



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 February 2025 by E Street BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/24/3355624

32 Church Lane, Evenley, Brackley NN13 5SG

- 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 Cathryn Fuller against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/0538/FULL.
 - The development proposed is described as “demolition of existing garage, conservatory and timber sheds and erection of 1.5 storey rear extension.”
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matter

3. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published prior to the determination of this appeal. The substantive parts of the new version do not however differ from the previous insofar as they relate to the main issue. The cases of the main parties will not therefore be prejudiced by my reference to the new version.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area with specific regard to the Evenley Conservation Area (ECA) and the setting of a grade II listed building.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal site is an attractive and modest two storey stone building with a slate roof. Including the external materials, it retains a number of pleasant traditional features such as its narrow linear form and a limited number of small windows which, along with the lintels, are timber. There is a later entrance hall/conservatory to the rear and a detached prefabricated garage. It has a distinct agrarian feel with a largely uninterrupted clean roof profile (save for some very small flat roof dormer windows) and occupies a corner position on the edge of the village and the ECA with the open countryside beyond. It relates to both situations and, along with the immediate group of other similar buildings which make up something of an enclave

of period design and consistency, the quality of its traditionality contributes positively to the significance of the ECA.

6. The grade II listed church is located towards the end of Church Lane with many residential dwellings surrounding it of varying ages and scales. The ECA appraisal refers to the fact that the church is secluded and does not feature prominently within overall views of the village due to local topography and vegetation. The church's setting is therefore limited in the visual sense, separated and within its own defined boundaries. Historically, it has some cultural, social, and religious significance a community focal point and place of worship.
7. Despite being to the rear of the building when viewed from the road approach, the width, shallower roof span and overall scale of the extension, whilst using similar materials, would unacceptably jar with the original proportions of the host building. This competition for visual dominance would be exacerbated by the use of the much larger window openings in the extension's first floor, particularly in the new gable and the two much taller half dormers. Whilst flush rooflights would maintain the quality of the building's original profile, their size and number would unacceptably clutter and disrupt the cleanliness of its outward appearance when taking into account the more historic dormers.
8. No detailed plans have been provided showing how the proposed triple glazed windows would sit in their respective reveals and therefore appear as a whole on the building. The use of timber would be welcome but given the number and type of installation, it would be eminently useful to have sight of some more detailed impressions than the elevations shown. These could theoretically be secured by planning conditions but without knowing them more precisely, I would be hesitant granting a planning permission that would use them. The existing openings are a fundamental and high-quality aspect of the building's traditionality.
9. Number 39 Church Lane (No 39) is to extend above the existing single storey rear projection and retains the existing land take whereby No 32 is a much larger projection. Moreover, the form of No 39 is a clear two storey dwelling whereby No 32 sits lower in ridge height and the appeal proposal would appear dominating and substantial. I am unaware of whether the replacement window schemes cited required, sought, or gained express planning permissions. Nevertheless, their presence does not sufficiently disregard the significance of the remaining original features, but moreover emphasises the importance of retaining them.
10. The current extensions and outbuildings are already part of the curtilage of the dwelling and do not face the church. The proposal would be the same. Moreover, there is a sufficient separation distance between the church and the proposal to which it would have no effect on the intrinsic features of the building. The primacy of the building will be retained as a residential dwelling along with the extension being built with traditional materials. The views both inside and outside of the church would be unaffected due its overall secluded nature and enclave of dwellings. There is also little indication that the appeal scheme, given its proposed use, location, and nature, would have a direct or indirect effect on the other aspects of the church's significance. Resultantly, and notwithstanding the lack of information for the replacement windows, I am unconvinced that the harms I have found above would extend to the significance of the church's setting.

11. That said, Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Nationally speaking, the Framework paragraph 212 places emphasis on great weight being given to an asset's conservation. Given the above assessment, the proposal would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the ECA. Due to the scale of the development in context, the harm would be less than substantial. As directed by paragraph 215 of the Framework, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. The proposal would result in a retrofit of the building and improve the general housing stock, to which I give modest weight. However, I have not been presented any evidence to suggest that the use of the building as a dwelling is currently at risk or any alternative schemes which could still reach the same outcome. The economic benefit during the construction phase would be time restricted in both scale and duration and therefore only limited weight would be afforded to it. Resultantly, the weight I would ascribe to it and the above matters would not outweigh the great weight given to the harm to the ECA.
13. Therefore, and overall, there would be conflict with Policies BN5 & R1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan 2014, Policies SS2, SPD1, HE5 & HE6 of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan 2011-2029, the relevant paragraphs of the Framework, Chapter 5 of the South Northamptonshire Design Guide and the ECA appraisal which together seek to ensure that development proposals are of a high-quality design and conserve the historic environment, amongst other things.

Conclusion and Recommendation

14. The appeal scheme would not comply with the development plan, I have been given no compelling reason, taking into account other material considerations advanced, to deviate therefrom. I therefore recommend the appeal be dismissed.

E Street

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

15. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR