

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8/2(h)

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| Parish: | Walsoken | |
| Proposal: | Proposed conversion and extension of silos to form dwelling | |
| Location: | Rosalie Farm Lynn Road Walsoken Norfolk PE14 7DA | |
| Applicant: | Mr Clark | |
| Case No: | 21/01536/F (Full Application) | |
| Case Officer: | Lucy Smith | Date for Determination: 23 September 2021 |

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Officer recommendation is contrary to the views of the Parish and the application has been referred by Sifting Panel

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of 4 silos to a single dwelling at Rosalie Farm, Lynn Road, Walsoken. Plans show the conversion of 4 existing silos which are proposed to be linked via the construction of a rear extension measuring approximately 15 x 4.5m from the rear of the existing silos. This extension provides the majority of the residential floor space proposed.

The site is outside of any defined development boundary on land which is therefore considered to be within the wider countryside for the purposes of the Local Plan. The applicant quotes the use of policies allowing the conversion of redundant rural buildings as justification for the proposal.

Key Issues

Planning History
Principle of Development
Form and Character and Impact on the Countryside
Other material considerations

Recommendation

REFUSE

THE APPLICATION

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of 4 silos to a single dwelling at Rosalie Farm, Lynn Road, Walsoken. Plans show the conversion of 4 existing silos which are proposed to be linked via the construction of a rear extension measuring approximately 15 x

4.5m from the rear of the existing silos. This extension provides the majority of the residential floor space proposed.

The site is outside of any defined development boundary on land which is therefore considered to be within the wider countryside for the purposes of the Local Plan although the applicant's case is that policies for re-using redundant rural buildings are relevant and therefore the application should be supported.

SUPPORTING CASE

The application is made for the conversion and alteration to 4 existing silos to create a single bespoke dwelling on land at Rosalie Farm, Lynn Road, Wisbech. A similar application was submitted earlier this year but was refused; this submission seeks to address the reasons for refusal pursuant to 21/00377/F.

These silos were a common sight 50 years ago, but their purpose has been superceded by more efficient methods, and due to their simple structure are very easy to dismantle and scrap. Therefore, they are a part of agricultural history that should be retained. This proposal retains the character of the silos, while making good use of them as part of a dwelling, with the new modern link structure mostly hidden from general view.

NPPF states that houses in Rural locations re using redundant or disused buildings and enhancing its immediate surroundings should be supported.

Local policy states conversion to residential will only be considered where the existing building makes a positive contribution to the landscape, we believe these Silo buildings are becoming a rarity in the countryside and this simple conversion will sympathetically blend new with old.

We would ask that this unique conversion be supported.

PLANNING HISTORY

21/00377/F: Application Refused: 12/05/21 - Proposed Conversion and extension of silos to form dwelling - Rosalie Farm

20/00075/PREAPP: INFORMAL - Likely to refuse: 04/08/20 - PRE- APPLICATION FULL (NO CONSULTATIONS AND NO MEETING): Proposed conversion of 2 barns and 4 silos to create 3 dwellings - Rosalie Farm

11/00042/PREAPP: INFORMAL - Likely to approve: 16/03/11 - Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new replacement dwelling - Rosalie Farm
Formerly Dennis Farm

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Parish Council: SUPPORT stating the following comments:

We supported the first application and I feel should support this again, for the following three reasons.

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The two reasons given for refusal on the first application have been addressed by the applicants agent.

These silos were a common sight 50 years ago, but their purpose has been superseded by more efficient methods, and due to their simple structure are very easy to dismantle and scrap.

Therefore, they are a part of agricultural history that should be retained.

This proposal retains the character of the silos, while making good use of them as part of a dwelling, with the new modern link structure mostly hidden from general view.

Highways Authority: NO OBJECTION recommended conditions relating to laying out of proposed access/turning area

Environment Agency: NO OBJECTION subject to FRA condition

Internal Drainage Board: NO OBJECTION the Board's byelaws should be complied with. If infiltration is proposed, it should be supported by ground investigation.

Environmental Health & Housing - Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION recommended conditions relating to contamination and remediation given previous use of the site and potential pollutants.

Natural England: No comment

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at time of writing

LDF CORE STRATEGY POLICIES

CS01 - Spatial Strategy

CS02 - The Settlement Hierarchy

CS06 - Development in Rural Areas

CS08 - Sustainable Development

CS10 - The Economy

CS11 – Transport

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES PLAN 2016

DM1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM2 – Development Boundaries

DM15 – Environment, Design and Amenity

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
National Design Guide 2019

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The key issues are:

Planning History
Principle of Development
Form and Character and Impact on the Countryside
Other material considerations

Planning History

This application is submitted following the refusal of a similar application on 12th May 2021 (ref 21/00377/F). The previous application was refused on the following grounds:

1. The application site is located outside of any designated development boundary and therefore in the wider countryside as outlined in Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016). No other justification has been provided which is considered to outweigh this conflict with the current Local Plan. Given the extent of new build-extension proposed, the application is not considered to comply with Policy CS06 in relation to the conversion of rural buildings and the construction of a new dwelling in this position, including the associated change of use of land is considered to pose an adverse impact on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to the NPPF (2019), Policies CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policy DM15 of the SADMPP (2016).
2. The application site is on land categorised as within flood zones 2 & 3 of the Borough Council's SFRA. The proposed dwelling would create a dwelling on land which is at risk of flooding and the sequential and exceptions tests are therefore required. The construction of a new dwelling in this location is not considered to pose any benefit to the wider community that would outweigh the flood risk and the proposal therefore fails the exceptions test outlined in Paragraph 160 of the NPPF (2019). Overall, the proposal is therefore considered contrary to paras 159-161 of the NPPF (2019), policy CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011) and policies DM15 and DM21 of the SADMPP (2016).

Limited changes have been made to the previously refused scheme.

Consent is sought for the extension to and conversion of existing grain silos on land to the north of Lynn Road, Walsoken, to the north east of S Bend and sharing a proposed access with an existing dwelling known as Rosalie Farm.

Principle of Development

The proposal is for the conversion of a group of agricultural silos to residential use, including a significant single storey extension, which will form the majority of the accommodation.

The farm unit is located some 1.5km from the edge of Wisbech and consists of the main house along with 4 barns and the 4 silos. The silos are located to the west of the rest of the

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farm buildings and are set back from Lynn Road behind existing agricultural fields which add to the rural setting of the buildings as a whole.

For the purposes of the Local Plan, the existing silos are located on the outskirts of Walsoken which is categorised as a Settlement Adjacent to a Main Town in CS02 of the Core Strategy (2011). The site is not within the development boundary for either Walsoken to Walton Highway which lies approximately 850m to the east of the site and is therefore on land which is considered to be within the wider countryside for the purposes of the Local Plan, where development is restricted to that identified as suitable in rural areas.

Policy CS06 of the Core Strategy (2011) supports conversion to residential use where:

- The existing building makes a positive contribution to the landscape.
- A non-residential use is proven to be unviable.
- The accommodation to be provided is commensurate to the site's relationship to the settlement pattern; and
- The building is easily accessible to existing housing, employment and services.

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2019) recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supports the protection of the countryside. Paragraph 120d of the NPPF states that decisions should support the development of under-utilised buildings. Paragraph 79 of the NPPF supports development which will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

The silos, with a diameter of 4.45m, each provide around 15.5sqm of floor space (totalling 62sqm), whereas the proposed extension forms closer to 70sqm of 'new build' floor space. Therefore, the amount of new build involved in the proposed development is such that, it is the LPA's opinion that the proposal could not be considered a conversion and therefore Policy CS06 does not apply.

Irrespective of this, the currently unused utilitarian silo buildings have limited positive impact on the landscape of the area and therefore the proposal is not considered to comply with CS06.

No justification has been provided to meet any of the other criteria outlined in Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016).

The principle of development is therefore considered contrary to policies CS02, CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011).

Form and Character and Impact on the Countryside

The proposed design includes the conversion of the existing silos, with windows inserted and walls proposed to be clad in timber to replace the existing zinc - full details of proposed materials could be controlled via condition. A single storey extension is proposed to the rear of the silos with a flat roof and semi-circular porch overhang from the north elevation. This extension measures around 14m x 4.5m when measured from the rear of the existing silos. A small roof overhang which projects from each side and a covered patio area to the north lend itself to an overall modern design.

As a result of the positioning of this extension, the impact on the street scene is largely limited by the screening provided by the existing silos. In regard to proposed curtilage, a substantial portion of land is proposed to be in residential use post-development.

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It is also of note that the extent of the red line site area involved, with a total site area of approximately 0.45ha in this proposal is considered likely to lead to domestication of the landscape to the detriment of the rural character of the area as a whole. No evidence has been provided to justify the extent of the curtilage proposed and no differentiation has been provided within the wider site to separate a smaller parcel for use as garden and other areas for paddock land or another use.

Other Material Considerations

The site is well distanced from surrounding properties. The existing dwelling, to the east of the proposal site is sufficiently distanced to mitigate the potential for overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing as a result of the proposed development.

An ecological survey was provided as part of this application which suggests there is little potential for the existing silos to form a habitat for any protected species. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the standing advice for protected species in the PPG.

The application site is within flood zone 3 of the Borough Council's SFRA (2018). As a partial conversion of an existing building, the proposal cannot reasonably be relocated in an area of lesser flood risk and the sequential test is therefore passed. However, in regards to the exceptions test, whilst the proposal can be demonstrated to be safe for its lifetime through raising floor levels by 0.3m, as the part conversion part new build is considered contrary to the overarching policies of the local plan, the creation of a new dwelling is not considered to pose any significant benefit to the wider community to the extent that the proposal passes this second part of the exceptions test. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to paragraph 164 of the NPPF (2019) and Policy CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011).

Contamination conditions would be required as part of any approval due to the existing use of the site, to ensure the safety of future occupants.

Crime and Disorder There are no known crime and disorder impacts associated with this proposal.

CONCLUSION:

This application proposes a part conversion of utilitarian former silos, with a large extension to form the majority of the accommodation. The applicant relies on policies for the conversion of redundant rural buildings to justify the scheme. However, Policy CS06 of the Core Strategy supports the conversion of existing buildings in the countryside only where the existing building makes a positive contribution to the landscape. It is the LPA's opinion that the building does not provide such a significant positive impact on the landscape that the need for its retention outweighs the overall policy contradictions related to the site's location outside of any development boundary.

It is also noted that this application, by reason of the extent of new build proposed, is considered to represent the construction of a new dwelling rather than a true conversion as required under the provisions of Policy CS06. The site is outside of any defined development boundary on land which is therefore considered to be within the wider countryside. No other justification has been provided to outweigh this conflict with the settlement strategy of the Local Plan and the principle of development on site is therefore not considered acceptable.

The extent of curtilage proposed further increases the overall impact of proposal on the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside which the Local Plan seeks to protect.

The application is therefore recommended for refusal on the following grounds.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason(s):

- 1 The application site is located outside of any designated development boundary and therefore in the wider countryside as outlined in Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016). Given the extent of new build-extension proposed, combined with the utilitarian and limited positive impact of the existing building, the application is not considered to comply with Policy CS06 in relation to the conversion of rural buildings and the construction of a new dwelling in this position, including the associated change of use of land is considered likely to lead to domestication of the landscape to the detriment of the rural character of the area as a whole. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to the NPPF (2019), Policies CS06 and CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011) and Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016).
- 2 The application site is within flood zone 3 of the Borough Council's SFRA (2018). As a partial conversion of an existing building, the proposal cannot reasonably be relocated in an area of lesser flood risk and the sequential test is therefore passed. In regards to the exceptions test, whilst the proposal can be demonstrated to be safe for its lifetime through raising floor levels by 0.3m, as the part conversion part new build is considered contrary to the overarching policies of the local plan, the creation of a new dwelling is not considered to pose any significant benefit to the wider community to the extent that the proposal passes this part of the exceptions test. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to paragraph 164 of the NPPF (2019) and Policy CS08 of the Core Strategy (2011).