

INSPIRING CONVERSION PROJECTS

Renovating a non-domestic building is a great way to achieve a bespoke property packed with character. From a windmill to an ambulance station, be inspired by this handpicked selection of conversions – could something similar work for you?

CLOSER LOOK PLANNING RULES



Mike Dade investigates the planning considerations for conversion projects

Conversions can be more complex than new builds from a planning perspective, so ensure you take good advice before buying a building to transform, unless of course it's already got permission to convert in the way you'd like. Remember that consent is generally granted primarily in order to preserve the property and this can significantly constrain your freedom for design innovation. It's worth checking your council's planning policies that apply to conversions in their Local Development Framework.

In cities, towns and villages there are less likely to be major restrictions on alterations and additions to existing buildings, but there may be on the types of uses that can be lost. For example, village and neighbourhood shops

and pubs, plus opportunities in main retail streets, might be protected. Evidence of unsuccessful marketing for a period of six months or a year can be enough to overcome policy restrictions protecting the building's current use.

Recent revisions to permitted development (PD) rights mean that converting agricultural buildings to residential properties is now easier. These amendments, which came into force in April 2018, permit a maximum of five new houses (up from three) to be created from existing farm buildings. Additional PD rights exist that allow for change of use from offices and storage units into residential properties. However, remember that all of these rights are subject to a Prior Approval procedure.

Boathouse repurposed

Once work sheds for the foundry, then a boat store, this grade II listed structure has a new lease of life as a two-bedroom home thanks to Napier Clarke Architects. Heritage shines through the locally sourced flint and red brick walls, as well as the cast iron windows.



Listed transformation

Beech Architects converted a series of grade II listed derelict barns into this striking five-bedroom home. The structures include an 18th century timber frame barn and a 19th century clay lump barn. The revision involved using traditional materials such as lime render, mortar and oak framing to remain sympathetic to the original structures. The project required planning permission, listed building consent, archaeological surveys and protected species surveys.

Ambulance station revamp

Interior architect Marta Nowicka (founder of Dom Stay and Live) has redesigned a former St John Ambulance station built in the 1950s into a four-bedroom home. A central wall was removed that previously divided offices from the ambulance garage to create a spacious open-plan living area. A double-sided woodburning stove sits on a central hearth, around which the kitchen, dining and sitting areas circulate. The presence of exposed brickwork, wrought iron light fittings and the large door openings all help to highlight the structure's industrial past.



Cow byre overhaul

This characterful home was created in the 1980s through the conversion of a group of agricultural buildings. Casa Architects has now also repurposed the cow byre, which sits adjacent to the property. It's been transformed into an open-plan kitchen-diner, featuring exposed beams that highlight its heritage and large spans of glazing that open the room out onto the garden.



Church metamorphosis

West Architecture has revamped a London Methodist church into a striking home. In a previous renovation, the architects added a timber mezzanine bedroom over the kitchen. The latest works see a more minimalist design to meet the needs of the new owner.





Industrial atrium

Formerly a garment factory, then an office, this building is now a home that's undergone a recent revamp by architectural studio Paper House Project. An enclosed stairwell has been opened up to create a striking atrium that allows natural light to filter throughout the house thanks to expansive glazing. The monochrome scheme features stark white walls alongside exposed steel columns and an open metal flight.



Chapel chic

A grade II listed chapel has been restored and transformed into a stylish B&B. Built in 1896, it once seated a congregation of 1,000, but later fell out of use and sat empty for many years. The renovation showcases an eclectic mix of features linking back to the heritage of the structure, alongside luxury details suiting the boutique feel of the accommodation.



Windmill makeover

Built in 1891, this recently converted 18m-tall windmill is now a holiday home, offering guests unique accommodation and panoramic views of the surrounding Suffolk countryside. When the owners bought the property, it was in a sorry state of repair. It had been used as a store when the sails stopped turning in 1900 and then later left derelict. The project has given the building a modern twist, with a zinc clad pod topping the architectural landmark.

CONTACTS

Barnsetc www.barnsetc.co.uk **Beech Architects** 01379 678442 www.beecharchitects.co.uk
Casa Architects 01225 851871 www.casa-architects.co.uk
Dom Stay & Live 07949 564550 www.domstayandlive.com
Napier Clarke Architects 01628 487808 www.napierclarke.co.uk
Paper House Project 020 8049 7037 www.paperhouseproject.co.uk
The Chapel 07790902603 www.chapelhg1.com **The Windmill** 01284 828458 www.thewindmillsuffolk.com **West Architecture** 01284 828458 www.westarchitecture.co.uk

CLOSER LOOK HOW TO APPROACH A BARN CONVERSION



Period property expert Alan Tierney shares his top tips for these schemes

- **Find a balance** between the open space of the barn and the need for comfort and privacy in the separated spaces of a useable dwelling.
- **Aim to retain the character** of the barn. In particular, your project should enable as much of the structure as possible to be visible internally.
- **Understand the breathable performance** of the building fabric and select appropriate compatible materials – try to use like for like, where possible.
- **Assess the structure carefully** before you begin, including later alterations and repairs.
- **Be prepared for coming up against surprises** during the course of the project and don't be put off by needing to adapt your plans as necessary.
- **Plan the provision and distribution of services** very carefully – mistakes here can spoil a barn's charm.
- **Pay close attention** to any wildlife that might be present. Commission surveys and take professional advice about appropriate measures.
- **Ensure that rainwater runoff** is managed effectively in the building's redesign. Pay special attention to roofs and large glazed areas.