

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 May 2017

by R A Exton Dip URP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 15th June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/16/3163652

The cowshed, land to the rear of Heacham Road, Sedgeford PE36 5LU

- 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 SHE Group against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01127/F, dated 6 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 9 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is conversion to residential of existing barn including a single storey extension to the east elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The site address is given as Sedgeford Hall Estate, Heacham Road on the planning application form. I have amended it to the above as this more accurately describes the location.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development.

Reasons

4. The cowshed is a traditional building of simple form in a state of dilapidation. At the time of my site visit the building and its immediate surroundings had mostly been cleared of vegetation. This showed the building to be constructed of a mix of brick, local stone and pantiles, with later remedial work carried out in modern materials.
 5. The building sits in the north-west corner of a larger field to the south of Heacham Road that is largely grassed with more substantial vegetation to its boundaries. The access track leading to the site from the south is lined with mature native trees and hedges which continue up to form the site's western boundary. The rear gardens of dwellings on Heacham Road to the north are bounded with mature planting of an ornamental nature, with sporadic breaks in between. The eastern boundary of the larger field in which the site lies is a considerable distance away. It is also lined with trees and hedges with sporadic breaks. As a result of the buildings siting and the surrounding vegetation there are limited views from the public realm and it is not prominent within the wider landscape.
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6. Taking into account the limited architectural and historic quality of the cowshed together with its relatively secluded location I conclude that it does not make a positive contribution to the landscape. Consequently, the principle of its conversion to residential use is contrary to Policy CS06 of the Kings Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council Core Strategy 2011(the Core Strategy). This is permissive of the conversion of buildings in the countryside to residential use only where they make a positive contribution to the landscape.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances. In this case, as the proposal involves the re-use of a redundant building, the relevant assessment is whether the development would lead to an enhancement of its immediate setting. Due to the modest nature of the proposal, the site's relatively secluded location, and in particular the lack of public views, I do not consider that it would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting. Consequently the proposal would also be contrary to the content of the Framework.
8. The site lies within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) where the Framework requires great weight be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. The proposed conversion and extension together with the creation of a curtilage would make the site slightly more prominent within the landscape. However, given the sites proximity to the main built up area of Heacham, the lack of wider or long distance views and the small scale nature of the proposal I do not consider that there would be any adverse effect on the AONB.
9. Whilst the proposal would appear visually close to development on the south side of Heacham Road it has no direct means of access to Heacham Road. Access would be off Sedgeford Road, some distance to the south of the village where an unsurfaced track leads off to the east close to a bend in the road. The track leads eastward for approximately half its length and then turns north for the remainder, with a total length of around 480 m. Given the length of the access track and the condition of its surface I consider it most likely that occupants of the proposed dwelling would be reliant on a private car to access services in the village and beyond, particularly in bad weather. I also note that part of the track lies within Flood Zone 3 where it crosses the Heacham River. In times of flooding this would mean that occupants of the proposal may not have dry access, and be prevented from leaving or returning to their home.
10. In light of these factors I conclude that the proposal would not be easily accessible to existing housing, employment and services, as required by Policy CS06 of the Core Strategy, and would therefore be contrary to it. It would also be contrary to the aims of the Framework in promoting sustainable development in rural areas by avoiding isolated new homes.

Other Matters

11. I note the appellant's reference to the officer recommendation for approval of the planning application. However, I have determined the appeal on its own merits based on the evidence before me and consequently this carries limited weight.
12. I have taken account of the other developments identified by the appellant in support of this appeal. Each case must be assessed on its own merits, as

rarely are two the same, particular in the case of conversions of older buildings. Having done so in this case I do not find that the other developments form precedents that lead me to a different conclusion.

Conclusion

13. In light of the above and taking all other matters raised into account I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard Exton

INSPECTOR