

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8/3(f)

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:	21/02397/F (Full Application)	
Case Officer:	Lucy Smith	Date for Determination: 9 February 2022 Extension of Time Expiry Date: 14 March 2022

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – at the request of the Assistant Director

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.

An application was refused at planning committee in October 2021, Members ultimately agreed with the decision to refuse the application. The reasons for refusal were not amended during the debate, however Members' primary concern related to the extent of garden land proposed and included within the red line, as opposed to the principle of the extension/conversion of the silos. This application has been submitted with a significantly reduced red line area shown on dwg No. PLO5c (from 0.45ha to 0.2ha)

Key Issues

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

Recommendation

REFUSE

21/02397/F

**Planning Committee
09th May 2022**

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.

An application was refused at planning committee in October 2021, Members ultimately agreed with the decision to refuse the application. The reasons for refusal were not amended during the debate, however Members' primary concern related to the extent of garden land proposed and included within the red line, as opposed to the principle of the extension/conversion of the silos. This application has been submitted with a significantly reduced red line area shown on dwg No. PL05c (from 0.45ha to 0.2ha)

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. 2 similar applications were submitted last year but were refused; this submission seeks to clarify the policy position and provide the additional information sought by planning committee to address the reasons for refusal pursuant to 21/00377/F and 21/01536/F.

Within the planning committee debate, a number of matters were raised- at which point the applicant could not respond to answer them to assist committee.

A number of members commented on the interesting design of the proposal and requested further details as to appearance and construction. This submission addresses this matter and provides a CGI illustration of what the finished project would look like.

One member questioned if the silos were physically sound and could be converted. It is confirmed that the silos are structurally sound and capable of conversion.

A question was asked in relation to the extent of the red line on the application and why it included the paddock area in front. Whilst this was clarified in the presentation to committee –this matter is subject to an amendment in this application site with the red edge solely relating to the silos and immediate curtilage- with other land outside of the application site edged blue. The paddock is to be turned into a hay meadow in the interests of ecology and net biodiversity gain.

It is noted that at the same planning committee Oct 2021) – permission was granted for a new dwelling opposite the application site (also in open countryside)- on the basis that Committee considered that it was sustainable development. 21/00981/F - Walsoken: Land east of Tarrazona, 16 S-Bend, Lynn Road: 2-storey 4-bed dwelling with attached double garage.

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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.

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

21/01536/F: Application Refused: 19/10/21 - Proposed conversion and extension of silos to form dwelling - Rosalie Farm – COMMITTEE DECISION

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

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: RECOMMENDED APPROVAL as previous applications for the silos have been approved and the Council remains happy with the application submitted.

Highways Authority: NO OBJECTION recommended conditions relating to the laying out of turning/parking area, to be retained in perpetuity.

Environment Agency: NO OBJECTION, subject to accordance with mitigation measures outlined in the FRA

Internal Drainage Board: NO OBJECTION in principle, noting the potential requirement for byelaw/land drainage consent

Environmental Health & Housing - Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION in principle, additional contamination investigation is required and should be controlled via condition.

Natural England: NO COMMENT

CSNN: RECOMMENDED FOUL AND SURFACE WATER DRAINIANGE CONDITION
Noting the following comments:

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'Environmental Quality have highlighted the potential for contamination to be present at the site and have requested further investigation to characterise the potential for contamination. Any SUDS and foul water scheme should have cognisance of the contaminated land investigation and any subsequent proposed remediation. The contaminated land investigation and risk assessment should be completed first before any SUDS or foul water scheme is approved or implemented.'

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

CS12 - Environmental Assets

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 11th October 2021 (ref 21/01536/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).

Changes have been made to the red line area of the previously refused scheme to overcome concerns raised by members in relation to the extent of curtilage previously proposed as part of the development. The overall site area has been reduced to 0.2ha, which allows parking for three cars to the west of the site and private amenity space to the rear. The previous site area totalled 0.45ha.

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 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 or Walton Highway which lies approximately 850m to the east of the site and the site 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, in line with Policy DM2 of the SADMPP (2016).

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 (2021) 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). Whilst the red line has been reduced, officers consider that the development therefore does not resolve refusal reason 1 of 21/01536/F.

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 sedum 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 driveway is proposed to extend from the existing track along the front of the property, providing parking spaces to the west of the silos. The paving is proposed as 'Cellpave HD Permeable Paving' which allows retention of some grass cover and limits the impact of hardstanding on the visual amenities of the street scene. Tree planting across the south elevation and conservation hedgerows will further soften the appearance of the dwelling within the countryside. Conditions could control planting details to ensure that the landscaping is completed as proposed.

Subject to suitable external materials and the planting scheme discussed above, which can be controlled via condition, the visual appearance of the proposal is considered unlikely to lead to significant harm to the form and character of the countryside. The design of the proposal is considered to comply with Policy DM15 of the SADMPP (2016).

Other Material Considerations

The Local Highway Authority has no objection to the scheme on highway safety grounds. Parking is provided in accordance with the required standards.

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 report/letter 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 and Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy (2011).

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 previous reason for refusal (reason 2 of decision reference 21/01536/F) therefore still stands. The proposal is 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.

Full details of foul and surface water drainage would be required as conditions, with consideration given to potential contamination impacts as part of the drainage strategy as requested by the CSNN team.

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

CONCLUSION

Members may recall the discussion at Planning Committee last year relating to the design of the dwelling and the extent of curtilage proposed. The application has been submitted with more compact red line area which will reduce the extent of land used for residential purposes, in line with members comments. Members will need to consider the weight attached to the reduction in site area.

It is the Officer's opinion that, whilst the reduction in site area reduces the impact on the countryside, the application, by reason of the extent of new build proposed, is still 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. Further, it is not considered that the design of the proposed dwelling is of sufficient quality to overcome the policy contradictions relating to the site's location.

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 is considered 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 (2021), 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).