



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2025

by K Lancaster BA (hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/24/3355666

Heronwell, C294 County Boundary to Thornley Gate, Allendale, Northumberland NE47 8AA

- 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 Mr Ian Pentney against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
- The application Ref is 24/03203/FUL.
- The development proposed is demolition of existing annex structure and side extension of existing dwellinghouse.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. In November 2023, all areas in England and Wales designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) were retitled National Landscapes (NL). There has been no change to the legal designation and policy status of these areas, but where appropriate, I have replaced the reference to the North Pennines AONB with the North Pennines NL (NPNL) in my decision to reflect this change.
3. Since the determination of this application, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) on 12 December 2024 and updated it on 7 February 2025. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal have not been amended. As a result, I have not sought further submissions on the revised Framework, and I am satisfied that no party's interests have been prejudiced by taking this approach.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development in the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area, including the NPNL.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached, two-storey dwelling constructed of sandstone walls, with a natural slate roof. There is also a detached building, used as an annex/studio situated forward of the main dwelling.
6. The appeal site is steeply sloping and located on much lower ground than the nearby terrace of properties fronting onto the main road. This position minimises views of the appeal site from the main road. However, there is a public right of way which runs along the front of appeal site affording walkers clear views of the appeal property.

7. Policy ENV 6 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036, adopted March 2022 (the NLP) relates to the NPPL and seeks to ensure, amongst other matters, that the special qualities of the NPPL will be conserved and enhanced, with particular considerations paid to the openness of the landscape and its sensitivity to development.
8. The guidance contained within the North Pennines AONB Design Guide recognises that buildings will be altered, extended or even converted throughout their life and that if carried out sensitively, this can allow old buildings to be adapted to meet changing needs. However, it also recognises that if done badly, such changes can damage both the character of the building and the wider setting. In respect of extensions, it states that they should respect the original building so that the existing volume or massing of the house remains the dominant form.
9. The proposed development would involve the demolition of the annex/studio together with a smaller outbuilding, and the construction of a part two-storey, part single storey extension to the side of the host property. It would extend approximately 9.82 metres from the side elevation and would be incrementally stepped down in response to the topography of the site.
10. The existing property is of a modest size measuring approximately 6.72 metres in width. The proposed extension would be of a greater width than the original property and would therefore represent a substantial addition to the original property. When viewed from the nearby public footpath, the width of the proposed development would be readily apparent and appear out-of-scale to the original and modest character of the host property. Whilst I accept that the design has been amended in response to the refusal of a previous application¹, the proposed development would nevertheless dominate the original dwelling and as a result, would not be viewed as a subservient addition.
11. I also acknowledge that the stepped design of the proposed extension would ensure the extension would work with and not against the topography of the site, and that the overall ridge height would sit slightly lower than the original building. However, due to its design and layout the proposed extension would create a central forward projecting element, which extends beyond the front elevation of the original property. This would not respect the original form and layout of the building, and would create an element that competes with, rather than respects the character and appearance of the host property.
12. In terms of fenestration, the existing building has a high ratio of solid walls to glazing. As a result, the extent of glazing proposed, in particular the large horizontal roof windows in the proposed extension would be in stark contrast to this character. In respect of the proposed rooflights, the appellant has suggested that any harm could be overcome by imposition of a planning condition, to require alternative rooflights to be provided. However, this would not overcome the wider harm identified above.
13. I have had regard to the reasoning provided in relation to the design approach, which states that the proposed design seeks to clearly distinguish between the extended parts and the original parts of the host property. However, in this particular case, the overall scale of the extended parts would overwhelm the

¹ Planning Application Ref: 23/04421/FUL

original parts to the detriment of the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

14. During consideration of the previous application the appeal site was identified by the Council as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). The dwelling and stone outbuilding is considered to be a NDHA on the basis that they form part of an upland smallholding dating from approximately the 1820s and are an example of vernacular architecture using locally sourced materials. The appeal site is therefore considered to be a locally distinctive type of development within the NPNL.
15. Although the Council did not specifically identify harm to the significance of a NDHA within its reason for refusal, and whilst I acknowledge that both the dwelling and the annex/studio building have been altered, they are nevertheless traditional buildings. The appeal site is located within an area in which the predominant building material is stone, and the layout of the existing buildings also provides evidence of layout and land use associated with a historic mining settlement. These elements contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development would as a result of its scale, design and use of materials overwhelm the original dwelling causing harm to its character and appearance and to its contribution to the surrounding area and the NPNL.
16. I acknowledge that there are elements of the proposed development that are welcomed, such as the replacement of existing uPVC with traditional style timber windows in the host property and the installation of an air source heat pump, improving the energy efficiency of the property. The appellant has also indicated that materials salvaged from the demolition of the annex building will be re-used. Nonetheless, these aspects of the proposal do not outweigh the above harm which I have identified.
17. I also recognise there is support within the Framework for the effective use of land, and that priority is given to the use of brownfield land. However, this does not alter my above findings in terms of the harm that the proposed extension would cause to the character and appearance of the host property, the surrounding area and the NPNL.
18. I have had regard to the appellant's suggestion that the ancillary building could be demolished, even if the proposed development does not go ahead. However, this would still require the prior approval of the Council and in any case would not justify allowing a development that would cause otherwise unacceptable harm to the host property and surrounding area.
19. Consequently, I therefore find that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host property, surrounding area and the NPNL. Thus, it would be contrary to Policies HOU9, QOP1, ENV1, ENV3, ENV6 and ENV7 of the NLP which seek amongst other things to ensure that extensions respect, complement and would not have an adverse impact on the style and character of the existing dwelling and its setting in terms of its design and use of materials, or on the character of the surrounding area. In so far as they relate to the NPNL, they state that great weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities and the statutory purposes of the NPNL.

Other Matters

20. The appeal site is adjacent to a Grade II Listed Building known as The Old Post Office, which is a two-storey mid C19th house with a central boarded door flanked by sixteen pane sash windows. Its significance lies in its historic and architectural interest. I have therefore had due regard to the statutory duty set out in Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This places a requirement upon the decision maker to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.
21. Due to the distance and topography, the council concluded that the proposed development would not cause harm to the setting of this listed building and based on the evidence before me and my own observations during my site visit, I see no reason to disagree with this conclusion.
22. The Council has not identified any harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, nor to the future occupiers of the appeal property. Nonetheless, the absence of harm is a neutral factor which neither weighs for or against the proposal.

Conclusion

23. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Lancaster

INSPECTOR