



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/25/3364656

Meadow Land Adjacent The Yard, Thornham Road, King's Lynn PE36 6LR

- 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 Mrs T McDermott against the decision of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01749/F.
 - The development proposed was described as 'retrospective change of use of part of field to gravelled yard allowing for new store building for maintenance of 2 acre meadow adjacent private dwelling'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site address given on the planning application form and stated on the Council's decision notice refer to the site as 'Norfolk Pools Builders Yard'. However, the application form advised that address was out of date and a revised address was entered on the appeal form. I agree with the Council that it is clear that the addresses relate to the same site, and I have therefore used the address given on the appeal form, albeit with the addition of the post code from the application form, in the banner heading above.
3. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the planning application form. However, the appellant's statement advises that the description should not have included 'change of use of part of field'. They confirm that the proposal is limited to operational development only, relating to the retention of a gravelled hardstanding area and the construction of a new store building, and that the use of the land would remain unchanged. I further note that the application form did not give any indication of a proposed use. The Council advises that it assessed the application on the basis of an agricultural use and has no objection to my determining the appeal on this basis. As a result and because I am satisfied in the circumstances of this case that no injustice would be caused, I have considered the appeal as seeking permission only for operational development and not any change of use of the land.
4. In March 2025, subsequent to the Council's decision to refuse the application, the Local Plan 2021-2040 ('the LP') was adopted and policies of the Core Strategy 2011 ('CS') and Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016 ('SADMP') which were referred to in the reasons for refusal were superseded. The Council's statement details the policies of the LP that it considers relevant to the appeal and the appellant has had the opportunity to respond as part of their final

comments. I am therefore satisfied that no prejudice would be caused by my determination of the appeal giving full weight to the policies of the LP, and I make no further reference to the CS or SADMP.

5. Also after the Council's decision, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') in December 2024. The main parties have addressed the change in their appeal evidence and I have determined the appeal having regard to these comments and the updated Framework.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:
 - i) whether or not the location of the proposal within the countryside would be acceptable; and
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area including the Norfolk Coast National Landscape.

Reasons

Location

7. The appeal relates to an area within a parcel of grass which sits between Thornham Road and a meadow, adjacent to a detached dwelling known as 'The Yard'. The site is part of an area designated by the Holme-Next-The-Sea Neighbourhood Plan 2021 ('the NP') as 'Countryside Zone' where Policy HNTS 5 of the NP sets out that development should, amongst other things, demonstrate a need that is clearly related to agricultural activities and linked to a specific location that satisfies that particular need.
8. The appellant advises that the proposal would support maintenance of the meadow to the rear of the site which is also shown to be within their control. The use of land as meadow land would fall within the definition of 'agriculture' set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the Act'), and there is no requirement in the Act for such use to be as part of an agricultural business or enterprise. Furthermore, while the Parish Council refer to use of the meadow site as a builders yard and then amenity space in connection with residential use of The Yard, the evidence before me does not indicate that there has been any change to its lawful use from agriculture. On that basis and insofar as the appellant advises that the store building would be used for storage of vehicles, machinery and equipment required to maintain the meadow and hay and seed storage, it would ostensibly be related to agricultural activity.
9. However, while the appellant suggests that hardstanding is required to park and manoeuvre vehicles, machinery and equipment from the store to the meadow, there is no clear detail to explain why such an extensive area of gravel around the store building would be needed to reasonably facilitate access. Moreover, the gravel does not reach the gate to the meadow which raises significant doubts in my mind both about its necessity to facilitate access and whether the development as a whole would be clearly linked to agricultural activity.
10. Taking these factors together, I am not satisfied that a need linked to agricultural activity has been adequately demonstrated so as to justify the development in the Countryside Zone. I therefore conclude that the location of the proposal within the

countryside would not be acceptable and there would be conflict with Policy HNTS 5 of the NP.

Character and Appearance

11. The appeal site is located within the Norfolk Coast National Landscape ('the NL')¹ which comprises a diverse area of coastal hinterland. The NL includes some buildings and settlements, but the overall level of development is low and that which is present is generally set within a surrounding landscape of farmland, heath, woodland and wetlands which is distinctly rural and which provides for a sense of remoteness and tranquillity to much of the area. These qualities together with the pattern of settlements contribute to the natural beauty of the NL.
12. The appeal site is adjacent to a short ribbon of dwellings which are set back similar distances from Thornham Road, behind which are farm buildings and a campsite. The information before me indicates that prior to the laying of gravel, the site was undeveloped grass. Together with the remaining grass to the west and the meadow behind, it is part of a predominantly undeveloped gap which provides for separation between Holme-next-the-Sea and the ribbon development along this part of Thornham Road and which forms part of the rural landscape setting around the village.
13. The appellant asserts that the design of the development would be in keeping with the rural area. However, while the materials may be sympathetic to a rural area, the design of the store building including a series of three sets of double doors would in my view be more reminiscent of a garage rather than a barn or standalone rural building and would give it a somewhat domestic appearance. In addition and notwithstanding that it may have come from a local quarry, the considerable area of gravel around the store matches that to the front of The Yard to form a continuous swathe served by the same single access from Thornham Road. It consequently appears as an extension to the driveway which reinforces the impression of domesticity.
14. Even if I were satisfied on the first main issue that the proposal would be meeting a need linked to agricultural activity, I find taking these factors together that the overall impression would be of development associated with the residential occupation of The Yard. The marked gap between the edge of the gravel and the gate to the meadow would further provide visual distinction between these sites resulting in a lack of any apparent connection that might otherwise suggest a relationship with the meadow rather than The Yard. On that basis, I find that the proposal would domesticate the site and would effectively extend the existing ribbon of suburban development along Thornham Road into the rural setting around Holme.
15. Moreover, the building would be set notably forward of the front of The Yard and other development beyond. Its proximity to Thornham Road would be uncharacteristic and the development in this position would disrupt the general building line along the road. Despite being single-storey, the store building would also have a relatively large footprint and would together with the expanse of gravel have a marked physical presence which would erode the site's open and rural quality.

¹ Formerly known as the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

16. There is some vegetation along the roadside, but this is of relatively modest height and a significant stretch of the frontage is open. Although the site is at a slightly lower land level than Thornham Road, there would be only limited screening of the development and based on my observations, it would be a conspicuous and intrusive feature in the street scene, even if predominantly experienced from vehicles. Some views could also be likely from rights of way in the wider vicinity, albeit that the distance, topography and single storey height of the development mean that the visual impact on these views would be limited and I agree with the appellant that the development would not be prominent on the skyline.
17. Given the relatively small scale of the site and development, effects would be localised and of low magnitude within the wider landscape. Even so, this is a sensitive receiving landscape given the NL designation and Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) outlines a duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the NL. The Framework additionally provides that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in NLs.
18. Given the above, I find the proposal would be appreciated as an unwelcome and unsympathetic incursion of urbanising development into the countryside around Holme causing harm to the rural character and appearance of the area which would detract from the qualities and natural beauty of the NL.
19. The appellant advises that the proposal is needed to enable maintenance of the land which could otherwise become overgrown and subject to fly-tipping and that there is no alternative on the land to accommodate this need. At the time of my visit however, the meadow appeared in a reasonable condition suggesting that the lack of a store building is not currently precluding maintenance. I find no compelling evidence demonstrating that the meadow would necessarily detract from the character and appearance of the area in the absence of the appeal proposal and I am not therefore persuaded that the potential to support easier maintenance of the meadow would outweigh the harm that I have identified.
20. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and detriment to the landscape and scenic beauty of the Norfolk Coast NL. It would conflict with Policies LP15, LP16, LP18 and LP21 of the LP insofar as they include requirements broadly for high quality design and development that conserves and enhances the NL's special qualities and distinctive character, that enhances local distinctiveness and the distinctive local character of coastal areas; and that response sensitively and sympathetically to the local setting. There would also be conflict with Policies HNTS 5, 10 and 20 of the NP insofar as they broadly require development that reflects local character and distinctiveness; that respects, conserves and enhances the NL and its qualities.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR