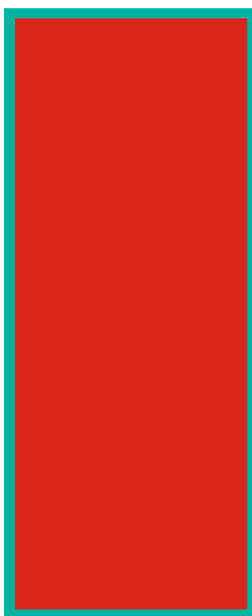
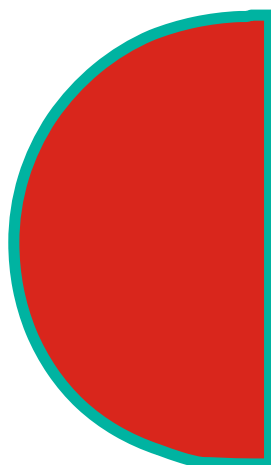


Supplementary Planning Guidance

THE CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS



*The Vale of Glamorgan
Adopted Unitary Development Plan
1996 - 2011*





*The Vale of Glamorgan UDP
Supplementary Planning Guidance*

THE CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS



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2. *The Vale of Glamorgan UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance*
The Conversion of Rural Buildings



THE CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS

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4. *The Vale of Glamorgan UDP Supplementary Planning Guidance
The Conversion of Rural Buildings*

THE CONVERSION OF RURAL BUILDINGS

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) has been prepared in the context of Planning Policy Wales (2002) as additional information for the Vale of Glamorgan Unitary Development Plan. It explains the Vale of Glamorgan Council's planning policy for the conversion of rural buildings in the countryside to new uses and also offers advice on design principles for conversions. The document incorporates advice contained in Planning Policy Wales, which views the conversion of rural buildings for residential use less favourably than business uses.

2. STATUS OF THE GUIDANCE

2.1 The draft SPG was approved for the basis of public consultation by the Council's Economic Development, Planning, Transportation and Highways Department on 10th December 1997, (Council Minute No. 1537 - 4.3.98 refers) and comments were previously invited during the Deposit period of the UDP (April – May 1998). These have subsequently been taken into consideration and incorporated in this final draft, which has also been updated in light of National Planning Guidance. This SPG was approved by Cabinet on 6th April 2005 (minute C1819) refers and Planning Committee on 12th May 2005. The Guidance will be used as a material consideration in determining planning applications and appeals.

2.2 Much of the Vale of Glamorgan's appeal is derived from its attractive countryside and traditional rural buildings. Many of the rural buildings in the Vale are of considerable architectural and cultural interest because of the craftsmanship and pride invested in their construction and are also often of historic interest as reminders of our agricultural heritage. These buildings are important assets in the

Vale and every effort should be made to preserve them or find a suitable new use. Changes in the patterns and methods of farming have resulted in many of these traditional rural buildings becoming economically redundant or functionally ill-suited to modern agricultural practice. The result has been for the owners of such buildings to look for new economic uses which in many instances have involved conversion to non agricultural purposes. At the same time an increasing number of people are seeking to live and work in the countryside and this has generated increasing demand to convert rural buildings.

2.3 These trends have been recognised and encouraged by central government advice which states that, "The re-use and adaptation of existing rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development, as well as for tourism, sport and recreation." (Paragraph. 7.6.9 Planning Policy Wales).

2.4 Advice can be sought from the Planning Department on all stages of a proposed conversion. Such discussions can be of great value to applicants and may save unnecessary work and delay.

2.5 The most frequent proposals are to convert rural buildings, in particular barns, to residential use. Whilst this can often be the most financially attractive option it is generally the least desirable from a building conservation and sustainability point of view. Other uses may be more appropriate particularly where they require less physical alteration to the building. These may include farm shops, small business uses and community halls. Small businesses are particularly acceptable where they are appropriate to the rural scene and where they create new employment or help to secure the future of the farm.

2.6 It is preferable that rural buildings be retained for their original agricultural use or be put to a new use in agriculture or craft related uses. Where buildings have become redundant from agricultural practice, without regular use and maintenance they quickly deteriorate and fall into ruin often resulting in their loss. The absence of traditional agricultural and other rural buildings impoverishes the rural scene and where appropriate new uses should be found for these buildings that will ensure their future and retain and respect the rural character of the Vale.

3. UDP POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Council's policy on the conversion of rural buildings is set down in Policy ENV 8 of the Vale of Glamorgan UDP. The same consideration will apply to any subsequent alteration or extension.

POLICY ENV 8 - SMALL SCALE RURAL CONVERSIONS

PROPOSALS WHICH INVOLVE SMALL SCALE CONVERSIONS OF RURAL BUILDINGS TO NEW USES WILL BE PERMITTED IF ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:

- (i) WHERE THE BUILDING IS OF ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC VALUE, THE PROPOSED CONVERSION RETAINS THOSE ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC FEATURES PRESENT IN THE BUILDING;**
- (ii) IN THE CASE OF A CONVERSION TO BUSINESS USE THE BUILDING IN TERMS OF FORM, BULK AND GENERAL DESIGN IS IN KEEPING WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS;**
- (iii) THE BUILDING IS STRUCTURALLY SOUND AND THE CONVERSION CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EXTERNAL WALLS, OR EXTENSION TO THE BUILDING. HOWEVER, EACH PROPOSAL WILL BE ASSESSED AS A MATTER OF FACT AND DEGREE, DEPENDING ON THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE;**
- (iv) CONVERSION WORK CAN BE UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT UNACCEPTABLY ALTERING THE APPEARANCE AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING;**
- (v) WHERE RESIDENTIAL USE IS CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE, AMENITY SPACE CAN BE PROVIDED WITHIN THE CURTILAGE OF THE SITE WITHOUT UNDUE INCURSION INTO THE RURAL LANDSCAPE;**
- (vi) VEHICULAR ACCESS IS AVAILABLE OR CAN BE PROVIDED FROM THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY WITHOUT ANY UNACCEPTABLE EFFECT UPON THE APPEARANCE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE;**
- (vii) SATISFACTORY PARKING PROVISION CAN BE MADE WITHIN THE CURTILAGE OF THE SITE;**
- (viii) IN THE CASE OF CONVERSION FOR SMALL SCALE COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, RECREATIONAL OR TOURISM USE THE PROPOSAL SHOULD NOT CREATE UNACCEPTABLE TRAFFIC OR OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS;**
- (ix) IN THE CASE OF CONVERSIONS FOR SMALL SCALE COMMERCIAL OR INDUSTRIAL USES, ANY RETAIL SALE OF PRODUCTS SHOULD BE ANCILLARY TO THE MAIN USE;**

(x) THE PROPOSAL IS NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT ON ADJOINING LAND. APPLICANTS MAY BE REQUESTED TO ENTER INTO A LEGAL AGREEMENT TO CONTROL THE ACTIVITIES OF OTHER LAND IN THEIR OWNERSHIP;

(xi) UTILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES CAN BE PROVIDED WITHOUT UNACCEPTABLE VISUAL INTRUSION AND WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT;

(xii) THE PROPOSED NEW USE WOULD PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE SETTING OR CHARACTER OF ANY CONSERVATION AREA; AND

(xiii) THE PROPOSAL WOULD PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC QUALITY OF A LISTED BUILDING OR ITS SETTING.

4. THE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

4.1 Policy Explanation

4.1.1 The following points enlarge upon the principles within ENV 8 and will be considered as a background to any proposal:

a) The conversion of buildings for residential purposes should usually be located within established rural settlements or within reasonable accessibility to local services. Proposals for the conversion of isolated buildings for residential purposes are generally unacceptable. Residential conversions are not considered suitable in such locations because isolated residential development can have a detrimental effect upon the rural / agricultural character of the landscape and encourage private car use contrary to the principles of sustainability embodied in national policy and the UDP. Exceptions to this may be the conversion of small scale industry/business use, which can benefit the rural economy, where the sympathetic conversion of a building of architectural or historic importance is the only way to save it from dereliction.

b) Generally barns considered suitable for conversion must be of a stone or brick built construction and built before 1914.

c) Many of the rural buildings in the Vale have architectural and historic significance and these best represent the areas rural character in building terms.

Appropriate schemes of converting these buildings may be considered more favourably than buildings which are newer and of lesser quality and which contribute little to the rural scene. It is considered that there is no planning merit in preserving unsightly buildings. In converting rural buildings developers should be aware that many of the rural buildings in the Vale exhibit features - both internal and external- of significant architectural interest such as date stones, roof timbers, carved timbers and finials. These should always be retained and preserved.

d) The design of the proposed conversion should respect - in terms of its scale, bulk and use of materials - existing development and be in keeping with its surroundings. Paragraph 2.9.1 of Planning Policy Wales states "Good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and should be encouraged everywhere. This applies to all development proposals, at all scales, from the construction or alteration of individual buildings to larger development proposals". Guidance on design considerations is provided in Section 2.4 of this document.

e) Paragraph 12 of Technical Advice Note (Wales) 6: Agricultural and Rural Development (2000) states that it should not normally be necessary to consider whether a building is no longer needed for its present agricultural or other purposes. The siting of any replacement building will form a material consideration with respect to its effect on the proposed conversion and the surrounding landscape. Where planning permission is required in

respect of such new agricultural buildings the Council may impose conditions on any planning consent which remove permitted development rights in respect of such a building.

f) A planning consent for the conversion of a building does not authorise its demolition and replacement, even by facsimile. Some conversion proposals may however involve minor reconstruction of the external walls. Rebuilding that is not of a minor nature will be unacceptable as this invariably destroys the original appearance and character of the building. For this reason applicants should be satisfied that the building is structurally sound and that development can be undertaken in accordance with the submitted plans without recourse to additional rebuilding other than that shown on the plans. Once started, conversion projects can result in collapse of the building's structure and in these instances rebuilding will not be permitted other than that allowed for in the planning consent. Rural buildings were originally built for a specific purpose such as grain storage and shelter for livestock, and these buildings do not lend themselves easily to conversion for alternative uses, particularly residential accommodation. In this respect, there may be a temptation to extend the building to create further accommodation. Proposed extensions to a rural building will always disrupt its scale and appearance and as such will not be considered appropriate. Where the Council considers it necessary, certain permitted development rights will be removed by condition from any permission. This will require any owner to submit planning applications for minor developments that would not normally require planning permission.

g) Proposals which require the substantial reconstruction of the external walls or roof will not be permitted since the scheme will be tantamount to allowing new development in the open countryside which would otherwise be refused. Each application should therefore be accompanied by a structural survey which has been prepared by an independent professionally qualified structural engineer. The structural survey should clearly indicate that the scheme is realistic and the rural buildings capable of conversion.

h) The rural buildings throughout the Vale are an integral part of its attractive rural landscape and in this respect it is important that conversion work can be undertaken without unduly altering the appearance and rural character of each building. In addition developers/applicants should give special consideration to the delineation of the residential curtilage, which should be achieved in an unobtrusive manner. The external treatment of the building and the curtilage are particularly important in the case of residential conversions. Where proposals are considered to have an obtrusive effect, the Council will be unlikely to look favourably on such applications.

i) The spaces surrounding rural buildings are generally restricted by the nature of their original use. Unless unobtrusive and sufficient amenity space can be provided around a building without conflict with surrounding uses, the proposal will not be favourably considered. The provision of adequate amenity space should avoid the creation of a suburban style curtilage around the building, and the subdivision of open courtyards should be avoided particularly where the courtyard serves a group conversion. Proposals to incorporate any agricultural land into the curtilage of the dwelling will require planning consent for a material change in use of the land.

j) Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings should make provision for safe vehicular access without any detrimental impact on the appearance of the countryside. Long driveways across open fields are unlikely to be acceptable.

k) All proposals must include satisfactory parking provision within the curtilage of the site. It is important that the parking area does not detract from the rural setting of the building. Where garaging is proposed, it should be incorporated within the barn itself, where possible.

l) Where a rural building is to be converted to a suitable small scale industry, its use should have no detrimental affect on the environment and should not generate unacceptable levels of traffic.

m) The conversion of rural buildings for small scale industry or craft-related manufacturing should not entail primary use of the building for retail purposes. However, the sale of goods that are ancillary to the primary use of the building may be permitted.

n) Many rural buildings are related to, or adjoin land used for agricultural activities or other uses which may be incompatible with a proposed conversion. Favourable consideration will not be given to proposals which may prejudice existing agricultural activities. Applicants may be requested to enter into a legal agreement before planning permission is granted, controlling activities on other land in their ownership which may have a detrimental effect on the proposed conversion, or to remove existing structures which may protect the provision of satisfactory amenity space.

o) The location of many buildings suitable for conversion may not be convenient for supplying services such as electricity, water and gas. The provision of these services must have minimal visual intrusion on the surrounding countryside. Applicants should understand that the provision of such services in more remote locations is often prohibitively expensive.

p) Where a building lies within a Conservation Area or affects its setting, great attention will need to be paid to retaining its character and integrity. Proposals that fail to preserve and enhance a Conservation Area and its setting will not be permitted.

q) A small number of listed rural buildings in the Vale are of such quality that they are considered inappropriate for conversion to new uses unless this would involve no alteration to the building concerned. It is essential that these structures remain unaltered as excellent examples of the Vale's rural heritage, (Grant aid towards remedial works to such buildings may be available from Cadw). Some listed buildings will, however, suit conversion to a new use where this would result in the retention of the building's architectural or historic qualities that were the original reason for its listing. Listed building consent will be required for any conversion works in addition to planning permission.

4.1.2 All applications must be accompanied by detailed measured survey drawings and photographs of the existing building showing detailed elevations, sections, plans and any critical or unusual details. These should be accompanied by a detailed scheme showing the work required to convert the building, a structural report detailing the condition of the building and relating the existing condition to the details of the proposed conversion of works. The structural survey must be undertaken by an Architect, a Chartered Building Surveyor or a Chartered Structural Engineer. Planning applications submitted without such details are unlikely to be acceptable and may be refused on the grounds that insufficient information has been submitted, for them to be properly assessed.

4.1.3 The Council will not normally grant consent for residential conversion in respect of recently constructed or reconstructed agricultural buildings. The Council is also anxious to obviate the conversion of relatively modern agricultural buildings which have been constructed without the benefit of planning permission through "permitted development" rights available to agricultural uses. The need to prevent this activity is reflected in Paragraph 12 of TAN 6, which remains in force.

4.2 Building Regulations

4.2.1 The conversion of a rural agricultural building in most cases which were previously not controlled under Building Regulations, to a use that will be subject to approval under this legislation, is termed a "material change of use". Regulation 5 & 6 of the Building Regulations 2000 outline the requirements of the above mentioned legislation which would be applicable to this form of development. It differs substantially from the meaning of "material change of use" in the Town and Country Planning Act. Planning permission may be required for a change of use where building regulation approval is not necessary and vice versa.

4.2.2 The application and enforcement of building regulations can be rather onerous when applied to very old buildings. However, the 2000 Building Regulations (as amended) along with supporting documentation have an inbuilt flexibility when applied to the conversion or alteration of existing buildings.

4.2.3 The utmost and foremost purpose of building regulations is to ensure the health and safety of people in and around buildings. Although building control staff will adopt a flexible approach when applying the regulations, on no account will safety provision be undermined or ignored.

4.2.4 When converting a rural building to another use to which it was not originally intended, in the main, building regulations will apply. Various regulations will apply for different uses; therefore it is important to have an understanding of what building regulations are applicable to what purpose group you wish to convert the original building to.

4.2.5 Provided safe standards can be achieved, the Council will adopt a flexible attitude to the application of the building regulations. The most important issue is to try and undertake work of conversion within the spirit of the regulations. If in any project a particular regulation is somewhat onerous to comply with, a relaxation or dispensation may be considered. If in any doubt one should always consult with the Building Control Group. The Council encourages early pre-submission consultation with officers who will advise and assist on matters relating to the Building Regulations. Such consultation is recommended to avoid misunderstanding between the requirements of planning controls and building control.

4.3 Design and Repair

4.3.1 The conservation of rural buildings in the Vale of Glamorgan is most important in terms of retaining its rural character. However, this is foremost a specialist skill and this should never be undertaken where it would result in destruction of the unique character and interest of a building. Assuming that the principle of conversion to a new use is accepted as a means of preserving the building, certain design principles will apply. A primary consideration for the conversion of rural buildings to new uses should always be to maintain simplicity and retain and enhance the building's character and integrity. A casual glance should not reveal that the building has been converted. This will often mean that unconventional arrangements of rooms may be required. A large barn, for instance, may not lend

itself to the conventional 2 reception rooms and 3 / 4 bedroom layout and fewer but larger rooms may be appropriate. The accommodation should be adapted to suit the building and not vice versa.

4.3.2 The following design principles are intended as a general guide to conversion. These should not be regarded as an exhaustive design checklist as each building will have its own unique character and will present different design opportunities and problems. Additional design advice can be sought from the Planning Division.

4.4 Design Considerations

4.4.1 The starting point of any conversion must be the identification of primary and secondary elevations and an assessment of the overall character and form of the agricultural building. Primary elevations are those which face public areas, or relate to other buildings or landscape settings or those which have significant architectural features or character. As such these elevations must be treated with the utmost sympathy and should be altered little, particular consideration should be given to creating as few new window and door openings in the elevations as possible. Secondary elevations are those which are private and without significant architectural value and may lend themselves to careful alteration, such as the provision of new window openings.

Walls

- i) Original walling materials should always be retained although where necessary second hand materials can be utilised for replacement or "new build". Non original materials should be restricted to secondary elevations.
- ii) The restoration of walls should utilise traditional methods and materials including lime based mortars and render mixes. Render or limewash are major parts of the character of buildings within the Rural Vale and as such should be restored. It is vitally important that walls are not raked out and repointed in an inappropriate manner as this will totally ruin the whole appearance and character of a building.



These pictures illustrate a contrast between weathered stonework with 'flush' pointing and badly restored stonework with harsh 'recessed' pointing.

"Strap" and "recessed" pointing is not suitable as this will provide undue emphasis on the coursing of the stonework.

Roofs

i) Roof structures comprise a dominant visual feature of rural buildings and should be left uninterrupted. In particular the roof pitch should not be altered. Such insertions as dormer windows and rooflights are always disruptive visually and are best avoided. However, flush rooflights may be acceptable on secondary elevations where no alternative exists. New assertive brick or stone chimneys should be avoided, a modern ridge vent being an appropriate alternative in certain situations.

ii) The roof is generally the least likely element of a rural building to remain totally intact due to dereliction or vandalism. Where re-roofing is required, original materials should be reused on primary elevations. Welsh slate or imitation slate should always be used where new roofing is necessary. Ridge tiles should be clay not concrete. Where other traditional materials have been used, e.g. Roman clay tiles or stone slates, these should be replicated.

iii) Verges and eaves details are often overlooked when converting a rural building. Verges often comprise simple slate on stonework with a maximum 40-50 millimetre overhang. Modern bargeboards / soffit details with overhangs are not appropriate. Careful consideration should be given to an appropriate eaves detail which replicates the original character of the building.



Verge detail should always be kept discreet and simple. Modern painted bargeboards do not reflect the original character of the building.

Exterior Fabric

i) External staircases to a first floor are common to rural buildings in the Vale and these should

remain intact along with the openings to which they lead. These openings can often be used for new windows with timber panelling beneath if a door entrance is not required.



A good example of a barn conversion carried out with minimal alteration to the building's external fabric. Simple wall and roof treatments have retained its original character and appearance.

- ii) On primary elevations new door and window openings and the blocking up of original openings can totally disrupt the original character of the building and as such are not acceptable. Where new window openings are necessary, these should be confined to discrete openings with a vertical emphasis in secondary elevations. Openings which have been blocked in the past can often be usefully reopened.



Subtle internal glazing has reserved the original form and appearance of this slit ventilator.



The original openings have been retained with the use of tailor-made timber window frames and panelling which blend well with the building's overall appearance.

- iii) New windows should preserve the character of the original openings. These should be tailor made in timber to suit the individual building and not "off-the-peg".
- iv) Large barn doors can provide an excellent source of light to interiors which should be utilised to the maximum. The old doors can be retained as external shutters.
- v) Chimneys are an overtly domestic feature and never an acceptable feature on former agricultural buildings. Where essential black enamelled stove pipes should be discreetly located on secondary elevations.

External Detailing

- i) Features of architectural interest should always be preserved and never removed or concealed. Such features can include dressed stone corbels, finials, coping or string courses, slit or cruciform

ventilators, moulded or chamfered timbers, flagged flooring old mullioned windows and date stones. On more formal buildings the interesting features might be symmetry in the layout of buildings or the arrangement of openings, semicircular arches, decorative brickwork, dressed stone and ornamental slate roofing.



A poor combination of render and stonework combined with the bay window and the 'fleur-de-lys' ridge tiles gives this dwelling an inappropriate suburban feel.

ii) Inappropriate detailing to the exterior of the building should be avoided. In particular guttering can be visually unsympathetic to the building if not chosen correctly. Half round section gutters and circular rain water pipes may be acceptable and these should be of iron or polyester powder coated cast aluminium, colour black. Modern guttering profiles are not suitable. External features such as satellite dishes and television aerials, alarm boxes and inappropriate wall mounted lighting, should be avoided where possible and should never occupy primary elevations.

Interiors

i) Aspects of the interior of rural buildings can often be of great value such as full height interior voids and structural timbers. Large interior spaces should not be over subdivided and roof structures of high quality should be left open to view without the insertion of domestic ceilings.

ii) Interior heights of rural buildings are often too restricted to allow for two floors. The use of split staircases and galleries can overcome this problem whilst giving interiors character and interest.

Settings

i) However well a scheme for conversion is carried out the treatment of a building's setting can ruin the overall effect. As a general rule the treatment of areas around a converted building should be kept simple. Open courtyards should not be subdivided to create artificial curtilages. Away from the building's main aspect traditional stone walls or thorn hedges can be used to provide screening for items such as cars and oil or LPG storage tanks.

ii) Non traditional materials such as tarmac and concrete should be avoided in access roads, paths and vehicle hardstandings. The grass / concrete system will however be acceptable for vehicle hardstandings.

iii) The agricultural character of the building's setting should be retained by the use of traditional stone paving or stable block setts and simple landscaping. With residential conversions, the unavoidable domestication of the setting of the building involving car parking, paths, garden areas and minor domestic artefacts, such as clothes lines and television aerials can have an unacceptable impact on the landscape. External clutter relating to conversion for business use will also be taken into account.



The open courtyard has been subdivided by artificial roads and boundary treatments to the detriment of the setting of the converted rural buildings.

iv) Many rural buildings are set in or adjoin open countryside and any proposed conversion should pay due regard to the wider landscape setting and the building's place in this scenery. Wherever possible, existing trees, hedgerows and walls

within the curtilage of the building should be retained and protected. Where planting / screening is proposed, this should comprise indigenous species. Conifers in particular should be avoided as an alien and incongruous feature in the rural landscape.



The domestic clutter shown in these pictures detracts from the simple opening of a rural building. Lamp standards, pergolas and obvious clothes drying areas, for example should be avoided.



4.5 Alterations / Amendments / Extensions to Approved Schemes

4.5.1 Applications for minor amendments or alterations to the approved scheme will only be considered by the Council if the amendments comply with the requirements of Policy ENV 8. Proposals to extend converted buildings are likely to detract from the character and amenity of the

existing buildings and surrounding countryside, accordingly proposals to extend existing converted buildings are likely to be resisted.

5. Further Information

5.1 Further information and general advice on the submission of planning applications for the conversion of rural buildings can be obtained from the Development Control Section of the Directorate of Environmental and Economic Regeneration, located in the Dock Office, Barry.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council,
Directorate of Environmental and Economic
Regeneration,
Dock Office,
Barry Docks,
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www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

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