
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2025

by **C Walker BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y2620/W/25/3367899

Land Off Bradfield Road, Trunch, North Walsham, Norfolk, NR28 0QL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Miss Ruth Hicks and Mrs Rachel Cook against the decision of North Norfolk District Council.
 - The application Ref is PO/24/0716.
 - The development proposed is erection of up to 6 no. dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal scheme relates to an outline proposal with all matters reserved, except for the means of access, for future consideration. I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.
3. A site layout plan has been submitted which indicates how residential development could be accommodated on the site. This is annotated as a concept, and I have taken it into account for illustrative purposes only.
4. The Council's third reason for refusal relates to insufficient information advanced to meet the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. The appellant has provided additional information with their appeal, and the Council indicate this has overcome the refusal reason. I see no reason to disagree. The submission of the BNG information now meets the minimum requirements¹. Therefore, I do not need to deal with this matter further.
5. My attention has been drawn to an emerging North Norfolk Local Plan (eLP). This has reached the Main Modifications stage following examination, with public consultation having now concluded. The Council advise that there are no significant unresolved objections and that adoption is expected by the end of 2025. Both parties agree that it can be given weight in decision-making albeit the level of weight is in dispute. I deal with this matter within my reasoning below.

Main Issues

6. In light of the above the main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on highway safety; and

¹ as set out in Article 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

- whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the proposal, having regard to access to services and facilities.

Reasons

Highway safety

7. With regards to the transport impact of new developments, Policy CT 5 of the North Norfolk Core Strategy (2008) (CS) sets out a number of criteria that development will be assessed against. These include that the proposal should provide for safe and convenient access on foot, cycle, public and private transport addressing the needs of all, including those with a disability, and that the expected nature and volume of traffic generated by the proposal could be accommodated by the existing road network without detriment to highway safety. This aligns with paragraph 115b of the Framework which stipulates that it should be ensured that safe and suitable access to sites can be achieved for all users. Safe and convenient access is also a requirement of Policy SS 1 of the emerging North Norfolk Local Plan (eLP).
8. The appeal site is located on the eastern side of Bradfield Road with access currently formed by a field gate. Norfolk County Council as Highways Authority have designated it as a 'Quiet Lane' which are minor rural roads or networks appropriate for shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other vehicles. Located beyond the western edge of Trunch, Bradfield Road connects the appeal site to the village in a north-easterly direction whilst to the south provides access to the rural area.
9. Both parties agree that the proposed development would generate approximately 36 vehicle movements per day, based on the TRICS² database. It is suggested that compared to agricultural traffic that could be generated without planning permission, which could involve large agricultural vehicles, the appeal proposal would likely generate a lower number of traffic movements. However, this has not been substantiated in evidence. Furthermore, my observations of the existing access, which showed limited signs of vehicular track marks in the grass, suggest it is currently only in light use. As such, I am not persuaded that the proposal would not significantly increase vehicle movements.
10. In any event, 36 daily vehicle movements associated with residential development would be very different in nature to agricultural traffic, which is likely to be more sporadic and limited to daylight hours. In contrast, residential use is likely to generate more two-way traffic as future occupiers leave and enter the site, particularly at peak times and vehicle movements will not be confined to daylight hours. The development would also generate pedestrian movement and is also likely to include some larger delivery vehicles associated with it, which would not occur to the same extent with an agricultural use.
11. Access to the site would be located towards the southern half of the appeal site. Between the access point and the junction with Chapel Lane to the north, Bradfield Road is flanked by narrow sloped highway verges and hedgerows on either side. It has a limited, single-track width of less than 4m, a matter undisputed. Figure 7.1 of Manual for Streets³ indicates that for two cars to pass, roads need to be at least

² Trip Rate Information Computer System

³ Communities and Local Government and Department for Transport

4.1m wide. Therefore, owing to the narrow width of Bradfield Road in the vicinity of the appeal site, it would not be possible for two cars to pass in opposite directions, nor a larger vehicle and one car. Pedestrians, including those that are less mobile, would have no separate footway and would be particularly vulnerable in such circumstances.

12. Although the appellants ATC⁴ traffic data indicates traffic would be unlikely to be travelling close to the 60mph speed that the road permits, given the likely established volume and nature of additional residential traffic, the opportunities for conflict between two-way traffic would substantially increase. Due to the curved road formation, drivers travelling south to the appeal site would be unlikely to see oncoming drivers turning north from the appeal site onto Bradfield Road, until they had fully committed to turning onto this section of the highway. Given the lack of passing places and the lack of full forward visibility of on-coming vehicles, this is likely to lead to vehicles having to reverse for considerable stretches of the highway to allow for another vehicle to pass. This manoeuvring, which is likely to take place close to the nearby junction and the appeal site access, would place users of the highway, including pedestrians and cyclists, at risk of accidents and harm.
13. It has been put to me that permitted development rights could allow the site to be used for tourism through a licence, subject to provision of electric hook ups and water access. Limited evidence is before me to show this is a realistic fallback position, or indeed that a lower number of likely seasonal use caravans/lodges than the 6 dwellings proposed, would clearly result in more traffic movements than the appeal scheme. As such I give this only limited weight.
14. In assessing specific applications for development, the Framework states that it should be ensured that sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. It also guides that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In the case of this appeal, the proposal would run counter to these objectives.
15. Accordingly, I find that the effect on highway safety would be unacceptable, placing users at increased risk of accidents, harm and inconvenience. Therefore, the proposal would give rise to factors that would undermine highway safety and it is certainly not representative of a safe and convenient access as required by adopted CS Policy CT 5, emerging Policy SS 1 of the eLP and the Framework.
16. Whilst concern has been raised that visibility is poor at the North Walsham Road C295, this has not been adequately articulated or substantiated and consequently I find no harm in respect of this aspect.

Suitable location/access to services and facilities

17. A strategic approach to development is set out in adopted CS Policy SS 1. This focuses the majority of development towards the towns and larger villages. Three 'Principal Settlements' at the top of the settlement hierarchy are expected to accommodate 50% of new homes, with the 'Secondary Settlements' expected to deliver 20%. 'Service Villages' and 'Coastal Services Villages' are required to

⁴ Automated traffic counters

accommodate a small amount of new development to support rural sustainability. Trunch does not fall within any of the settlements listed within this policy. The appeal site comprises agricultural land adjacent to the built-up part of the village Trunch, in the countryside.

18. Development in the countryside is limited by CS Policy SS 2, to that which requires a rural location and comprises one of a list of exceptions. Housing development is not listed as an exception, bringing the scheme into conflict with this policy.
19. However, in the eLP, Trunch has a defined settlement boundary and is categorized in Policy SS 1 as one of a number of 'Small Growth Villages', which are collectively expected to contribute to housing delivery. Development outside of the settlement boundaries are permitted only if all of a number of criteria (currently 3a to g) are met. It is common ground that the appeal site lies adjacent to the emerging settlement boundary and meets criterion 3a. Relevant criterion are 3d, 3f and 3g, which I take in turn below.
20. Criterion 3b requires the number of new dwellings granted planning permission (less any lapsed) since the adoption of the Plan, should not be significantly more than the individual growth figures for each settlement set out in Table 3 'Small Growth Villages – Indicative Growth Figures'. The Council assert this cannot be met as growth figures only begin after the adoption of the eLP. Whilst noted, it seems to me that the intent of this emerging policy is to limit the extent of growth to a sustainable level for each settlement. In that regard I find that 6 dwellings would not be disproportionate for Trunch, which has an indicative growth figure of 37 dwellings, nor would it undermine the policy intention.
21. Small-scale, incremental growth compatible with the form and character of the village and its landscape setting is expected by criterion 3c. Given that layout is reserved and the site lies at the edge of the village where densities are more likely to be low, to successfully manage the transition to countryside, I find no conflict with this criterion.
22. However, as I have already found harm in respect of highway safety, the proposal would conflict with criterion 3e. For this reason, the proposal would conflict with emerging Policy SS 1.
23. Lying immediately adjacent to existing dwellings at the eastern edge of the village, the appeal site is not isolated. It is well contained by residential development to the north and east, such that it would read as a natural extension to the village. The evidence indicates that the village has a limited provision of services and facilities including a public house, social club, village hall and church. The lack of services such as a shop and school would mean that future residents would need to travel further afield to meet their day-to-day needs, noting that Mundesley and North Walsham offer wider services.
24. Limited information is advanced on the frequency of bus services, although I note that they connect Trunch with nearby towns, with the nearest bus stop said to be over 500m and a 15-minute walk away. However, access from the site for pedestrians to reach the bus stops and facilities within the village, would be firstly via a narrow road with no footway or street lighting. Although the road widens once onto Chapel Lane, it still has no continuous footway or streetlighting. This would likely deter many future occupiers from accessing these provisions on foot and diminish the attractiveness of utilising public transport as a genuine alternative to

reliance on the private car. This is at odds with the requirement of CS Policy SS 4 for development to contribute to the delivery of sustainable development.

25. For the reasons set out above, I find that the appeal site is not a suitable location for the proposal, having regard to access to services and facilities in conflict with CS policies SS 1, SS2 and SS4. Conflict is also identified with emerging Policy SS1 of the eLP to a more limited extent. The weighting that I attribute to these policies is a matter I return to in my planning balance.

Other Matters

26. Trunch Hall, a grade II listed building lies within the vicinity of the appeal site. Accordingly, I have had special regard to section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). However, neither party has indicated that the proposal falls within its setting. From what I have seen and read, I have no reason to disagree. Therefore, I do not consider this further.
27. The appeal site lies within the zone of influence of European habitat sites afforded protection by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended. Limited information is before me in respect of the site-specific effects on the site, or indeed the qualifying features to enable me, as competent authority, to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA). Had I been minded to allow the appeal, it would have been necessary to further consider whether the proposal would likely have significant adverse effects on the integrity of those sites, including whether necessary mitigation was secured. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons there is no need for me to undertake an AA.
28. The proposal is advanced as self-build custom build dwellings. The Planning Obligation advanced with this appeal to secure this provision is not executed so cannot control this matter. Additionally, as a scheme for up to 6 dwellings, the eLP would expect a mix of house sizes and tenures in accordance with Policy HOU 2 which requires an element of affordable housing either on site, or provision in lieu secured via a financial contribution. Had I been minded to allow this appeal, it would have been necessary for me to consider if these matters were fatal to the scheme or not, including the level of weight that should be attached to this emerging policy. However, as I am dismissing it for other reasons, I do not need to do so as it would not affect the outcome.
29. My attention is drawn to perceived inconsistency in decision making in Trunch for housing. Three examples of where planning permission has been granted are cited. These are; (1) three dwellings at Itarsi on Chapel Lane, (2) one dwelling on land south of The Poppies, North Walsham Road and (3) three dwellings north of Chapel Road. Although I do not have full details before me for context, such as all of the relevant officer/committee reports, it is clear from the plans that all three sites were located more centrally within the built up part of the village and, owing to this, are unlikely to have faced the same type of highway safety issues that this scheme would create. Therefore, they do not alter my findings.

Planning Balance

30. The Council cannot currently demonstrate the necessary five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (5YHLS) in accordance with the Framework. An inability to demonstrate a 5YHLS warrants the application of paragraph 11(d) of the Framework, which relates to the presumption in favour of sustainable

development. In this case it means granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

31. The boost in housing supply and the associated economic and social benefits, such as the temporary construction jobs they would create, and the ability of the scheme to support local services, contributing to rural vitality, weigh considerably in favour of the scheme. I do not consider that 'limited landscape harm' by its very nature, is a benefit as suggested by the appellant.
32. I have found that locationally, the site runs contrary to the spatial strategy of the CS. However, in circumstances where the Council's housing delivery policies have acted to unduly restrict the supply of homes, I do not find the site's position outside of the built-up part of the village, and thus at odds with the Council's adopted spatial strategy, to be decisive to the outcome of this appeal. Rather, when considered in the round, the site is within a relatively sustainable location where occupants would be able to help support local services. My findings on this matter broadly align with the emerging approach set out in Policy SS 1 of the eLP, to which I give considerable weight, owing to its advanced stage in the process.
33. Whilst the distance from the appeal site to the village services is not significant, of concern is the ability of pedestrians and cyclists to safely access these, particularly between the access point of the appeal site and Chapel Lane where the road is particularly narrow and lacks verges. Moreover, I have identified demonstrable risk and harm to highway safety in respect of the likelihood of conflicts, owing to the narrow, rural nature of the lane and the lack of passing places. It has not been shown that these risks are capable of mitigation, as was the situation in the caselaw⁵ cited to me.
34. Although I have had regard to many caselaw examples drawn to my attention, based on the limited information, the need for each case to be determined on its own merits and the differing contexts to the scheme before me, they do not alter my findings on this appeal.
35. As the proposal places people at risk of harm, I afford this substantial weight. These adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits I have identified when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply. Moreover, the proposal conflicts with the development plan and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

36. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

C Walker

INSPECTOR

⁵ Telford & Wrekin Borough Council v. SoS for C&LG [2018] EWHC 51 (Admin)