



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 June 2025

by R Gee BA (Hons) Dip TP PGCert UD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1st July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2003/W/25/3362289

Land off West End Road, Epworth, North Lincolnshire DN9 1LE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs G Hirst against the decision of North Lincolnshire Council.
 - The application Ref is PA/2024/867.
 - The development proposed is erection of a general-purpose agricultural building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Following submission of the appeal, the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024 and updated on 7 February 2025. The parts of the Framework most relevant to the appeal have not substantively changed from the previous version. As a result, I consider that there is no requirement for me to seek further submissions in respect of these matters, and I am satisfied that no party's interests would be prejudiced by my taking this approach.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - i) whether the proposed development would be essential to meet an agricultural need; and
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Isle of Axholme Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.

Reasons

Need

4. The appeal site is located towards the western boundary of a relatively small parcel of land indicated to be under the control of the appellant. It is within the countryside for the purposes of planning policy.
5. Whilst Policy RD2 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan (LP) seeks to restrict development within the open countryside, it supports the principle of agricultural and forestry buildings in the open countryside where they are essential for the efficient operation of agriculture or forestry and subject to other criteria including

those specified in policy RD14 of the said plan. Similarly, Policies CS2 and CS3 of the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy (CS) states that in the countryside only development which is essential to the functioning of the countryside will be allowed to take place. This might include uses such as that related to agriculture, forestry or other uses which require a countryside location.

6. The appellant submits that the LP is out of date. However, there is nothing in paragraph 11 d) of the Framework to suggest that the expiry of the plan period automatically renders the policies in the plan out-of-date, but rather the policy's degree of consistency with the Framework. In this circumstance I find that the policies most relevant to the determination of the appeal to be consistent with the overall aims of the Framework and therefore carries the full weight of the development plan.
7. Within the wider site, edged blue on the submitted plans, existing structures are present, including a dwelling and storage building. The evidence indicates that permission has recently been granted for a general-purpose agricultural building¹ intended for a similar use as the current appeal; namely for the storage of machinery and general agricultural produce including hay and straw. The appellant has identified the need for increased storage to accommodate hay/grass and produce from their micro-farm operations.
8. Whilst I recognise the need to keep machinery/fuels separate from produce little substantive evidence has been provided to justify the need for a second building, particularly given the limited extent of land within the appellant's control. The lack of information with regards to the micro-farm operation limits my ability to conclude that the proposal is essential to the functioning of the countryside, essential for the efficient operation of agriculture or forestry, or that it comprises employment-related development appropriate to the open countryside.
9. It is noted that the Council raise concerns with regards to the present use of the approved building, as indicated in the appellants statement of Case for the storage of domestic related items. However, this is not a matter for me to conclude upon.
10. For the reasons stated above, I conclude that the appellant has failed to robustly demonstrate that the proposed development would be essential to meet an agricultural need. Conflict therefore arises with Policies RD2 and RD14 of the LP and Policies CS2 and CS3 of the CS.

Character and appearance

11. The appeal site is located within land designated as the Isle of Axholme Area of Special Historic Landscape (IAASHL), a non-designated heritage asset.
12. Policy RD14 of the LP states that agricultural and forestry buildings, that require planning permission or prior notification, should be sited near the existing buildings and designed to utilise existing landforms and vegetation to minimise visual impact. Policy RD14 further states that particular care must be taken where proposals would affect special landscape areas such as the IAASHL.
13. The significance of the IAASHL is largely derived from its range of fields which reflect examples of open-field cultivation that has persisted since medieval times. This was a system used by agricultural communities in pre-20th century northern

¹ Council reference PA/2023/1244

Europe where areas of land were communally managed. Means of enclosure are generally not evident in the landscape, with the main boundary defining features made in the form of drainage ditches which are not immediately evident until viewed at a close distance.

14. In contrast the land, under the control of the appellant, has been enclosed by high boundary treatments, including fencing and hedges. This is at odds with the wider historic landscape. Nonetheless, the appeal site lies within a designated historic landscape which extends a considerable distance in all directions from the appeal site.
15. The Framework requires that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
16. The design and external appearance of the proposed building would be appropriate for its rural context. The proposed building would be positioned close to the western boundary of the site and would not be highly prominent within the wider landscape due to its location set back from the highway and the presence of existing high vegetated boundary treatments. Nevertheless, due to the significant separation between the existing and proposed buildings the proposal would detract from the open, rural character of the wider area and consequently further erode the historic landscape in which it lies.
17. Whilst I observed buildings within the wider landscape, these are infrequent. Moreover, I do not know the circumstances under which these buildings were erected which limits my ability to draw any meaningful comparisons. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
18. In undertaking a balanced judgment, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset, I conclude that there would be conflict with the Framework, which seeks to conserve non-designated heritage assets and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
19. For the reasons stated, I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to the Isle of Axholme Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest. This draws the proposal into conflict with Policies DS1, LC07, LC14 and SPG3 of the LP and Policies CS5 and CS6 of the CS. Amongst others, these policies require development to respect the local landscape and not adversely affect its setting or any of its features.

Other Matters

20. I have been referred to the Council's decision to grant planning permission for the development of other buildings on land under the appellant's control. However, I have not been provided with the full details of the schemes, and so cannot draw any meaningful comparisons. In any event, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Gee

INSPECTOR