



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 June 2020

by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L2630/W/20/3244873

2 Poplar Barns, Ipswich Road, Long Stratton, Norfolk NR15 2TJ

- 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 Barry Thornburrow against the decision of South Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/1688, dated 19 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'severance of part of land belonging to 2 Poplar Barns and the erection of a detached three bedroom house.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. There are three main issues. These are the effect of the proposed development on a) the character and appearance of the area; b) the living conditions of existing and future occupiers with specific regard to private garden space; and c) highway safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is part of the garden to No 2 Poplar Barns, one of three dwellings which appears to have been created out of the conversion of traditional agricultural buildings. Each of the three buildings has a generous curtilage which exudes a spacious character, reflective of their low density rural surroundings. They are narrow and rectangular in shape which reflects their historic use. They are located on a subdivided roughly rectangular land parcel to the west of the A140. They are some distance to the south of the edge of Long Stratton and part of a small group of informally laid out dwellings in a distinctly rural area.
4. The size of the plot afforded to the dwelling would be uncharacteristically small when compared to its neighbours. A measure which would also truncate that belonging to No 2. Buildings would therefore appear more crowded, unreflective of the low density rural character of the surroundings. The design of the proposed dwelling appears to emulate the agrarian appearance of the others around it, putting to use a double height centralised glazed opening, a lean to canopy to one side and a timber clad exterior. However, the use of

certain overly residential features such as a large dormer structure and numerous uniformly sited windows would jar with this style, resulting in a contrived and awkward appearance for its setting. In addition, the limitations of the plot would lead to a building which would appear restricted in its length, too compact and thus out of scale with the others. The shortened range would also emphasise the height, making it more noticeable within the plot.

5. These factors would combine to result in a building that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies DM 3.5 and DM 3.13 of the Local Plan¹. Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that new development (replacement dwellings and additional dwellings on sub divided plots specifically) achieve high quality design which maintains or enhances the character and appearance of existing buildings, the street scene and its surroundings.

Living Conditions

6. There are two strands to the Council's concerns in respect of this main issue, based around the crux of the matter which is the amount and quality of the private garden spaces that would be afforded to the existing and proposed dwellings.
7. In the case of the resulting plot to No 2 Poplar Barns, the garden would be much smaller than the existing but for the purposes of private amenity enjoyment still of sufficient size with open and unobstructed areas to the front and rear. It would also be largely unencumbered by other features with some reduced but sufficient space between buildings and boundaries.
8. The same cannot however be said of the proposed dwelling. The building would be small in context and in order to allow for a driveway and off street parking to be provided, it would be pushed towards its boundaries, leaving very limited distance between them and the side walls of the building. This would not only result in a very small garden in quantitative terms but also a space that would be restricted, garnering an oppressive experience for its users. I have not been provided with a defined garden size minimum set out by the development plan. But this does not excuse plots that would fail to provide for a satisfactory outdoor environment in the interests of the living conditions of future occupiers. Put simply, the size and restrictive nature of the garden afforded to the proposed dwelling would be unacceptably poor and lead to harm to the living conditions of future occupiers.
9. This would accordingly conflict with Policies DM 3.5, DM 3.8 and DM 3.13 of the Local Plan which require, amongst other things, development (replacement dwellings and additional dwellings on sub divided plots specifically) to provide and maintain adequate private amenity space, be of high quality and ensure a reasonable standard of amenity more generally.

Highway Safety

10. The appeal scheme would utilise an existing access that runs at right angles from and connects to the northbound carriageway of the A140. It is a narrow single width track that serves the three dwellings I referred to earlier. The main area of concern for the Council is that the A140 is part of the Major Road Network (MRN) and in so being functions as a movement corridor. They set

¹ South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document 2015

out that additional junctions should be minimised or rationalised wherever possible to minimise turning movements and potential vehicular conflict. The movements of concern in this case I take to be slowing down and turning left and also waiting and turning across a live traffic lane depending on which direction an arriving vehicle would travel from. I acknowledge both the potential for such situations to be hazardous to other road users and how they may affect the free flow of traffic along this arterial route.

11. Be this as it may, I am mindful of the fact that the proposed development would not create a new access off the A140. The Council consider that, through extrapolating TRICS² data, the new dwelling would add around six additional vehicular movements per day. In the context of an access that already serves three dwellings, I do not consider this significant. I acknowledge that the existing access is neither substantial in size nor very prominent. It is neither lit nor signposted but there are prominent hazard warning markings for a substantial length of the A140 on the approach to Long Stratton as well as a ghost island dedicated turn into Parker's Lane, a short distance from the entrance to the appeal site. This gives me some comfort that users approaching the access from either direction will be alert to slowing or turning vehicles in the road. In addition, the appeal site access is a relatively short distance from a change in the speed limit, down to 30mph near the junction of Lime Tree Avenue to the north. This and the above factors will mean vehicles are less likely to be travelling at full speed, as they might be on an otherwise open and unencumbered stretch of the A140.
12. I am therefore minded to conclude that, with regard to this main issue, the appeal scheme would unlikely impinge on the efficiency of the A140 as a road of its type and status as a key part of the network and whilst it would result in more uses of the access, they would not be such, given their context, that would give rise to a significant highway safety issue sufficient to withhold planning permission. The proposed development would therefore not conflict with Policy DM 3.11 of the Local Plan which concerns road safety and the free flow of traffic. Stating that, amongst other things, on all sites, development will not be permitted that endangers highway safety or the satisfactory functioning of the highway network.

Other Matters

13. I note the appellant's comments concerning the sustainability credentials of the appeal site such as the fact that it is within the settlement boundary of Long Stratton and there is access thereto by means other than the private car. These are not however contentious matters in the appeal and in any case a lack of harm cannot, by definition, be used to weigh against it. It would accordingly be neutral in any balance of considerations.
14. There is a suggestion in the evidence that the dwelling in this case has been designed as a lifetime home for a specific end user and whilst this would clearly fulfil a need, there is limited evidence that such a need could not be met elsewhere. Particularly given the harms that I have found.

² Trip Rate Information Computer System

Conclusion

15. I have had regard to other matters that have been raised by third parties and whilst I have found that there would not be harm arising out of the third main issue, this would not make up for the appeal scheme's shortcomings in respect of the first two. It is for these reasons that the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR