

Entry Name: Flordon Hall 15th c.
Grade: II*
Source: Historic England
Source ID: 1050698
English Heritage Legacy ID: 226593

Entry Name: 2 storey Dower House, 16th c., called the Piggery by NG in the curtilage of Flordon Hall
Grade: II
Source: Historic England
Source ID: 1172231
English Heritage Legacy ID: 226594

Entry Name: Timber Framed 16th c. Norfolk Long Barn also in the curtilage of Flordon Hall
Grade: II
Source: Historic England
Source ID: 1373055
English Heritage Legacy ID: 226595

Flordon Hall is a significant Grade II* listed property. It has medieval origins, with later Tudor alterations. A significant amount of the original fabric survives and it clearly shows the evolution from a medieval hall house into a later gentrified residence. The building reflects centuries of continuous occupation and status. It is tied to the development of a rural estate and local social hierarchy. The Hall's historical significance is further highlighted by its association with the Buttevelyan family, who owned the land in AD1103 and the Kemps, who owned a large manorial estate by the end of the 16th century. The Hall has been a central part of the Flordon village's identity and continues to be a symbol of the area's heritage. It is intrinsically linked to the parish church, St Michael and All Angels, Flordon, also a grade 2* building. Many occupants of Flordon hall are listed as either Patrons or clergymen of the church dating back to the 17th c. The associated building/barn* are Grade II listed and are excellent representative examples of traditional Norfolk rural buildings. *One building has been identified as the 'piggery' by the applicant. It is in fact a substantial two store Dower House (very clear if you actually look at the building), with a single story cob barn attached, which has a date stamp of AD1134.

Whilst the Applicant acknowledges that the Hall and Barns are located close to each other, they clearly just see them as three listed buildings. It should be noted that the site's importance is greater than the sum of its parts. It's not just three buildings; it's a complete historic environment. The Hall shows how people lived, the barns show how they worked, and the landscape ties it all together. Together they form a well-preserved, legible historic estate, which is why the whole site and landscape is such a significant heritage asset.

The proposed pylons on our land (RG19-RG24) would pass from North to South West of the complex, the closest of which (RG21) would be some 200 m away but RG22 will have the most visual impact at 350m. The frontage of Flordon Hall faces East, so the pylons will be seen from the rear but at that distance they will have a profound impact and dominate all views west over the land. No appropriate viewpoint image has been produced to make an assessment of this effect. However, a viewpoint image was taken from the Long Lane, to the south east of the Hall so its focus is taken from an oblique angle. It does however, give some indication of the likely appearance of the proposed development and how it will change an otherwise agricultural landscape. There are hedgerows and trees between the listed buildings and the fields containing the proposed development however, the pylons will be clearly visible from the immediate setting of the Hall, not least because the land height increases as you look towards the pylon locations.

In terms of impact, it is noted that significant effects are identified up to a distance of approximately 1.5 km for landscape receptors and up to a distance of approximately 2 km for visual receptors. However, in terms of significance, the properties at No 70-73 Flordon Rd and the property, 'High Hopes' will have pylons RG21 and RG22 about 100m from their kitchen window. These are tenanted properties belonging to Flordon Hall and let at affordable rates for local people. As they are in the wider curtilage of the Hall it is understood that they should be afforded similar protected status as the Hall and Barns. The effect on these properties and the property 'Gable End', will be devastating.

The applicant's conclusions about harmful impact seem to be based on views from the listed buildings rather than views of them in their landscape setting. The Applicant considers that the assessment of permanent moderate adverse significance of effect (significant) (6.11.A2 Environmental Statement Appendix 11.2 – Historic Environment Assessment Tables [AS-070]) and Mid Less Than Substantial Harm (6.11.A7 Environmental Statement Appendix 11.7 - Assessment of Harm to Designated Heritage Assets [APP- 215]) to this listed building is appropriate and reflects the harm to the value of this asset. In this process they conclude the following:

Flordon Hall: It is concluded that the asset would experience Mid Less Than Substantial Harm.

Dower House or Piggery: It is concluded that the asset would experience Lower Less Than Substantial Harm.

Long Barn: It is concluded that the asset would experience Lower Less Than Substantial Harm.

South Norfolk District Council own experts disagree with these assessments and have written to the ExA to that effect. In relation to Flordon Hall state "It is considered that Flordon Hall should be assessed as incurring a higher level of less than substantial harm than National Grid indicates". They conclude that the assessment should state; "Flordon Hall: Moderate adverse significance of effect (significant); High less than substantial harm.

The Applicant carried out a walk over exercise, taking photos of what they considered important within the landscape of the Order limits. One of the photos, noted as Plate 22, "shows a Farmyard with the Barn to Flordon Hall and Piggery 60 yards south of Flordon Hall, looking east". They also note the following:

"Known Heritage Assets 2.1.23 The farmyard, where are located the Grade II barn to Flordon Hall (1050698) and the Grade II Piggery 60 yards south of Flordon Hall (1172231), is visible from the Order Limits (Plate 22). As for the Flordon Hall (1050698), it is not visible due to a tree line to its west".

The photo appears to be an attempt to hoodwink the planning process by reducing the impact that pylons will have on this historical site. This action appears common place throughout the planning application. What the photographer failed, or possibly, intended not to notice, was that if they had taken the photo a few yards to their right, you would clearly see Flordon Hall and the two listed barns in the picture. So, the obverse photo would clearly show just how significant and dominating the pylon at that location will be from the Hall and barns.

I add the following paragraph as it demonstrates the significant way the Applicant has chosen to twist the way a setting is described and the ignorance that has been used to describe certain settings. Plate 28 A topsoil pile along Wymondham Road, looking north-east.

2.1.30 2.1.31 “A top-soil pile was witnessed during the walkover survey. The pile looked to be the soil from a hole which had been intentionally dug in the area next to the field entrance along Wymondham Road (Plate 28). The area is principally agricultural in use and is subject to modern farming practices including large drainage ditches”.

What this actually shows is a pile of spoil left after the sugar beet have been harvested. The beet is stacked on the edge of the field next to the road, before being loaded for onward transportation and processing. This practice has been carried out for generations and is how we get most of the white sugar used in the UK. The hole they note is extremely significant. It is understood that this is one of the sites of a clay pit which was dug out to provide the clay to form the handmade bricks for Flordon Hall and the Dower House.

Flordon Hall and the area around the Hall and farm create a setting that has inspired many artists. The world renown artist, George Edward Mackley MBE (born 1900 in Huntingdon, died 1983 in Tonbridge, Kent) was an English wood engraving artist. He created many pictures in and around Flordon Hall. One of his pictures and widely considered to be Mackley’s finest wood engraving, was made at the Hall and entitled, “*Threshing at Flordon Hall*”. This subject was chosen as the front cover illustration for the retrospective show on Geroge Mackey’s wood engravings staged by Blond Fine Art in London in 1995. It not only depicts threshing but also the rural tranquillity around the Hall.

The natural environment around Flordon Hall is typical of rural south Norfolk but with some particularly interesting ecological features because of its position in the River Tas valley. The surrounding land is mostly arable farmland and pasture. Fields are divided by mature thick hedgerows and tree lines, which are important wildlife corridors. Small copse and spinney as well an ancient woodland (Nortons Wood 52.542956, 1.231616), break up the open landscape. These features create important wildlife corridors, allowing species to move between habitats in an otherwise open farming landscape. The applicant states that they have an Exclusion zones Commitment in respect to ancient woodland which can be found at Reference B17 in Table 6.1 of the outline CoCP [APP-300] and refers to the provision of a 15m minimum exclusion zone from the edge of ancient woodland. This has been totally disregarded in respect of Nortons Wood mentioned above, where there is no exclusion zone.

For many years we have been working with Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) who support farmers in South Norfolk to manage land for wildlife enhancement rather than operating specific, named public nature reserves. They have provided us with advice on biodiversity and ecological improvement across the farm. As a result we have created a substantial County Wildlife Site which has been recognised by South Norfolk County Council in the Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) which is a Local Environmental Record Centre holding information on species, geodiversity, habitats and protected sites for the whole of the county of Norfolk . This area, which is adjacent to the location of pylon RG24 has been identified as an Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB). The area is recognised as having particular importance for biodiversity through local, national or international designations. Using the corridor principle for wildlife, the site is linked via permanent grass land and a chalk stream which is a tributary of the river Tass, to Flordon Common with its SSSI and the SAC.

Flordon Hall is a short distance from Flordon Common, the key ecological feature in the area. It contains a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is of national importance and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SAC designation places it among the most important conservation sites in Europe; it is an exceptional and fragile habitat. The SAC is home to rare species, including the Desmoulin's whorl snail. Other notable wildlife includes Water voles, Barn owls and Barbastelles

Bats. Both areas butt up to Flordon Hall land and both areas are endangered by pylon RG23 and RG24.

With the SAC included, the landscape around Flordon Hall is not just farmland. The presence of the SAC means the area is part of a carefully protected ecological network, where water, soil, and land use are tightly linked. The area is peaceful farmland sitting next to a rare, spring-fed wetland of European importance, where tiny changes in the environment can have big ecological consequences.

So in conclusion, I consider scale of the intrusion by introducing 50m high pylons on 50m Sq. concrete rafts would result in a high level of less than substantial harm to the significance of the grade II* listed building and associated barns. Whist the Applicant has made a subjective assessment as to the harm to these historic buildings, they have only provided sufficient information and evidence to support that subjective assessment. It is therefore appropriate to conclude that they have misconstrued the facts to support their stated aim and whether by intent or ignorance they have misled others to become complicit in that aim.