



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 7 April 2021

by Graham Chamberlain BA(Hons) MSC MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/20/3263264

1 Gorleston Cottages, Main Road, Titchwell, Norfolk PE31 8BB

- 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 Mrs Gemma Smith against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
- The application Ref 20/01071/F, dated 16 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 November 2020.
- The development proposed is described as 'the construction of two new semi-detached cottages'.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the construction of two new semi-detached cottages at 1 Gorleston Cottages, Main Road, Titchwell, Norfolk PE31 8BB, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 20/01071/F, dated 16 July 2020, subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - Whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Titchwell Conservation Area;
 - Whether the proposal would conserve the North Norfolk Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and
 - The effect of the proposed development on highway safety, with particular reference to access intensification and parking.

Reasons

Whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Titchwell Conservation Area (CA)

3. Titchwell is a small, sparsely populated settlement focussed on the junction of Church Lane and the A149. The settlement has a generally linear single plot depth pattern with most homes facing onto the A149 and arranged in tight grouping separated by sections of larger arable fields. This results in the village having a very pleasant rural setting and character. The buildings tend to exhibit the vernacular style with flint and red brick being the predominant building material. There is also a pre-eminence of 19th Century architecture. These qualities give a strong sense of cohesion and harmony to the village scape. The CA therefore derives much of its significance from the aesthetic and architectural values identified above.

4. The appeal site is located between a terrace of traditional flint cottages and a new pair of semi-detached homes. It is positioned centrally in a small cluster of homes on the edge of the village, albeit somewhat divorced due to the presence of an intervening field. Being a small pocket of development surrounded by a field and exhibiting local period architecture, the cluster is typical of the CA and contributes to its significance.
5. The appeal scheme would intensify the extent of development within the cluster. However, this would not be out of character with the wider CA because the clusters of development that make up the village are tightly formed. In addition, the position of the houses would respect the pattern of development by being of a single plot depth behind front gardens devoid of parking. The historic front wall would be retained as would views of the clunch gable end of the adjoining terrace. The proposal would also amount to infilling and not encroach into the adjoining arable field. Thus, the proposal would respect appreciable features of the CA, including the rural landscape setting.
6. Importantly, the proposal would employ an appropriate architectural approach. The front elevation would exhibit an attractive period aesthetic that would harmonise with the overriding architectural style of the CA. This would be undertaken with integrity due to the traditional proportions and details, including a pleasing gable span, symmetry, chimneys and period style windows. The porches and string course would add a little more detail to what would be very attractive dwellings established out of the local context.
7. The slightly recessive siting and more modest scale relative to the new properties to the west, as well as the use of a pan tile to the roof (as opposed to slate), would provide some subtle variety that is also a feature of the clusters of development in the CA. In this respect the appeal scheme, when viewed cumulatively with the new houses to the immediate west, would not appear as a discordant block of development on the edge of the village.
8. The rear elevations would be dominated by timber boarding and Juliet balconies and this would be quite visible from the lane to the east, which rises to the south. However, as the boarding silvers over time the rear gables would not appear as stark, especially as the rear boundary hedge grows. On balance, the timbered rear elements would be acceptable in this instance.
9. The size of the proposed dwellings would have a similar height, width, and depth to the others in the cluster and the extent of the plots would also be in keeping. The built footprint would not be uncharacteristically great with the properties set in from the boundaries. Space would be provided for adequately sized rear gardens with storage and landscaping. Off-road parking would be out of sight from the A149 or its presence softened by native hedging. As a result, the development would not appear cramped or have any symptoms of an over development. Instead, it would appear as a carefully considered infilling.
10. In conclusion, the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the area. But for the timbered rear elements, the proposal could have been considered a slight enhancement of the CA as a contextually appropriate and sensitive infilling. The appeal scheme would therefore adhere to Policies CS08 and CS12 of the CS¹ and Policy DM15 of the DMP², which seek to secure sensitive developments that protect the historic environment.

¹ Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council Local Development Framework – Core Strategy 2011

Whether the proposal would conserve the North Norfolk AONB

11. The Council's Landscape Character Assessment places the appeal site in the Holme to Brancaster designation. The landscape in this area is generally intact with a strong sense of openness. Traditional building materials are a particular feature as are the open views from the gentle chalk slopes out towards the coast. To this I would add a remote, tranquil and wild quality where settlements are recessive to the undeveloped countryside. This is particularly experienced when approaching the coast from the south. Titchwell sits comfortably in the landscape and adds to its qualities by being a small, loose knit settlement characterised by traditional buildings.
12. For the reasons already set out, the proposal would be consistent with the settlement pattern and form of the village. The use of local materials to the front and side elevations of the dwellings would also respect the local building traditions of the AONB. Thus, the proposal would adhere to many of the planning guidelines in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment.
13. The proposal, when considered cumulatively with The Hides development, would appear quite prominent in panoramic views of the coast, especially from the lane to the east of the site. However, over time the hedge to the rear of the site will mature and anchor the development. In this respect, consideration could also be given to planting a couple of trees. This would soften what could otherwise be a slightly strident rear timber gable and a body of parked cars.
14. The appeal scheme would not reinforce or create a sense of the village tapering off into the countryside, but it would be difficult to achieve this because the proposal would be an infill development. The important point in this respect is that the proposal would complement the cluster in which it would sit and therefore it would not stand out in the landscape. The proposal would not, therefore, harm the openness and tranquillity of the area.
15. In conclusion, the proposal would conserve the landscape of the AONB and therefore a conflict with Policies CS08 and CS12 of the CS and Policy DM15 of the DMP, which seek to protect the landscape and inherent quality of the area through sensitive design, would not occur.

The effect of the proposed development on highway safety

16. Parking for the development, as well as the occupants of the adjoining cottage, would be to the rear of the site and accessed from the A149 via a private driveway. This driveway already serves The Hides development. As a result, seven homes would be served by a driveway that currently serves four. The driveway is about 4.2m wide and therefore slightly wider than that recommended in Manual for Streets (4.1m).
17. That said, a close board fence has been erected hard up to the driveway and this will result in a sense of narrowing that would make it difficult for two vehicles to pass. Thus, if a motorist entering the site were to meet one exiting, then the motorist entering may need to reverse out onto the A149. The speed of traffic and limitations to visibility posed by on-street parking would make this manoeuvre undesirable. The Highway Authority have not objected to the proposal, but it is unclear whether they considered this matter.

² Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016

18. That said, the appellant has confirmed that a passing place can be constructed on land in the developer's control. This would allow two vehicles to safely pass without a reversing manoeuvre being necessary. It would therefore be both prudent and necessary to secure the construction of a passing place through the imposition of a condition. The passing place need not appear over engineered to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area. It would also make access a bit safer for the residents of The Hides.
19. Each of the new dwellings would have three bedrooms. Two parking spaces per dwelling would therefore be proportionate. The appeal scheme would conveniently achieve this level of provision whilst providing space for vehicles to turn and exit the site in a forward gear. Thus, there would be no need for future residents of the appeal scheme to park regularly on the A149. Access to the parking has been secured through a legal undertaking. There would also be some residual space for parking to serve the occupants of 1 Gorleston Cottages, which would benefit highway safety.
20. In conclusion, the proposal would preserve and modestly improve highway safety through more off-road parking and an improved access. Therefore, in this respect there would be no conflict with Policy DM15 of the DMP.

Other Matters

21. The proposal would amount to infilling and is therefore acceptable in principle when applying Policy DM3 of the DMP. I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of the drawings, which show the proposed dwellings contained within a site encompassing the former garden of 1 Gorleston Cottages plus an additional strip of land. The appeal scheme may be occupied as second or holiday homes, but I have not been directed to any local policy that would prevent that. I have considered the advice given by the Council at a pre application stage, but have come to my own views for the reason given. Thus, these points do not suggest a different overall conclusion to that I have reached.

Conditions and Conclusion

22. 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 certainty that the development is undertaken in accordance with the approved drawings. To protect the character and appearance of the area and in the interests of heritage it is necessary for schemes of landscaping (including alterations to the front boundary wall) and lighting are approved as well as samples of external materials. It is also necessary to protect the landscaping. To preserve highway safety, it is necessary to secure the parking area and details of a passing place. To safeguard living conditions, it is necessary for two first floor side windows to be finished in obscured glass.
23. 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 be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1423 01P Rev B: Existing and Proposed Location / Block Plan; 1423 02P Rev B: Proposed Plans; and 1423 03P Rev A: Proposed Elevations.
3. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, the proposed on-site access/car parking/turning areas shall be laid out, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan and retained thereafter available for that specific use.
4. No development shall take place on any external surface of the development hereby permitted until details and samples of the materials, including joinery, to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
5. No development shall commence on any external surface of the development until a sample panel of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted has been erected on the site for the inspection and written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The sample panel shall measure at least 1 metre x 1 metre using the proposed materials, mortar type, bond and pointing technique. The development shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.
6. Prior to the installation of any outdoor lighting relating to the development hereby approved, a detailed outdoor lighting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of the type of lights, the orientation/angle of the luminaries, the spacing and height of the lighting columns, the extent/levels of illumination over the site and on adjacent land and the measures to contain light within the curtilage of the site/individual curtilages. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with approved scheme and thereafter maintained and retained as agreed.
7. Notwithstanding the details that accompanied the application or the approved plans, prior to the first occupation of any dwelling hereby permitted, full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These details shall include finished levels or contours, hard surface materials, refuse or other storage units. Soft landscape works shall include planting plans, written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment) schedules of plants noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers and densities where appropriate.
8. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation or use of any part of the development or in accordance with a programme to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or plants that within a period of 5 years after planting die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species as those originally planted, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written approval to any variation.

9. The following windows in the development hereby permitted shall be fitted with obscure glazing and shall be non-opening and shall thereafter be retained and maintained in that condition: First floor window on the eastern elevation serving Bedroom 1; and First floor window on the western elevation serving Bedroom 1.

10. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, full details of the breaks in the boundary wall and the proposed gates to the front of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include the method of forming the openings, how the wall is to be made good and the design, materials and height of the gates to be installed. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details and the wall shall be retained thereafter as such unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

11. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until a vehicular passing bay along the access drive has been constructed in accordance with details that have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The passing bay will thereafter be maintained in its approved form.

End of Schedule