
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 May 2017

by Andrew McCormack BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 6 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2003/W/17/3168539

Land off Hollingsworth Lane, Epworth DN9 1SL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul Dawson against the decision of North Lincolnshire Council.
 - The application Ref PA/2016/879, dated 13 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 7 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of a mono-pitch roof shed 3.6m long x 2.7m wide and 2.2m high on the edge of a 3 acre grass (agricultural) field to the north of Castle Drive, Epworth, off Hollingsworth Lane.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is situated on land to the north of Epworth and lies within the nationally significant medieval landscape of the Isle of Axholme which is designated as an Area of Special Historic Landscape. The area is characterised by open rolling countryside and open linear fields which run north to south. These fields are a key defining feature in the landscape. From what I saw, I note that there are no built features located upon these fields or in the immediate surrounding area. There is a public footpath which runs to the east and north of the appeal site which provides views across the site to the landscape and landmarks beyond.
 4. Policies RD2 and LC14 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan 2003 (LP) state, amongst other things, that development in the area that meets the needs of rural communities will be permitted provided that the use is related to the historic landscape and its features. Furthermore, development should not be detrimental to the character or appearance of the historic landscape. Policy CS6 of the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy 2011 (CS) relates to the safeguarding of the nationally important medieval landscape of the Isle of Axholme and specifically refers to the open strip fields and Turbaries of the landscape. Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that in determining planning applications account should be taken of the desirability of new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
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5. The appellant is seeking to plant fruit trees and vines and the proposed storage shed would serve to support this. However, from my observations, I find that the provision of the fruit trees and vines would not relate to the historic landscape where such planting is not prevalent. Furthermore, the wider appeal site appears as an open strip field and the proposed storage shed would diminish the open character of the site and the designated landscape. The visual impact of the scheme would only be exacerbated by the construction of the structure where there are no other built structures present in the immediate area.
6. Due to the open and rolling nature of the landscape, its proximity to properties in Epworth and the proximity of the public footpath, the proposal would be apparent and highly visible from the surrounding area. As a result, it would be apparent in key long distance views within the area such as the view from the nearby footpath of Epworth and the tower of St Andrew's Church to the south and south west and the view of the open countryside from Epworth to the north and north east. As a result, I find that the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the designated historic landscape and would diminish its intrinsic openness.
7. I note the appellant's willingness to use different materials, if required by planning conditions, and to screen the proposal with trees in order to successfully mitigate its physical impact on the landscape. Notwithstanding this, with regard to materials, I must assess the proposal before me on its own merits and on the evidence before me. In any event, given my conclusion on the main issue, I find that alternate materials would not overcome the significant harm caused to the intrinsic open character of the historic landscape. Similarly, whilst I appreciate the appellant's intention to mitigate its visual impact, the screening of the proposed storage shed with trees would not successfully limit its impact on the openness of the designated landscape. Moreover, the use of trees in this way would not be in keeping with the prevailing character of the area and would significantly detract from its intrinsic qualities.
8. I acknowledge the appellant's points regarding the intention to use the appeal site and adjacent land for agricultural and horticultural purposes only. Furthermore, I note that the proposal would enable the appellant to store equipment on site to assist in this. However, having taken these and all other matters into account, I find that none, individually or cumulatively, would outweigh the significant harm which would be caused to the nationally important designated historic landscape.
9. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Therefore, it would be contrary to Policies RD2 and LC14 of the LP, Policy CS6 of the CS and the relevant guidance within the Framework. Amongst other matters, these policies and guidance seek to ensure that development respects, protects or enhances the special historic landscape, character, appearance and setting of the Isle of Axholme Area of Special Historic Landscape.

Conclusion

10. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew McCormack

INSPECTOR