



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2020

by Graham Wyatt BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0515/W/20/3246313

Barn Rear of Sunnyside, Station Road, Wisbech St Mary PE13 4RY

- 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 Mrs K Smith against the decision of Fenland District Council.
 - The application Ref F/YR19/0576/F, dated 1 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as a "proposed barn conversion".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site forms a single storey brick building that is accessed via a track and is set back some 200m from Station Road. The existing building is sited beyond the developed footprint of the settlement and therefore lies within the countryside. In such circumstances, Part B of Policy LP12 of the Fenland District Council Local Plan 2014 (the Local Plan) states that the re-use and conversion of rural buildings for a residential use will be supported where the criterion set out is met.
4. In this instance, it is clear that the existing building is not of significant historical or architectural merit. Moreover, I have not been provided with any evidence to demonstrate why the building cannot be used for the purposes it was originally built or that there is no demand for the use of the building for business purposes. Thus, it would be in conflict with Part B (a) and (b) of Policy LP12 of the Local Plan.
5. Nevertheless, the appellant refers to paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that isolated dwellings in the countryside should be avoided unless one or more of the circumstances listed therein applies. In this instance, the appellant relies upon paragraph 79 c) which refers to the re-use of redundant or disused buildings that would enhance its immediate setting.
6. The existing building is utilitarian in design which reflects its former storage use. Although there is evidence of previous openings that have since been bricked in, the building has a single opening to the front which contains a roller shutter door. It is proposed to insert openings on each elevation, render the building, install a zinc roof and extend the building to create additional floorspace, along with a garden and formalised parking areas.

7. The proposed development would introduce a significant number of new windows and doors. The size and placement of the openings in a typical domestic arrangement, together with their design and materials, would be alien to the building's utilitarian form, and would significantly change the intrinsic character of the building. Furthermore, the use of render over the entire building would further detract from the buildings simplicity and further exacerbate the unduly domestic appearance of the building. The proposal would therefore represent a discordant domestic form of development which would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the building and the surrounding countryside.
8. In addition, although the appellant suggested that the site could be landscaped to enhance the immediate area, this could take some time to mature and cannot be guaranteed to remain in perpetuity. Thus, although paragraph 79 of the Framework indicates that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided except in certain circumstances, including where development would reuse redundant or disused buildings, even were I to accept that the development would re-use a redundant building, it would not meet the additional requirement of paragraph 79 c) of the Framework which also requires the re-use to enhance its immediate setting.
9. Overall, I consider that the proposed alterations to the building to form a dwelling would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with Policy LP12 of the Local Plan, the requirements of which are specified above. The development would also be in conflict with Policy LP16 of the Local Plan, and the Framework which seek, amongst other things, to ensure that developments enhance their immediate setting and make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Other Matters

10. A residential caravan is currently within the site and is occupied. The Council confirm that this was granted planning permission¹ in May 2020 and is subject to a condition to ensure that it is not occupied by any persons other than gypsies and travellers². Thus, the caravan was permitted taking into account the specific needs of the individuals involved and is not a determinative factor in the consideration of the appeal before me.
11. I accept that the development would enable the appellant to remain at the site and support local services and facilities such as the school. I also note the appellants' desire for a larger house to support their growing family. However, whilst acknowledging the benefits that would result in this respect, these are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, and having regard to the development plan when read as a whole, the appeal is dismissed.

Graham Wyatt

INSPECTOR

¹ Application F/YR19/1048/F dated 6 May 2020

² As defined in Annex 10f Planning policy for traveller sites' (Department for Communities and Local Government, August 2015)