

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2024

by C Harding BA (Hons) PGCert PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/24/3341176

Megget, Ploughmans Piece, Thornham, Norfolk PE36 6NE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr K Hunter against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01296/F.
 - The development proposed is Replacement Dwelling
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of Thornham Conservation Area, and the Norfolk Coast National Landscape.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a residential bungalow of brick construction with pantile roof. It is located within a cul-de-sac of properties of similar design and construction.
4. Although the appeal site lies outside of Thornham Conservation Area ('the CA'), it forms part of its immediate setting, with the CA boundary forming the northern boundary of the appeal site. The CA is predominantly focused around the western part of the village, but extends eastwards along the A149 where it is focused on the road and the properties that address it. The appeal site forms part of a more modern development set behind road frontage properties.
5. The significance of the CA is derived, insofar as it relates to this appeal, from the number of historic buildings and the use of traditional local materials, with many buildings and structures being of distinctive flint construction, and the intermittent linear nature of historic development along the main road, with single or small groups of buildings with gaps between.
6. The appeal site lies within the Norfolk Coast National Landscape. I am therefore mindful of the requirement to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. Paragraph 182 of

the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') states that National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) have the highest status of protection, and that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing their landscape and scenic beauty.

7. The proposal would result in the replacement of the existing bungalow with a two-storey house of contemporary design. The architectural approach to the dwelling would be varied, with each elevation incorporating different materials, and elements of the dwelling having differing approaches to roof design. As a result, although in themselves, the various elements and materials are generally reflective of the local area, the overall architectural composition would lack coherence.
8. Although buildings in Ploughman's Piece are largely architecturally unremarkable, there is a strong sense of character, with a high degree of uniformity in the red brick and pantile construction of the dwellings, many of which are detached bungalows, or dormer bungalows. This character is not devoid of value. The appeal proposal would differ substantially in design approach and would present a flint clad elevation to the road. In doing so, and while acknowledging that variety is not necessarily harmful in all cases and that flint is a common material within the settlement, in this instance the proposal would appear harmfully incongruous within its immediate surroundings.
9. I acknowledge that larger properties of a markedly more modern design and construction are situated at the corner of Ploughman's Piece and Choseley Road, however they do not punctuate the otherwise strong character of the street due to their peripheral location. In contrast, the appeal site is located at the end of a cul-de-sac and is surrounded by buildings of consistent scale and character. Therefore, its situation is not reflective of the examples cited.
10. At present, there is a view of the existing bungalow and other properties on Ploughman's Piece from the A149 between cottages within the CA. The view is largely restricted to red pantile roofscapes due to the single storey nature of the dwellings, which generally appear recessive and subservient to the cottages along the road, and do not read as being expressly modern structures. As a result, the existing development provides a sympathetic setting to the CA, suggesting a continuation of secondary, subservient development recessed from the road frontage.
11. Due to the increased height of the proposal, more of it would be visible between buildings in the CA than the existing dwelling. The visible elevation would incorporate large areas of brickwork at first floor level, punctuated by circular windows in gable features. The overall design approach, despite the use of red brick, would be clearly modern and this would be accentuated by the relatively small amount of fenestration at first floor level, the gable features and the circular windows.
12. Overall, the proposal would be a more substantial structure, with a greater degree of visible contrast to properties in the CA than is currently evident. While the setting of heritage assets can evolve over time, the greater prominence of the proposal would erode the sense of subservient development behind the properties fronting the A149. This would result in

harm to the significance of the CA, albeit this harm would be minor and therefore, less than substantial.

13. Paragraph 208 of the Framework states that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Paragraph 205 of the Framework states that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets.
14. The proposal would provide temporary economic and social benefits by providing employment during construction, and would comprise the redevelopment of a previously developed site. However, it has not been shown that the current dwelling is not fit for occupation and nor is the current dwelling harmful to the character and appearance of the area. I therefore afford these benefits minor weight. As the proposal would be a replacement dwelling, it would not represent a boost to the supply of housing. Overall, I conclude that the benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm, which although less than substantial, to which I nevertheless afford great weight.
15. Moreover, having found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and the significance of the CA, being mindful of my duty to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural and scenic beauty of the NL, I afford significant weight to the harm that I have found in these respects.
16. The proposal would conflict with Policies D1, H1, H4 of the Thornham Neighbourhood Development Plan ('TNDP'), Policies CS08 and CS12 of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Local Development Framework Core Strategy, and Policy DM14 of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan. Together and amongst other factors, these policies state that proposals should be of a high design quality, appropriate to the character of the site and its surroundings, as well as protect and enhance the historic environment and special qualities of the area.
17. However, the proposal would not conflict with TNDP Policy HA1 as, overall, it would incorporate materials that are compatible with the area.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the Framework, worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Harding

INSPECTOR