



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 August 2023

by A. Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/23/3315850

Land North East Of Flordon Road, Creeting St Mary, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 4QN

- 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 D Burn against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref: DC/22/05116 dated 11 October 2022 was refused by notice dated 15 December 2022.
 - The application is for erection of 3 dwellings (in lieu of previous applications for 3No dwellings and 6No dwellings respectively).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

Procedural Matter

3. Since the determination of this application a revised National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) was published in early September 2023 whose main focus was not directly relevant to this appeal. Nevertheless, I have determined this appeal in accordance with the revised provisions within the Framework.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is currently a parcel of agricultural land that has permission for residential and light industrial development, the principle of which has been well established. The site sits prominently upon the bend in Flordon Road as it turns towards the nearby outlying hamlet associated with Creeting St Mary. On entering Flordon Road from Coddensham Road the appeal site soon comes into view, raised as it is upon the bank associated with the lay of the land in this location. The appeal site is currently therefore raised above the highway here but is partially shielded by some remnants of hedging and small oak trees that survive on the site boundary.
5. Beyond the site begins the existing built form associated with the outlying houses of the village of Creeting St Mary. The village itself appears to be largely dispersed and presents as several different pockets of development.

The closest pocket to the appeal site is located immediately adjacent to the site and takes the form of a linear development of houses generally fronting onto Flordon Road.

6. For the most part these houses are relatively large, suburban type properties set well back into their plots and presenting a generally well landscaped frontage onto the road here. I saw on my site visit that although there were some first-floor rooms, largely contained within the roofs of the properties, the vast majority of homes here were bungalows. I therefore consider that the overriding character of the area here is one of single storey development that, although largely of a ribbon type suburban form, nevertheless has its own character and offers a limited impact upon the wider landscape.
7. The larger site associated with the appeal has permission for a mixed-use development of 6 small industrial units and 3 detached dwellings. The proposed industrial units would be located to the rear of the appeal site proper adjacent to the A14 road that runs along the entire length of the plot here. In regards the dwellings these 3 proposed properties were increased to 6 semidetached dwellings following the allowing of planning permission by a previous Inspector¹ and would be located towards the front portion of the larger site area.
8. Although the previous Inspector found in favour of allowing more dwellings to this site, it seems to me that the main difference between these two schemes is in the size, siting and architectural presentation of the properties and not the amount of units nor the principle of development here.
9. Although adopted some time ago, I consider that the Policy guidance within Policies GP1, H13 and H15 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) are still in general accordance with the emphasis upon good design as advanced by the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework). For the purposes of this appeal therefore I consider that the aspirations for maintaining an area's character or appearance and respecting the materials and finishes of a local area are consistent with the requirements of good design today. As such I do not consider that the wording of these particular policies can be considered so out of date so as to make it redundant in assessing this particular case.
10. Moreover, Policy CS5 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (CS) still reflects the need for good design in the way it responds to its local context and surrounding character and is also relevant.
11. The proposal before me seeks to construct three large, detached houses to this site. The proposed dwellings would be located along a similar alignment to that of previous schemes but would sit some metres further forward than those of the most recent permission. Although their general height would be similar, their form, design and materials would appear significantly different to those houses previously allowed.
12. The scheme would therefore result in three double gable fronted houses, each of a very similar design and each sporting one large asymmetrical glazed gable feature that would be counter-balanced by a full two storey glazed gable to the opposite side of each property. The materials proposed would be light render with vertical timber cladding. To the front, the larger asymmetrical gable,

¹ Application reference DC/21/02298/ Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/21/3280981

- would be cantilevered over a recessed garage giving some hint to a modern interpretation perhaps of a jettied vernacular building characteristic of the wider area.
13. To the frontage there would be three blocks of four car parking spaces along with further hardstanding in front of each property's respective garage. The four spaces associated with plot 3 would be located immediately adjacent the site's red line boundary where the access into to the proposed industrial site would be located.
 14. In considering this design solution I give great weight to the existing context of this site and to the overriding rural character of this part of Flordon Road. Although the houses would be not noticeably larger than those of the previous scheme, there are certain elements that would give much greater impact to the character and appearance of the area.
 15. Firstly, the proposed double gables would see no less than six double storey glazed gable elements along this part of the road that would, combined with their location being some metres farther forward than the previous scheme, dominate the bend in the road here.
 16. Further to this, although the actual amount of landscape may be on some levels comparable, the previous scheme tended to break up parking and intersperse it with planting and landscape. Conversely, this proposal sees three blocks of parking for up to 12 vehicles along with more space for the informal parking of further vehicles on the site's frontage.
 17. Such a design firstly has an impact when the site is seen through the driveway of the proposal, whereby parking of cars would dominate the site entrance. Furthermore, the four spaces outside Plot 3 would be located on higher ground and would be very visible on approach from the Coddensham Road direction. As a result, the frontage of this site would be harmfully dominated by car parking to such an extent as it would undermine the rural and landscape character of the lane here.
 18. In terms of the distinctive design characteristics, I have mentioned above the modern interpretation of a traditional gable. However, through including six large, glazed gables here, on relatively high houses that are set higher and closer to the road, there would be a very harmful effect of over dominance within what is effectively still a country lane. Although some such gables appear locally, buildings of such scale appeared to me to be rare outside of defined settlements unless they were of some Manor house typology. Moreover, the blatantly modern design and amount of these features would contribute to a significant departure from the local character with the proposed houses seeming much more urban than that of the previous scheme.
 19. As such although I consider that some modern design or glazed gable features could work here, there would be a significant undermining and urbanisation of the local character through including so many in this location on buildings that are so modern and so high.
 20. As such I consider that the design response notably fails to take the opportunities to create good design that is responsive to its built and landscape context. In this regard the proposal before me would be in conflict with Policies

GP1, H13 and H15 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan as well as Policy CS5 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy. It would also be contrary to the aspirations and increasing emphasis upon good contextual design that functions well and is beautiful as advanced by The Framework.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR