance at Reeth. The site was for a period listed as being an asset of community value but the moratorium period passed without it being shown that there was sufficient need or viability for it to be retained as a community building. It has since been removed from the register maintained by Richmondshire District Council. The proposal would see the redundant buildings given a residential and business use with Bed & Breakfast accommodation in 2 bedrooms for guests who are partaking in the organised activities. The proposed alterations to the building and the erection of a car port with studio/classroom space above would not harm the appearance and character of the traditional building or that of the Upper Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Barns and Walls Conservation Area, highway safety, residential amenity or ecology and are considered to be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

33. It is recommended that permission/consent is **GRANTED** subject to a S.106 planning obligation securing a local occupancy restriction and to appropriate conditions including those listed below:

- Time limit
- Plans and documents
- Details of walling, pointing, roofing, window and other materials
- Landscaping plan
- Access, car parking and turning area to be formed and retained
- Removal of permitted development rights
- Informative regarding public right of way