
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2017

by Claire Searson MSc PGDip BSc (Hons) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 21st March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A2525/W/16/3163427

Ashtree Farm, 92 Guanockgate Road, Sutton St Edmund, Spalding, PE12 0LU

- 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 & Mrs M Ward against the decision of South Holland District Council.
 - The application Ref H19-0782-16, dated 3 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 17 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is a barn conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

3. Saved Policy HS16 of the South Holland Local Plan 2006 (LP) permits the conversion of redundant rural buildings to residential use provided that the building is of architectural or historic merit and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the landscape (criterion 3), the design of the scheme, materials of construction and detailing are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building (criterion 4) and the building is capable of conversion without the need for significant extension or alteration (criterion 5).
 4. One of the main planning principles set out in paragraph 17 of the Framework is to recognise the intrinsic value and beauty of the countryside. Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) notes that the re-use of redundant or disused buildings which lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting as a special circumstance where development in the countryside is permitted. The overall emphasis of LP Policy HS16 is to protect rural character and while the LP is of some age, I consider that it complies with the Framework in this respect. Thus in accordance with paragraph 215 of the Framework, I give it full weight.
 5. The appeal barn is a large rectangular structure constructed from brick and metal grain walling. It also partly clad in asbestos and has an asbestos sheet roof which is pitched. It is located adjacent to Guanockgate Road, and due to
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the flat fenland landscape, it is visible from a number of vantage points in the countryside.

6. While its design is fairly typical of modern agricultural buildings, due to its utilitarian form and materials, I consider that the building has no architectural merit and has no positive effect on the rural landscape character. In this respect the principle of the development of the appeal barn would not accord with criterion 3 of saved LP Policy HS16.
7. Furthermore, in order to convert to a residential use, a number of alterations are proposed. Specifically, the asbestos cladding and metal grain walling would be replaced with brickwork to match the existing, as well as timber cladding. The existing asbestos sheet roof would be replaced by natural slate and the pitch and height of this would be increased to allow accommodation at first floor level. Timber windows and doors would be inserted where there are large existing openings and a number of new openings to each elevation.
8. I find that these alterations would be significant. I note that the aim of the design is to enhance the external appearance of the barn, however, the introduction of a number of windows and timber cladding would dramatically change the appearance of the barn and I consider that the development would have a domestic character. Moreover, while I note that the footprint of the barn would remain the same, the upward extension would further increase the prominence of the barn in the rural landscape. The development would not therefore accord with criterion 4 and 5 of LP Policy HS16 which relate to extensions and design of rural buildings.
9. In light of the policy conflict with LP Policy HS16, therefore conclude that the development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the countryside. In addition, the development would be in conflict with paragraphs 55 and 17 of the Framework as it would not lead to the enhancement to the immediate setting of the barn nor would it respond to the character of the countryside.

Other Matters

10. The appeal building is located adjacent to Hawthorne Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building. While the Council did not make reference to this in their report, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building.¹ However, while I have found harm to the general character and appearance of the rural area, following my observations on site, I consider that the proposed development would be effectively screened by the presence of mature vegetation surrounding the listed building. The proposed development would not interfere with the significance of the dwelling as a historic farmstead. Accordingly, I consider that there would be no harm to the significance of these listed buildings, as derived from their setting.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons above, taking into account all other matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Searson
INSPECTOR

¹ As required by s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990