
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 August 2022

by G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E2530/W/22/3290415

Land off Mere Lane, Aisby NG32 3NF

- 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 A Bowlby against the decision of South Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref S21/2024, dated 21 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is Erection of a Single Dwelling, Detached Garage, Stables, Kennels and Associated Hard and Soft Landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal is on the site of two modern, metal-clad agricultural buildings set in open countryside just outside the northern edge of Aisby village. To the north, east and west is agricultural land. The site is accessed via Mere Lane with the structures set back from the road behind a mature hedge and grassed area. From the site access on Mere Lane there are some views though to residential properties in the village but otherwise the site is visibly detached from the settlement.
4. A series of recent planning approvals for a dwelling remain extant on this site. The scheme allowed under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) (Planning Ref S20/0177) allowed for the conversion of the existing agricultural building to a single dwelling house. This scheme would retain the utilitarian, agricultural character of the structure, which is appropriate to this open countryside location, and would not look out of place.
5. The later approvals, which culminated in Planning Permission Ref S21/1455, allowed the demolition of the agricultural building and its replacement with a dwelling along with three outbuildings. This scheme followed the same approximate siting of the former agricultural building but was based on a more traditional form and appearance of a dwelling with narrow gables, a T-shaped plan, and traditional materials and detailing.

6. This most recent permission incorporated single storey wings to either side of the main dwelling and these would read as subordinate additions which are a familiar feature of house extensions. Because of their height and the mature hedge to the roadside these would not be unduly prominent in the surrounding area. The two-storey main building would be the most visible element with a strong verticality and steeply pitched roof, characteristic of the local vernacular.
7. In my view, the permissions for conversion and for the new-build dwelling are very separate planning approvals, allowed under different planning legislation. The conversion retained the appearance of the agricultural building, hence its scale and bulk. In contrast, the new-build permission was for a dwelling which would relate to the scale, form and design of dwellings in the immediate locality and as a result considerably reduced its scale and form. This appeal is to consider a proposal for a new-build dwelling of different scale and design and therefore the extant permission for the new dwelling (Ref 21/1455) should be the fall-back scheme under consideration. Comparisons with the footprint and massing of the existing agricultural building and approved scheme of conversion are therefore not a significant factor in considering this appeal.
8. The appeal proposal would have a rectangular footprint with a hipped roof, and a classical design. Whilst this may be inspired by Georgian architecture with careful regard to proportions and detail, and have a dignified presence, its large scale and boxy form would not be reflective of properties in the surrounding area and the design would not reflect the distinctive character of nearby buildings.
9. Whilst the appellant states that the only difference with the extant permission is its contemporary Georgian design, I consider that the scale and form of the proposal are also entirely unrelated. It would not respect the overriding traditional form and appearance of buildings in the area, in the way that the approved scheme would, it would not assimilate comfortably with its context, and it would be visually harmful.
10. There may well be large and prominent houses in the village, and I have also noted the footprint of many of these buildings highlighted in the appellant's appeal statement. However, a building footprint does not necessarily translate to a large and bulky overall form, and I have not viewed any similar dwellings in the village which display the same characteristics as the appeal proposal. It would appear alien and out of place in this edge of the village location set in a landscape of open agricultural fields.
11. The intention to use the latest renewable energy technologies, and for the development off-grid, is welcomed. However, these measures could equally be incorporated into a building of more appropriate form and design and would not therefore justify an unacceptable proposal. Likewise, the intention to provide tree planting and other landscaping for biodiversity gain could equally be provided in an alternative scheme.
12. The proposal would have a harmful effect on the character or appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy DE1 of the South Kesteven District Council Local Plan (2020) and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). These seek to achieve well-designed places and for development to make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

Other Matters

13. I note the representations submitted during the appeal process supporting the proposal. However, this is not a reason to allow a scheme which would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and is clearly contrary to planning policy.

Conclusion

14. I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to decide otherwise. For these reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR