Mr G Franklin

Robert Doughty Consultancy

Landscape Review
New Dwelling, Pear Tree Farm, St James Road,
Long Sutton

1185 2/LR/WB/DA

May 2017

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. My name is Wendy Buckingham, I have a BA (Hons) degree and a Master of Philosophy degree (MPhil) in Landscape Design, and I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape institute since 1991. As Principal Landscape Architect with the Robert Doughty Consultancy, I am experienced in carrying out Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment work for a range of development types.

1.2. This review is intended to assess the potential impact on the local landscape of the development of a new dwelling on the application site. Any mitigation requirements relating to the above can be established in order to ensure that any landscape or visual impacts arising from the development are reduced.

1.3. In order to carry out this assessment, prior to visiting the site, a desk top study was carried out to gain an insight into the landscape character of the site and surrounding area and highlight any possible sensitive receptors. This was followed by a site visit on the 26th April 2017, which involved both assessing the views from the site itself outwards and visiting key viewpoints such as public roads, footpaths and residential areas. Significant views were recorded using a digital camera with the focus lens adjusted to 50mm.

1.4. The application measures 1.1 ha, and is located approximately 2.25km to the south west of Long Sutton and the A17. Permission is sought for an individual "Paragraph 55" dwelling.

NPPF Paragraph 55 states that:

"Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as… the exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling. Such a design should-

- *be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas*
- *reflect the highest standards in architecture*
- *significantly enhance its immediate setting, and*
- *be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

2. SITE AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

2.1. The application site is generally flat, and is comprised of several agricultural buildings, most of which are either disused or used for storage, surrounded by hardstanding and bare ground. Poor semi-improved grassland and tall ruderals dominate the western extent of the site, with an intact hedgerow with some associated tree planting defining the southern, western, and part of the northern site boundaries. There are a number of large trees along the eastern boundary, and overall, with the exception of the site entrance on St James Road, the site is well screened. There is an existing dwelling directly adjacent to and north of the site, along with another dwelling with an associated cluster of outbuildings approximately 200m to the east. These two dwellings, along with the site itself comprise a well vegetated and green parcel of land, which is more intimate in scale and character and is in contrast to the sparsely vegetated surrounding flat agricultural land.

2.2. Looking at the site in its wider context, it is surrounded by open, flat agricultural farmland, consisting of very large field sizes which are on the whole devoid of hedged field boundaries. There is a small caravan park, Foremans's Bridge, approximately 375m to the south of the site, along with a number of isolated dwellings and farmsteads, which are characteristic of the locality.

2.3. In terms of landscape character, the application site falls within the National Character Area **46, The Fens**. This area is described as "**large scale, flat open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies, with sparse woodland cover and a hierarchy of rivers, drains and ditches providing a strong influence throughout the area. Shelter belts, including poplar, willow and leylandii are often around farmsteads".** There is no local level detailed landscape character assessment available for the South Holland District, but the National Character Area description accurately describes the locality of the site. The landscape surrounding the site is typical of the drained fenland that surrounds the Wash and land lying to the south, being virtually flat pond low lying. It is characterised by its simplicity and relative remoteness, with expansive and peaceful panoramas and big skies.

2.4. However, at a very local level, the character of the site is influenced by its proximity to the large and very visually prominent pylons and

powerlines which run in a north-west, south-east direction directly to the western and southern boundaries of the site.

3. VISUAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS

3.1. The site is on the whole very well screened by established existing planting to its boundaries. The site is particularly well contained visually in views from the south by the site's boundary vegetation and from the east by intervening buildings and associated tree planting.

3.2. Looking towards the site from the south, as can be seen in Viewpoints 1 and 2, the dense Hawthorn hedge and tree planting in the southern area of the site will substantially screen the proposed development from view, even in the winter months when leaf coverage is sparse. The only part of the development which may be visible is the upper storey and the roof, but as the dwelling is to be located in the northern area of the site, any glimpses will be softened by the existing vegetation on site. What is apparent in Viewpoint 1 is the visual prominence of the existing electricity pylons and power lines when viewing the site from this direction, which are detracting features in the locality.

3.3. Looking towards the site from the east, the site and the proposed development are significantly screened from view by the existing residential development and associated buildings, which are situated directly east of the site on St James Road.

3.4. From Wanton's Cross Gate to the west of the site, as can be seen in Viewpoint 3, the site's boundary vegetation is more sparse than that to the south, and the existing agricultural buildings on the site can be glimpsed. As these existing buildings are single storey and the proposed dwelling is to be 2 storeys in height, the development will be visible in views from this direction. However, the new development will be viewed against a backdrop of existing trees and the roofline is unlikely to break the skyline due to the height of the trees in the background, and the boundary vegetation to the site's boundary west of the dwelling will soften and filter any views. Additionally, as can be seen in Viewpoint 3, the pylons and powerlines to the south of the site are the dominant visual elements in this view.

3.5. From St James Road directly north of the site, there will be clear views of the development, as can be seen in Viewpoint 4, as this is the current access into the site and is, therefore, clear of any boundary vegetation.

However, views into site from this direction are achievable only from directly adjacent to the site from St James Road itself, as the northern side of this road is vegetated, which screens views into the site from further north. The current view is of a cluster of ageing and semi-derelict agricultural buildings set within a weed infested farmyard and this, although rural in character, is not a particularly attractive view. Existing residential development is clearly visible directly to the east of the application site, and the proposed building, although more unique and individual in design, will be spacially associated with the exiting dwelling within a well vegetated parcel of land.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

4.1. To conclude, the application site as a whole is well screened form view as has been detailed above, with the proposed development benefitting from a high degree of visual containment afforded by the existing boundary vegetation.

4.2. Close views of the development will on the whole be confined to views from the road network immediately surrounding the site, specifically from Wanton's Cross Gate and St James Road directly adjacent to the site. The vast majority of people affected by any changes to the landscape the development may bring will be those travelling by vehicle ie transient receptors. There are very few properties associated with the roads surrounding the site, and where there are roadside properties, more often than not they are associated with curtilage planting which screens views. There are no footpaths within the extents of the immediate road network, hence there are no Public Rights of Way close to the site. Due to the sparse road network in the area, once away from the roads which immediately surround the site, views of the site are extremely limited and distant.

4.3. The impact of the proposals on views is affected by a variety of issues, such as the landscape backdrop to particular views, the proximity and character of other buildings and structures, and intervening planting and buildings. I consider that the character of the application site is influenced by its location directly adjacent to an existing cluster of residential development within a well vegetated parcel of land which has a distinctly different character to the open surrounding farmland, and this imparts an increased capacity for the site to accommodate a residential dwelling, albeit a dwelling of a different style to that which

exists. Additionally, the existing pylons and powerlines and the caravan park, which lie to the south of the site, are elements within the immediate landscape context of the site which, although characteristic of the area, are strong visual detractors.

4.4. To assist with the integration of the development into the local landscape, and to ensure the site is developed without adverse landscape impacts, whilst at the same time preserving the key attributes and features of the site, the proposal will include the following mitigation:

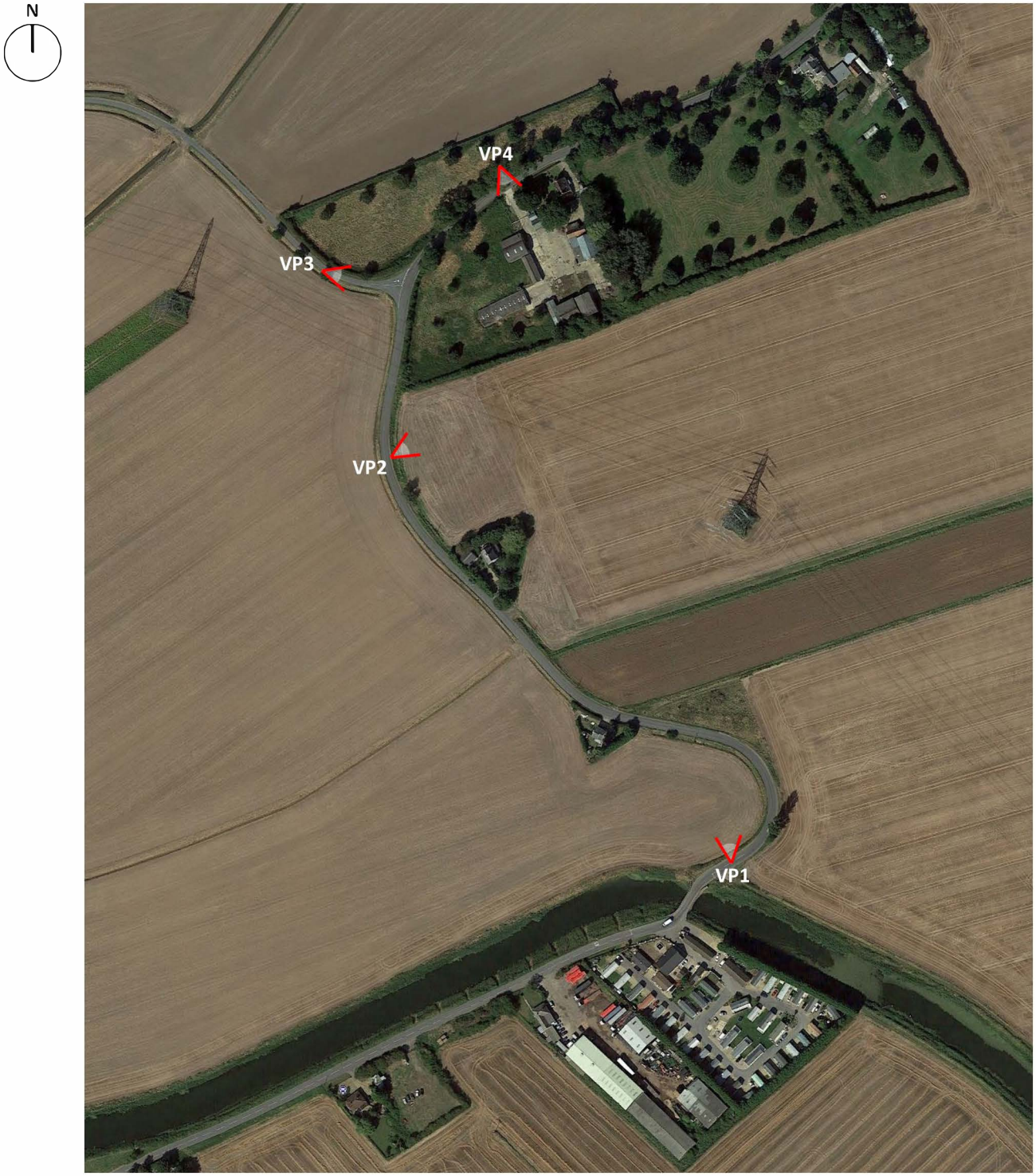
- The existing boundary hedges and trees to the site will be managed and maintained with any gaps in the hedgerows being infilled with appropriate species. The retention of these existing hedges and trees will assist in giving the development a more established character from the outset, and will also ensure that the long-term future management of these hedges and trees is secured. In particular, the retention and infilling of any gappy areas of the hedge and trees to the western and northern boundaries of the site will afford screening of views into the site from Wanton's Cross Gate and St James Road directly adjacent to the site.
- The dwelling itself will be located in the north eastern area of the site, which will have the effect of continuing the frontage character of this small residential cluster on St James Road, as well as keeping the building away from the southern boundary, which is subject to longer distance views from Wanton's Cross Gate.
- Tree planting within the site itself, particularly associated with the site's southern boundary, will screen and soften any views of the first floor and roof of the new dwelling which are achievable from this direction.

4.5. In my opinion, the strong visual and physical containment afforded to the site from the wider landscape by the extensive existing boundary vegetation, combined with the location of the site within a cluster of residential development, will ensure that this site can accommodate the type of development proposed without adversely affecting the character of the locality and without being visually obtrusive. This particular locality, although broadly in keeping with the Fenland Character detailed in 2.3, contains a number of elements, such as pylons and powerlines,

which are far more significant visual detractors than the dwelling will potentially be, notwithstanding the proposed contemporary character of the dwelling.

Appendix A

Photographic location Plan 1185-2_SK_LP01



Rev.	By	Notes	Date

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Client: Mr G Franklin			
Project: Photo location plan			
Drawing title: New Dwelling, Pear Tree Farm, Long Sutton			
Drawing No. 1185-2_SK_LP01	Rev.	Drawn WW	
Scale NTS @ A4	Date 15.05.17	Checked WB	

All measurements should be checked against on site conditions and any discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the Robert Doughty Consultancy.

Appendix B

Photographic Viewpoints

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Photographic Viewpoints



Viewpoint 1 - Looking north towards site from Wanton's Cross Gate



Viewpoint 2 - Looking towards site from Wanton's Cross Gate

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Photographic Viewpoints



Viewpoint 3 - Looking east towards site from Wanton's Cross gate opposite site



Viewpoint 4 - Looking into site from St James Road

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