



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 August 2020

by S A Schinaia MSc EngD FGS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/20/3252169

Roughlands Farm, Grove Road, Old Buckenham, Norfolk NR17 1PJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant approval required under Schedule 2, Part 3, Paragraph Q.2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended.
 - The appeal is made by Mr R Richards against the decision of Breckland District Council.
 - The application Ref 3PN/2019/0062/UC, dated 26 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is 'Prior approval for change of use of agricultural building to a dwelling (permitted development) Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have adopted the description of the proposed development included in the Council's decision notice and in the appeal form.
3. The appellant has raised concerns that the Council has made the application process more complicated than it is intended to be. They also point out that the reason for the prior approvals process is to increase housing stock. Whilst noting these matters, I must however, consider the case on its merits against the specific requirements of Class Q.

Main Issues

4. The main issues of the appeal are:
 - (1) whether the building is capable of conversion through operations reasonably necessary to convert the building to a dwellinghouse, in accordance with Class Q(b), paragraph Q.1, part (i); and
 - (2) whether the proposed development would result in an increase in the external dimensions of the building, in accordance with Class Q(b), paragraph Q.1, part (h).

Reasons

Building operations

5. The building is a large agricultural unit and is made of a steel frame construction. The walls are made of concrete blocks in the lower part and

vertical timber spaced cladding (Yorkshire boarding), covering the open areas above the walls and in some areas the concrete block walls too, such as those on the northern facade. The walls are of different height and the southern side of the building is completely open. According to the structural survey submitted to support the prior approval application, the roof is made of Big 6 fibre cement sheeting on both slopes, supported on cold rolled Z purlins. The floor is largely made of rubble fill.

6. The proposed works would require amongst other building works, the side cladding to be removed, the existing block walls and concrete frame to be retained and the installation of a new roof onto the existing frame and purlins.
7. The Council are of the view that the structural appraisal survey report submitted in support of the application was vague in relation to the floor, foundations and structure. A subsequent second structural survey with trial holes around the appeal building was carried out in support of this appeal. I see no reason to disagree with the findings of the structural survey addendum that there are foundations present to support the conversion of the building to a residential use.
8. However, I agree with the Council that there is a noticeable vagueness in terms of details for the proposed roof. The structural survey notes that it is 'envisaged' that this will be proprietary composite steel sheeting and includes what appear to be broad calculations in terms of their loads. To my mind, to be sure that the steel structure of the building can take the load of the new roof, without significant further works, confirmed details of the roof material and detailed calculations should be provided. Further, it is noted that additional purlins may be needed to support the new roof. Again, this is vague and it is noted in the initial structural survey that 'detailed calculations will determine this issue'. I consider that this matter further emphasises the need to fully understand the proposed roofing material, its load and therefore whether the existing structure is sufficient for conversion to a residential use without significant structural works.
9. My concerns with regard to the above matter is also exacerbated by the fact that it is noted that the internal walls, which I accept are internal works and therefore not within the remit of this regime, would need to bear the load of the new ceiling.
10. Therefore, I conclude that it has not been demonstrated that the building is capable of conversion through works reasonably necessary to convert the building into a dwellinghouse. Therefore, the proposal would not comply with the provision of Class Q, paragraph Q.1, part (i).
11. The Council is of the view that the totality of building works proposed would constitute a rebuild rather than a conversion. However, given the uncertainty set out above, I do not consider it is possible for me to come to an overall view on this matter.

External dimensions

12. The structural survey has shown that the existing Yorkshire boarding with ventilation gaps is not suited to residential work and consequently it would need to be removed and replaced.

13. The appellant contend that the existing dimensions of the building will be retained as the existing cladding projects 55mm from the outer steelwork/blockwork and the proposed new vertical timber cladding would project 44mm. However, the drawings in the structural survey addendum at appendix 1, shows the 55mm projection as an average across the three existing elevations. It is clear on the western elevation drawing that the existing cladding is 20mm. Thus, there would be an increase from the existing dimensions on the western elevation.
14. The structural survey addendum also acknowledges that the new wall required on the front southern elevation, would also extend the building by 44mm. The appellant has suggested that an alternative cladding solution could be provided on the southern elevation. However, there is no further evidence before me to demonstrate that this can feasibly be achieved, whilst also being appropriate for residential use.
15. I also share the concern of the Council that given the relatively limited information on the proposed replacement roof, it cannot be sufficiently determined that this would not increase the dimensions of the building.
16. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would not result in an increase to the external dimensions of the building, thus failing to satisfy Class Q.1(h).

Other matters

17. The appellant has referred to numerous other appeal decisions. However, given the very specific nature of the appeal scheme, these are only of minor relevance and I afford them little weight. I have assessed the appeal scheme according to its own merit.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal does not comply with Class Q(b), paragraph Q.1, parts (h) and (i). Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

S A Schinaia

INSPECTOR