

The background image shows the interior of a barn conversion at night. The space is illuminated by warm, golden light from within. A long wooden counter with a sink and faucet is visible, with various items like a dish rack and a vase of purple flowers on top. The walls are covered in horizontal wooden slats, and the floor is made of stone. Large potted plants with white flowers are placed on either side of the counter. The foreground is a gravel surface.

QUICK GUIDE TO
BARN CONVERSIONS
IN FRANCE

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Quick Guide to Barn Conversions

Detailed planning consent is required in order to convert any agricultural building into living accommodation. This applies whether the building is a 'stand-alone' property, or part of a larger group of buildings – for example where a property includes an existing dwelling with other barns or outbuildings.

Whether permission will be granted or not depends on a number of factors. The most relevant are whether the local planning regulations allow such a conversion, or where no local plan is in place, whether the barn is in an agricultural zone.

More specifically:-

Stand-alone building

If the barn is situated in a rural area, it is very unlikely that permission will be granted. There is a general emphasis in France on retaining rural areas for agriculture purposes only. Part of the planning process is a verification that utility services are available (water, electricity, etc). Isolated barns tend not to have services already connected, and where that is the case, it may be that either there is no facility to connect to them, or the cost to the commune of increasing the supply and infrastructure prevents a successful planning approval.

Part of a large group of buildings where there is already a dwelling

Planning consent for the conversion of an existing barn under these circumstances is far more likely. However, it is not guaranteed and again depends on the local regulations. As a general rule the conversion would be permitted provided the intention is not to create a completely separate dwelling (ie with separate services or for re-sale). A conversion to create additional living space for personal use, or for gîte purposes should be fine as it doesn't create a separate dwelling.

Before signing any offer or purchase contract, potential buyers of a conversion project should check whether planning consent is possible. This may require the submission of an application for outline permission (certificat d'urbanisme opérationnel) to be certain. Any offer to purchase can include a 'suspensive condition' that planning consent is granted prior to completion.

Barn renovations can be expensive because, by their very nature, barns were not built with modern living in mind, but the results for a sympathetic conversion can be wonderful - effectively there is a 'blank space' and the internal design can be arranged to suit personal tastes, with high ceilings, mezzanines, etc.

Modern insulation is required as part of the planning dossier, and this can add significant costs too. With the help of an experienced planning consultant and design team, the process can be less daunting and costs can be calculated in advance.

If you are considering a barn conversion, whether you are thinking of buying a property in France or have recently moved, please get in touch with us. We shall be pleased to hear from you.



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