

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 15 September 2015

APPLICATION NO DC/15/2481/FUL

LOCATION
 Abbey Farm Meadow
 The Street
 South Elmham St James
 Suffolk
 IP19 0HT

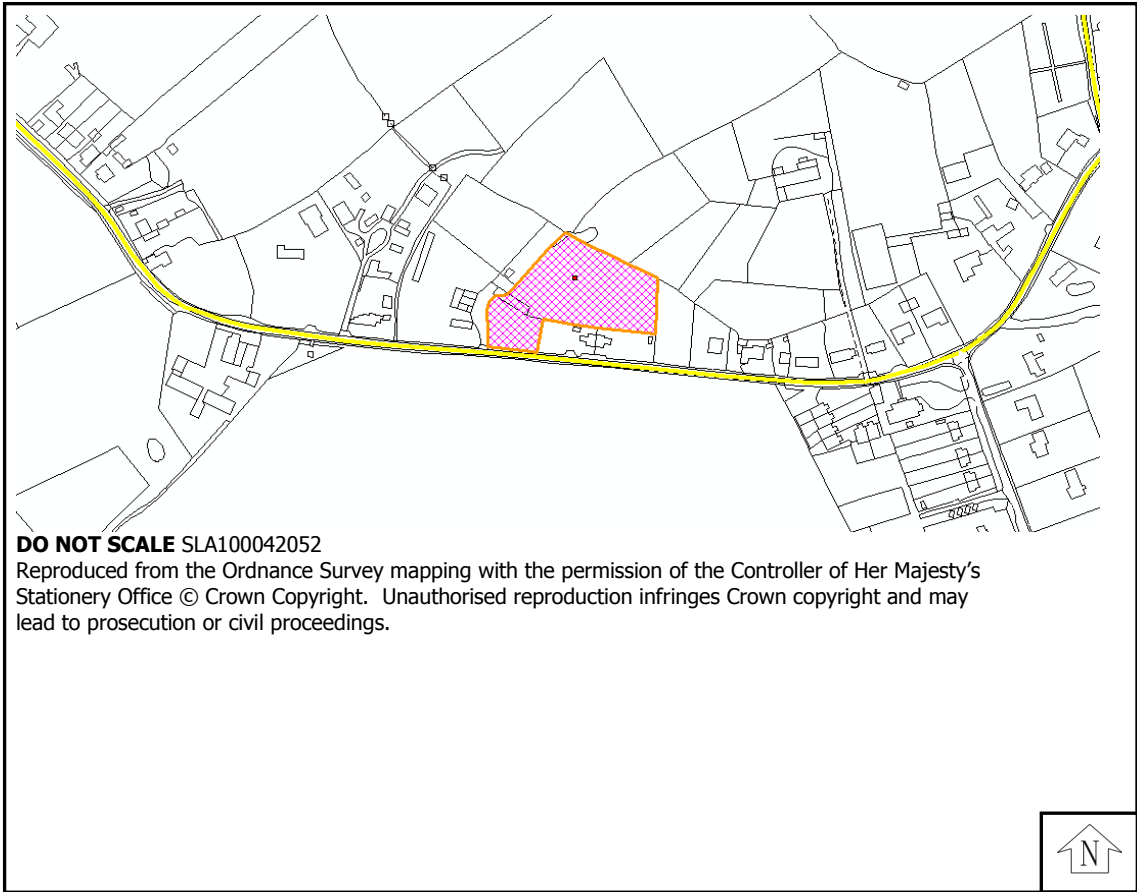
EXPIRY DATE 31 August 2015

APPLICATION TYPE Full Application

APPLICANT Mr Peter Crockford

PARISH South Elmham St James

PROPOSAL Construction of a new sustainable, energy efficient house and garage



1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The submitted application seeks approval for the erection of a two-storey, 4/5-bed detached dwelling with 5-bay garage block to the rear. It is proposed to make the dwelling as energy efficient as possible and would include features such as air source heat pumps, solar panels and rain water harvesting as a minimum.
- 1.2 The dwelling would be fully DDA compliant, which is particularly important to the applicant who has a young child currently being treated for a stage 4 neuroblastoma. The proposed

ground floor bedroom/study would be intended for use by medical staff should the need arise.

- 1.3 Notwithstanding the above it is the principle, design and scale of the dwelling, and its potential impact on the setting of the adjacent listed building, that require assessment and for members to consider the proposal in context of the site, its surroundings and current local and national planning policy.
- 1.4 The application comes before the Committee because the Cabinet member for Planning and Coastal Managements lives immediately adjacent to the site, although at the time of writing this report, no comments had been received from him respect of the submitted application.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 South Elmham St James is a small village which is one of several villages set approximately 6 miles between the market towns of Bungay, Halesworth and Harleston. There are limited local facilities in adjoining villages, including primary schools, a pub and a small village shop. Halesworth is the closest town offering a train link to larger settlements. The village is very rural in nature and its main industry is that of agriculture, although there are some limited smaller businesses such as that of the applicant.
- 2.2 The site subject to this application is located on The Street, which is the main road through the village, and is currently used as a hay meadow/grassland, with significant hedging and mature trees surrounding the site. There is a direct vehicular access from the site onto The Street. The site is located within a ribbon of development along the northern and southern sides of The Street, which includes the village hall and a mix of dwellings of varying sizes, age and design.
- 2.3 To the immediate east, directly adjoining the site is a pair of semi-detached two-storey dwellings and beyond that is 'The Bungalow, all of which are situated in relatively generous gardens.
- 2.4 To the west, and directly adjoining the site, is Abbey Farm, which is a Grade II listed building, which has planning permission and listed building consent for the conversion of an existing garage and shed to form living accommodation. Beyond Abbey Farm there are additional farm units and further residential properties, again of varying styles, age and design.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The application is for the construction of a new sustainable, energy efficient house and garage on land to the east of Abbey Farm, The Street, South Elmham St James.

4 CONSULTATIONS/COMMENTS

- 4.1 **Neighbour consultation/representations** none had been received at the time of writing this report
- 4.2 **South Elmham St James Parish Meeting Comments** none had been received at the time of writing this report

Consultees

- 4.3 **Suffolk County - Rights Of Way:** Footpath 3 has been recorded adjacent to the proposed development area; no objection to the proposed work, however informative note to be added.

4.4 **Anglian Water** was consulted on the 28 July 2015. No comments received

4.5 **Essex and Suffolk Water PLC:** We would advise you that our existing apparatus does not appear to be affected by the proposed development.

We have no objection to the construction of a new house and garage at the above subject to compliance with our requirements. Consent is given to this development on the condition that a new metered water connection is made onto our Company network for the new dwelling for revenue purposes.

4.6 **WDC Environmental Health - Contaminated Land:** comment as follows:

“The author of the phase 1 study submitted with the application has not identified any sources of contamination likely to impact upon the site and has concluded that no further investigation or assessment of contamination is warranted. However, the development involves disturbance to land and I would advise the LPA to impose a planning condition requiring the reporting of any suspected contamination encountered during development”.

4.7 **Suffolk County - Highways Department:** Recommends that permission be refused for the following reason:

The visibility of the access on to the development is well below the standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). For a classified C-class road, with a 30mph speed limit we would expect minimum visibility splays to be in the X axis 2.4m and in the Y axis, 90m in both directions.

The access in its proposed form as shown in Drawing Title: Site Plan/Street Scene, has a current Y visibility of 6m to the right and 3m to the left. Allowing this visibility splay on the proposed access would be detrimental to highway safety, for both users manoeuvring from the access and for those on the public highway.

4.8 **Waveney Norse - Property and Facilities** were consulted on the 28 July 2015.

PUBLICITY

4.9 The application has been the subject of the following press advertisement:

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Public Right of Way Affected,	07.08.2015	27.08.2015	Beccles and Bungay Journal
Public Right of Way Affected,	07.08.2015	27.08.2015	Lowestoft Journal

SITE NOTICES

4.10 The following site notices have been displayed:

General Site Notice Reason for site notice: In the Vicinity of Public Right of Way, Date posted 05.08.2015 Expiry date 25.08.2015

5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 The Waveney Core Strategy was adopted in January 2009. Policy CS01 sets the spatial strategy for the District. Policy, policy CS02 seeks high quality and sustainable design, CS11 considers housing and policy CS17 built and historic environment.

- 5.2 The Development Management policies were adopted in January 2011. Policy DM01 sets “physical limits” for some settlements. Policy DM22 considers residential development in rural areas. Policy DM02 sets design principles, policy DM30 seeks to protect and enhance the historic environment and DM31 archaeological sites.

6 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The policies noted above are considered the most appropriate in this instance and the overriding considerations are those of development in the open countryside, highways, visual impact and the setting of the adjacent listed building.
- 6.2 Policy CS01 states that most new development will take place in the main town of Lowestoft, followed by the Market Towns and that outside these locations, development will be regarded as being in the open countryside where the objective is to preserve the countryside for its own sake. Exceptions to this overall approach will be infill housing development and affordable housing that meets local need, both subject to the character and form of the settlement amongst other issues.
- 6.3 Policy DM22 states that infill housing development of 1 or 2 dwellings may be acceptable as a means of allowing some, albeit limited, opportunities for housing in rural areas, subject to the form of the settlement and access to services and facilities.
- 6.4 Having considered the proposal it is suggested that the development could comply with policy DM22, however there other policy considerations that will need to be taken into account.
- 6.5 Policy CS02 relates to high quality and sustainable design, and the proposal is to create a dwelling that has a low carbon footprint by utilising natural resources where possible. It could be suggested that the development would be in an unsustainable location that would lead to reliance on private transport as there is no bus route or other public transport options through the village. However, the village is well-populated and the addition of one, albeit large, dwelling would not have such an impact on the sustainability of the village or otherwise. Whilst energy saving measures have been proposed the main building is that of traditional form (bricks and mortar) albeit with added insulation, however this would not be sufficient to comply with ‘green’ requirements.
- 6.6 CS11 relates to the general housing policy and states that outside the larger villages, only infill development and other exceptions will be permitted. Character and form of the settlement, access to services and facilities and impact on the landscape will be important in determining proposals for infill development. Again, in this respect the proposed development may be considered as infill development as it is within an existing settlement and the site represents a space between existing dwellings. Nevertheless there remain concerns regarding the overall scale of the proposed development and associated garage block.
- 6.7 CS17 relates to the built and historic environment where proposals for development are expected to conserve or enhance listed buildings and their settings along with designated Conservation Areas and the local distinctiveness of existing non-designated built environments. The proposed dwelling is very large and bulky in scale and appearance and would have a considerable visual impact on the area as a whole, and in particular, the setting of the adjacent listed farmhouse to the west of the site. It therefore needs to be considered whether the visual harm to the farmhouse would be so detrimental as to warrant refusal of the scheme. In this instance, it is considered that the siting of the dwelling, toward the front of the site, and with front projecting gables would have a significant and detrimental impact on the appearance and visibility of the adjacent listed building, be dominant within the street scene, and have an unacceptable impact on the aesthetic quality of the area as a whole.

- 6.8 DM01 relates to physical limits with development being concentrated within the main towns and villages of the district, with preference for development being given to previously used land or buildings or vacant or underused land. Whilst it has already been established that the development would not comply with this particular policy there is some limited scope for allowing development outside the physical limits boundaries as defined in the local plan. In this case there may be some limited scope to allow some form of building to be erected in this location.
- 6.9 Perhaps one of the most important and pertinent considerations is that of policy DM02 (Design Principles) which states that planning permission will normally be granted where the proposed development is sympathetic to the site and its surroundings and where proposals respect and enhance the identity and character of the site, contribute towards the distinctiveness of the local area, the quality of the built environment and the surrounding landscape.
- 6.10 It must be said that the proposed dwelling is very large in scale and overall bulk and that along with the garage block, is considered to be reaching the tolerance of the site as a whole. Whilst the site itself is very generous, the shape of it does rather limit the potential for development and the size and location of the dwelling itself and the associated 5-bay garage block creates a rather cramped and awkward layout. As a consequence of these restrictions and the siting of the proposed property, the dwelling would be very dominant and imposing within the street scene and could be said to detract from the adjacent listed building and its setting and the area as a whole.
- 6.11 It is, of course, appreciated that design is a very subjective and emotive subject; however it is considered by your officers that perhaps a less dominant, more visually sympathetic, or even contemporary style dwelling could be created, if members wish to support the erection of a dwelling in this location.
- 6.12 The remaining local plan policies that are relevant to this case are DM30 and DM31 which relate to the historic environment and archaeological sites. As already stated the proposed development would have an impact on the setting of the adjacent listed building and would be visually dominant thereby reducing the views of Abbey Farm, particularly from the east, and this impact will need to be carefully considered. In addition, although the site has clearly been used for agriculture for a number of years, it is in close proximity to and associated with the adjacent listed building and it is not unreasonable to expect an archaeological watching brief as a minimum if permission were to be granted.
- 6.13 As noted in paragraph 4.7 above, Suffolk County Highways have recommended refusal of the scheme on highway grounds. The hedgerow along the site frontage is quite significant and there is a hedge/fence at the adjacent property 2 Town Cottages that the applicant has no control over so cannot improve visibility splays to the east. It is appreciated that there is already a vehicular access in this location, however given the use of the land for hay making/grazing/low level agricultural uses, the vehicular activity is extremely limited and a domestic property would significantly increase the traffic movements to and from this site.
- 6.14 A potential amended access has been proposed and this has been sent to County Highways for comment and members will be updated should further comments be received.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This application is finely balanced, and whilst the personal circumstances of the applicant have been considered this is not reason enough to override policy considerations.
- 7.2 In this instance, because of the design, scale, overall bulk, impact on the street scene and the adjacent listed building, and the issue of lack of visibility from the access the development proves to be unacceptable.

8 RECOMMENDATION

The application is recommended for refusal for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is considered unacceptable by virtue of the overall scale, bulk, design and siting of the dwelling and the resultant negative visual impact this would have on the street scene as a whole and, in particular, the setting of the adjacent listed building. As such the development is contrary to Core Strategy policies CS02 and CS17 and Development Management policies DM02 and DM30.
2. The visibility of the access on to the development is well below the standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). For a classified C-class road, with a 30mph speed limit, minimum visibility splays would be in the X axis 2.4m and in the Y axis, 90m in both directions. The access in its proposed form as shown in Drawing Title: Site Plan/Street Scene, has a current Y visibility of 6m to the right and 3m to the left. Allowing this visibility splay on the proposed access would be detrimental to highway safety, for both users manoeuvring from the access and for those on the public highway.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: See application ref: DC/15/2481/FUL at www.waveney.gov.uk/publicaccess

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