



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 January 2024

by T Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 March 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/23/3320987

Flaxton Farm, Bunwell Road, Besthorpe NR17 2LN

- 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 Dr and Mrs Reddy against the decision of Breckland District Council.
 - The application Ref 3PL/2022/1339/F, dated 26 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 28 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is Barn Conversion and associated works.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The new local plan, Breckland Local Plan (2023) (BLP) was adopted in September 2023 during the course of the appeal. My decision must be made on the basis of the most up to date development plan. I am however advised that the policies within the local plan that are relevant to this proposal are up to date and as previously detailed within the evidence.
3. The description of the proposal has altered from the application form to the decision notice. That on the application form adequately describes the proposal which I note includes an access.

Main Issues

4. The first main issue is the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of future occupiers with regard to external circulation space, upstairs head height and daylight to and outlook from the smaller bedroom on the northern side of the building. The second is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. The third is whether the building would be capable of residential conversion without the need for significant rebuilding.

Reasons

Living conditions

5. Although tight to the north and south boundaries, such an arrangement is not uncommon when dealing with such buildings originally intended for different use. The lack of space immediately around the building would be off-set by the well sized garden area to the south-east. Further, the evidence indicates that the rooms on the first floor would exceed the relevant national standards in terms of floor space. The provision of a well-sized roof light within the smaller

bedroom is unlikely to result in a level of daylight that would harm the living conditions of future occupiers.

6. However, the same would not be the case in relation to the available outlook from that bedroom. Given the rooflight would appear to be above head height, the outlook would be likely to be restricted towards the sky only. This would contrast with the other two bedrooms which would have a pleasant outlook from windows within a side elevation.
7. This would be a rather compromised form of design for a habitable room and the lack of any meaningful outlook would result in a significant adverse impact on the living conditions of future occupiers.
8. There would therefore be conflict in this particular respect with policies COM 01 and COM 03 of the BLP which amongst other things require new development that provides high standards of accommodation for housing in terms of quality and arrangement of internal space and will not permit development that which does not provide for adequate levels of amenity for future occupants. The supporting text clarifies that amenity includes consideration of issues relating to outlook.

Character and appearance

9. The appeal site is within a countryside setting to the north of Bunwell Road to the east of Attleborough. Residential properties sit closely to the north and south within a small grouping of residential character, which distinguishes the immediate area from the extensive tracts of arable land beyond.
10. Vehicular accesses are a common appearance serving the limited development within the immediate area which sits to the north of Bunwell Road and the addition of a further access within this context would not be out of place. The barn if converted to a dwelling would be in close proximity to both its northern and southern boundaries but would benefit from a substantial garden area to the south-east. Therefore, whilst the arrangement would be slightly irregular, the development would not be unacceptably cramped and could not be considered an overdevelopment of the site.
11. There would subsequently be no significant adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, with regard to these particular matters there would therefore be no conflict with policies COM 01 or GEN 02 of the BLP which amongst other things require that new development integrates to a high degree of compatibility with the surrounding area and development that respects and is sensitive to the character of the surrounding area.

Whether barn capable of conversion

12. The barn is of substantial if traditional construction but is showing signs of wear and tear. However, the evidence includes a suitability for conversion report¹. This report concludes that it is a suitable building for conversion to a domestic dwelling. The report notes that there are repairs that are required but no element need be demolished or replaced in its entirety.
13. There is no other evidence before me which contradicts this position. I therefore conclude that the building is capable of residential conversion without

¹ Plandescil Consulting Engineers Suitability for Conversion Report Revision A October 2022.

the need for significant rebuilding or extension. The proposal would subsequently not conflict with Policy HOU 12 of the BLP which amongst other things includes this as one of its requirements.

Other Matters

14. There appears to be no disagreement with the Council over matters relating to highway safety, flooding, ecology, overlooking, contamination or trees or hedgerows. These are however neutral matters.
15. There would be some social and economic benefits associated with the proposal which could include local construction spend and a small contribution towards housing supply. The retention of the barn through conversion should be afforded positive weight, although would not outweigh the harm identified on the basis of the current proposed conversion scheme.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. There is nothing to indicate that the decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

T Burnham

INSPECTOR