



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2021

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X3540/W/20/3261116

Pine View, Hollesley Road, Capel St Andrew, Suffolk IP12 3NQ

- 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 & Ms Perace & Zahra against the decision of East Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/20/2507/FUL, dated 7 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Demolition of existing bungalow and outbuildings, erection of new one and a half storey dwelling and outbuildings'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of the existing bungalow and outbuildings and the erection of a new one and a half storey dwelling and outbuilding at Pine View, Hollesley Road, Capel St Andrew, Suffolk IP12 3NQ, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: DC/20/2507/FUL, dated 7 July 2020, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matter

2. Since the Council issued its decision it has adopted The East Suffolk Council – Suffolk Coastal Local Plan 2020. This has superseded the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan 2013 and the policies contained therein. It is incumbent upon me to base my decision upon the most up to date planning policy and this is what I have done. The appellants have had an opportunity to address the change in policy through their appeal submissions.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site currently encompasses a bungalow with attached outbuildings. Built form therefore spans the width of the site as does the gravelled forecourt, which is enclosed by a low brick wall. This results in a hard, suburban frontage to the appeal site which jars with the more verdant plots either side. The neighbouring dwellings are period properties based on a simple rectangular plan and exhibit balanced facades finished in brick and slate or cream render and pan tiles all with white framed windows. Chimneys articulate the ridge and reinforce the pleasant composition of the elevations.

5. Church Road is a rural thoroughfare and the scattering of properties along it are not uniform in appearance. Nevertheless, most present an attractive period style. Pine View on the other hand has an appearance that jars with this wider character, as it is finished in what appears to be an artificial stone with wide brown-framed windows. However, when not directly outside the appeal site, the bungalow has a subtle impact on the landscape due to the presence of the flanking properties and the existing landscaping in neighbouring gardens. This provides the appeal property with a restrained and recessive appearance in the surrounding agricultural landscape.
6. Policy SCLP5.3 of the LP supports replacement dwellings in the countryside provided they would not be more visually intrusive. The term 'visually intrusive' is not defined. The Council have not made the case that a replacement dwelling would be more visually intrusive simply because it is larger and I have no reason to disagree, particularly as there may be instances where an enlargement could facilitate design and landscape improvements. Instead, the new dwelling would have to cause some adverse disruption to local character when compared to the existing for it to be visually intrusive.
7. The appeal scheme would result in the bungalow being replaced with a two-storey dwelling and therefore it would be more visible in the landscape, especially when rounding the bend in the road to the east of the site. However, the new dwelling would not appear strident because the simple rectangular plan and the general form and scale would harmonise with the buildings either side, which would provide an anchoring context.
8. The built form would also be in proportion to the plot, set a little in from the site boundaries and amount to a reduction in the built footprint. This would result in a marginal design gain by creating space around the dwelling and a less sprawling appearance when compared to the existing bungalow. The use of render would not be out of place provided a suitable pastel colour or such like is used and it would be possible to secure an appropriate roof covering, such as a slate or pan tile that would respond to the neighbouring properties.
9. That said, I share the view of the Council that the property would incorporate several awkward features such as the oversized porch and dormers and the asymmetrical roof gables. The latter would result in an eaves line noticeably lower than the adjoining properties. To this I would add that the absence of a chimney would be jarring given the local context as would the window style when compared to the more traditional appearance found locally along the length of the road. The absence of planting along the flank boundaries would also result in the appellants being reliant on the softening effect provided by landscaping in neighbouring gardens, but the longevity of this cannot be guaranteed as it is outside the appellants' ownership and control.
10. However, the farm gates would provide a rural character to the site befitting its countryside location and the frontage would be softened by a new hedge, although the low wall would be a suburban feature. A landscaping condition could be imposed to ensure the presence of the new dwelling is softened by planting, which over time would provide maturity to the site. It would also ensure the flanks of the site are sensitively landscaped and not dominated by fencing. There may also be scope for some planting directly in front of the dwelling to provide further relief and provide a more rural appearance.

11. Moreover, the asymmetrical gable would not be particularly apparent given the set back of the property, and the front elevation would be generally balanced despite the oversized porch and dormers. In addition, I have not been directed to any local design or style guide covering either East Suffolk or the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which the scheme would offend, or the appellants should have considered.
12. The outbuilding could appear more subservient if positioned further back into the site and finished in a contrasting material. However, it would be much smaller than the proposed dwelling and the neighbouring property has a rendered outbuilding, so the approach advanced would not be out of place.
13. Overall, the appeal scheme would not be an enhancement to the extent suggested by the appellants, but nor would it be as bad as the Council allege. It has some positive aspects, principally the harmonious and well-proportioned scale and massing, but also some awkward detailing. Its acceptability is finely balanced, particularly given the sensitive location in the AONB and the increase in height. Nevertheless, in this instance I find in favour of the proposal. This is mainly because the existing bungalow is particularly jarring, and the appeal scheme would be marginally more responsive to the local character and appearance of the area. The new dwelling would also be more environmentally friendly by incorporating features such as more insulation, solar panels and an air source heat pump.
14. In conclusion, the appeal scheme would preserve the character and appearance of the area and would not be more visually intrusive than the existing bungalow. Therefore, it would adhere to Policies SCLP5.3 of the LP as well as Policies SCLP11.1 and SCLP12.34, which seeks to secure development that responds to the local context, scale, massing and layout of the area and protects the AONB. These policies are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore carry full weight.

Conditions

15. I have had regard to the advice in the Planning Practice Guide and the conditions suggested by the Council. It is necessary in the interests of precision to ensure that the development is undertaken in accordance with the submitted drawings. In the interests of preserving the character and appearance of the area it is necessary to secure details of external finishing materials and landscaping.

Conclusion

16. The appeal scheme would adhere to the development plan and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal should succeed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
2. Subject to the other conditions in this schedule, the development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 477-04, 477-03 Rev B and 477-01 Rev D.
3. Notwithstanding the submitted details on the approved plans, no development shall commence above slab level until details of the materials, fenestration and colours to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the dwelling hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
4. Notwithstanding the submitted details on the approved plans, no development shall commence above slab level until there shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details with all proposed landscaping being carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner. Any existing or proposed trees or plants shown on the approved landscaping scheme which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.