



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 September 2023

by Paul Thompson DipTRP MAUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W3520/W/22/3294690

The Orchard, Kitchen Close, Wickham Skeith IP23 8LZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Beryl Shaw against the decision of Mid Suffolk District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/21/04804, dated 8 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as Erection of two-storey dwelling. Creation of vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of two-storey dwelling at The Orchard, Kitchen Close, Wickham Skeith IP23 8LZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/21/04804, dated 8 August 2021, subject to the attached schedule of conditions.

Procedural Matters

2. I have taken the description of development from the Application Form but omitted superfluous information not forming part of the description of what is proposed. Moreover, there is no detail of the vehicular access. The description of development is therefore for *Erection of two-storey dwelling*. Furthermore, outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved. I have had regard to the site location plan but only in so far as it relates to considering the likely impact of the proposal on the matters set out in the main issues below.
3. The Council must consult Historic England where a planning application affects the setting of a Grade I listed building. This did not occur as part of the planning application. On my instruction, the Council therefore carried out such consultation, but no response was forthcoming.

Main Issues

4. As far as I can reasonably interpret from the Decision Notice, and the Council's Officer Report and Statement, the main issues are whether the proposal would preserve the setting of three designated heritage assets, namely a Grade I listed building, known as 'Church of St Andrew'; a Grade II listed building, known as 'Hall Farmhouse'; and the Wickham Skeith Conservation Area.

Reasons

Special Interest, Significance and Setting

5. The appeal concerns a rectangular parcel of land within a larger field that extends east and southeast from the boundary of the Wickham Skeith

Conservation Area (CA). The site is adjacent to a ribbon of pairs of two-storey dwellings to its south and land northwards separates it from the Grade II listed Hall Farmhouse¹. Much further east is the Grade I listed Church of St Andrew².

6. Wickham Skeith is a traditional rural village that grew from farming of the surrounding land. Hall Farm being one of three farmsteads within the CA including ranges of outbuildings and ponds. The predominant grain of built form around the green and other roads in the village is linear frontage development. Together with the field pattern that envelopes the village, this creates a clear and distinct pattern of development that contributes to the character and appearance of the CA, its historic setting within the surrounding countryside, and its understanding and significance as a heritage asset.
7. The Church is likely of medieval origin but restored in the mid-19th Century. Its significance is derived from its special architectural and historic interest. The use of flint rubble and stone dressings in its construction ensures that the architecture is typically ambitious and decorative. The bell tower and nave are each buttressed, and the top of the tower is marked by embattled parapets and openings. It occupies extensive grounds largely enclosed by mature planting. The presence of roadside planting east of The Broadway means views of the Church and its tower are of greatest prominence from the footpath south of Hall Farm. While the Wickham Skeith Conservation Area Appraisal does not identify this view as an important vista, visibility from the roads converging east of the green is likely to be more prominent when hedges and trees are cut lower or not in leaf.
8. Hall Farmhouse is a two-storey timber-framed farmhouse, finished in render and a pantile roof. It is arranged on a 3-cell plan and was probably built in the 16th Century. However, it has been subject of later alterations. As far as it is relevant to this appeal, its significance is to be found in its architectural and historic interest as a 16th Century timber-framed farmhouse.
9. The setting of both listed buildings also contributes to their special interest and understanding of their significance as heritage assets. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) defines this as being the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced.
10. In the context of the appeal and in so far as it is relevant to the Church, I am mindful of the contribution made by agricultural landscapes to the setting of such buildings. The presence of development in the village and the largely undeveloped and open landscape between provides a rural context which forms an integral part of its historic setting. The Farmhouse occupies the same agricultural landscape and the land immediately around it contributes to its legibility and understanding as a farmstead in the village, including its likely role in food production.
11. The ribbon of houses south of Hall Farm are visible in views from footpaths to the north and east, but are consistent with the village frontage grain of development. Hence, they do not interfere with the relationship of either listed building or the setting of the CA in the surrounding agricultural landscape. The remaining undeveloped space along the east frontage of The Broadway, including the site, is also one of several connections between the CA and

¹ List Entry Number: 1182725.

² List Entry Number: 1352521.

surrounding countryside. The site, its relationship within the larger field, and how this relates to the heritage assets, is also evident from those footpaths.

Effect of the Proposal

12. The proposal would continue the existing ribbon of houses north on The Broadway. This would amount to change within the setting of the listed buildings. However, it would appear as a natural extension of the existing grain of development in the village and almost certainly have a similar relationship within the surrounding landscape as residential development south of it. Moreover, the Farmhouse would remain prominent within its immediate surroundings and continue to be distinguished from existing and proposed houses east of The Broadway by the space between. Its legibility and understanding as a farmstead within the open and undeveloped agrarian landscape to its east would therefore persist. Accordingly, the proposal would preserve the rural setting of the Farmhouse and not detract from it.
13. Furthermore, the proposal would be situated further south of the point where views of the Church are likely to be able to be experienced from the west, around the junction of roads leading from the village green. The relationship between the village and the Church would not be harmed by the proposal. As this contributes to its setting this would be preserved. In any event, the Council would have sufficient controls, through consideration of Reserved Matters, to ensure any two-storey dwelling is sensitively designed to maintain views by being suitably sized, sited and landscaped.
14. In light of the above, the relationship between the CA and the surrounding countryside would also not be harmed by the proposal and its setting would be preserved.
15. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would preserve the setting of the Church of St Andrew, Hall Farmhouse and the CA. Hence, it would satisfy the statutory duty outlined in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) (England) Act 1990; and the design and heritage aims of Policy CS5 of the Council's Core Strategy³, Policies HB1 and HB8 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) (LP), and the Framework.

Conditions

16. Where appropriate and for clarity, I have amended the wording of the list of conditions provided by the Council, including in relation to standard conditions for the permission. However, I have omitted conditions related to plans; materials; access details, visibility splays and manoeuvring; and construction working hours, as there are no details regarding such matters to agree or control with the application, at this stage. I have also not included the condition for a lighting scheme for the site in relation to bats, as there is no substantive evidence before me of the site being utilised as habitat for bats.
17. In the interests of human health and in response to the comments submitted by the Council's Senior Environmental Management Officer, I have imposed a condition to deal with any unexpected land contamination. This is reasonable, as the appeal relates to the principle of developing the site.

³ Mid Suffolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted September 2008).

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Paul Thompson

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) Details of the access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before any development takes place and the development shall be carried out as approved.
- 2) Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than three years from the date of this permission.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall take place not later than two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved.
- 4) Any contamination that is found during the course of construction of the approved development that was not previously identified shall be reported immediately to the local planning authority. Development on the part of the site affected shall be suspended and a risk assessment carried out and submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Where unacceptable risks are found remediation and verification schemes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These approved schemes shall be carried out before the development is resumed or continued.

END OF SCHEDULE