



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2024

by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) FCIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th of December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/24/3350894

Normead House, Garboldisham Road, East Harling, NR16 2PU

- 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 and Mrs Philip Norris against the decision of Breckland Council.
 - The application reference is 3PL/2023/1195/F.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing prefabricated dwelling and erection of new dwelling house in conventional design with pitched roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal includes the demolition of an existing prefabricated dwelling. At the time of my site visit, the dwelling that occupied the site had already been demolished and I was, therefore, unable to see it in situ. At that time a mobile home was situated within the site.
3. The description of the development refers to the provision of a "dwelling house in conventional design with pitched roof". However, the design of the dwelling house was revised during the course of the application process. The form of the dwelling when the application was determined incorporates a flat roof, replacing the proposed pitch roof and resulting in a reduced height of the roof when compared to the proposal in its initial form.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area and whether the proposal is of an outstanding design, having particular regard to local and national policies for the delivery of homes in the countryside and achieving good design.

Reasons

5. There is no dispute between the parties that the appeal site is in a rural location outside of the settlement boundary for Harling. It is, therefore, within the countryside for planning purposes, where the Development Plan does not generally support new development.
6. The proposal is for a replacement dwelling. Policy HOU11 of the Breckland Local Plan (2023) (the BLP) states that "replacement dwellings must be of a scale and design sensitive to the countryside setting, with a height and size similar to that of the original dwelling. If an alternative height or scale is

- proposed, the applicant will be expected to demonstrate that the scheme exhibits an exceptionally high quality of design and enhances the character and appearance of the locality".
7. Policy GEN02 of the BLP seeks to ensure that new development is of a high quality of design. Under that policy new development is expected to meet a number of criteria, including respecting and being sensitive to the character of the surrounding area. This aim is also supported by policy COM01 of the BLP, which reiterates the need for new development to contribute to the distinctive character of the local area and, further, to integrate to a high degree of compatibility with the surrounding area.
 8. These policies are in general accordance with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) as set out in Sections 5, 12 and 15.
 9. Guidance on how these aims are to be achieved is provided within the Breckland Design Guide (the BDG). That document requires that new development must relate positively and be well-integrated into its local context, drawing on positive examples from the surrounding area.
 10. The site formed part of a working farmstead, with the farm buildings comprising a small group, set within open fields, surrounded by mature hedging. The wider farmstead site has since been developed for general residential use, with the conversion of the former barn, the replacement of the farmhouse with a new dwelling, and the removal of controls restricting occupancy. The buildings are modest in scale and feature traditional design elements, including sloping roofs. The evidence before me indicates that the demolished bungalow was a low building and, whilst on a plot fronting Garboldisham Road, appeared subservient to the main buildings within the group.
 11. Overall, whilst the neighbouring building, Town Farm Cottage, was enlarged during development of the wider site, the buildings nonetheless form a grouping of modest scale set within the open field surrounding it. This contributes positively to the rural character and appearance of the area as open farmland.
 12. The footprint of the proposed dwelling would be significantly greater than that of the earlier bungalow. Further, the proposed two-storey dwelling would, even incorporating a flat roof, be significantly higher at ridge and eaves height.
 13. Notwithstanding that the proposal would have a lower roof height than its immediate neighbour, the massing of the built form on the site would be significantly increased. This would be particularly noticeable, given its proximity to the road. This perceptible increase in built form would be exacerbated by the introduction of the double garage, itself a substantial building. Notwithstanding the presence of a mature hedgerow on the site frontage, this would remain visible from Garboldisham Road, by virtue of the height of the proposed building, the openness of the surrounding fields and the local topography.
 14. The proposed development would undermine the modest scale of the group and erode the openness of the rural setting through the introduction of additional built form of an inappropriate scale. The scale of the building is such that it would compete with its neighbours, rather than complementing the existing hierarchy of built form within the group. Further, the proposal would

introduce the incongruous built form of a flat roof adjacent to the otherwise more traditional roof forms. Thus, the proposal would have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

15. Whilst the proposal would incorporate some sustainable features, such as higher levels of insulation, photovoltaic panels and an air source heat pump, these are now relatively common features of new homes and do not push the boundaries of conventional design. I am not, therefore, persuaded on the basis of the evidence before me that the dwelling would necessarily be outstanding or innovative in terms of its design and levels of sustainability.
16. Bringing these matters together I conclude that the proposal would have a significant harmful effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area and would not be an outstanding design, having particular regard to local and national policies for the delivery of homes in the countryside and achieving good design. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to the aims of policies COM01, GEN02 and HOU11 of the BLP as identified above. For similar reasons the proposal would be contrary to the guidance provided in the BDG.

Other Matters

17. The appellant has received planning permission for the replacement of the bungalow with a two-storey family dwelling¹ (the approved scheme). However, I have very limited information regarding the design of the approved building. However, I note that, whilst larger than the original bungalow, the approved scheme would have a significantly smaller gross internal area than that currently proposed.
18. Thus, the massing of the approved scheme would not have a more harmful effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area than the proposal before me in terms of its impact on the openness of the countryside, nor would it have the same effect in terms of dominating the group of buildings. The fallback therefore attracts limited weight in favour of the appeal.
19. There would be a modest public benefit in updating the housing stock through the provision of a more energy-efficient dwelling house. However, there is no evidence before me to suggest that this could not be achieved through the implementation of the scheme already permitted, which would be built to satisfy current building regulations.
20. Similarly, there would be a minor public benefit to the local economy through the creation of short-term employment in the construction industry, but, again, such benefits would accrue through implementation of the scheme already permitted.
21. In conclusion the harm would outweigh the limited benefits provided by the scheme when considered against development plan policies and the Framework when read as a whole.

¹ Council Ref: 3PL2021/1654/F

Conclusion

22. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

I A Dyer

INSPECTOR