



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 March 2025 by T Morris BA (Hons) MSc

Decision by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/25/3359840

Flore Lane Wharf, Heyford Lane, Weedon Bec, West Northamptonshire NN7 4SF

- 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 Paul Whiting against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/4444/FUL.
 - The development proposed is demolition of two storey pitched roof extension and replacement with a flat roof two storey side extension with attached single storey double garage. Demolition of a two storey extension comprising a single garage with bedroom above and replacement with a new extension with raised roof height of the same footprint.
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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. In the interests of conciseness and accuracy, I have taken the description of development from the Council's Decision Notice.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Grand Union Canal Conservation Area (CA) and the setting of the listed building, Bridge No. 27 (BN27).

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. Flore Lane Wharf is a detached former canal wharf building which originally dates from the 19th century, although it has some more recent additions. It is sited along the Grand Union Canal and is within the CA. The Grand Union Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (2014) (CAMP) identifies that the significance of this part of the CA is derived from the gentle curves of the canal which runs through an attractive landscape setting with mature trees, open fields and long views across the countryside. The surviving listed and unlisted historic bridges and the historic groups of canal-side buildings are also key positive features within the area.

6. Flore Lane Wharf is also immediately adjacent to BN27, which is a Grade II listed public road bridge over the canal. The bridge was likely built at a similar time to this part of the canal and is predominantly formed of brick and stone, with a single elliptical arch, stone arch rings, solid parapet and solid piers. Its significance derives from it being one of the surviving listed historic bridges along the canal which is identified as a key positive feature within this part of the CA.
7. I acknowledge that despite its earlier origins; Flore Lane Wharf features some more recent extensions. Even though the later additions have some uncharacteristic features, such as the bow window, in the main they reflect the simple form, materials and openings of the original building. The current arrangement has a pleasant consistency in terms of its roof forms, scale, massing and materials, with a hierarchical relationship between the main body of the building and its later additions. By virtue of its simple pitched roof form, its traditional materials including the predominance of red brick and its mostly regular window pattern, it still maintains some of its original character. Furthermore, I note that it is identified as an 'Other Significant Building' in Map 1.1 of the Grand Union Canal Proposed Conservation Area Character Area Maps for Public Consultation, provided by the Council. Despite its alterations, the building therefore still appears as an historic canal side building, and in that regard, it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the local area, including to the CA and the setting of BN27.
8. Due to the overall scope of the proposed extensions together with their different materials, fenestration and roof styles, the proposal would detract from the traditional character of Flore Lane Wharf. The use of ironstone, whilst used in the surrounding area, would erode the predominance of the red brick of this particular building. Furthermore, the mix of different roof styles, dominance of glazing and fenestration would undermine the visual coherence of the building. Given the scope of the extensions and their fragmented appearance, the proposed development would appear as a disjointed and disparate addition and would be an incongruous feature in the CA, as well as within the setting of BN27, particularly when viewed from the canal towpath. Even though the proposal seeks to replace some uncharacteristic additions to the property, this does not justify further extensions which would also be harmful.
9. I have considered the style of other buildings and extensions in the CA, albeit the CA spans a considerable area where there will inevitably be variety in building styles. I am also aware of modern extensions in the area. In particular, I observed Ingledell Cottage on my site visit, but that has an altogether different design to Flore Lane Wharf, and it is not directly comparable. It is set lower in the landscape and a more discreet building than the appeal property. It is also further away from BN27 and is visually separated from the bridge by a large tree. The photographs of Stanton's Barn and Whitehall Farm provided by the Appellant show ironstone, however, at those properties, ironstone appears to be the main material. This is different to Flore Lane Wharf where red brick is the main material. Its extensive use here, however, would sharply contrast with the rest of the building and would visually compete with its original materials. Furthermore, from my own observations on my site visit, red brick seems to be the predominant material along this stretch of the canal. Overall, none of the examples provided justify the proposal given the individual design and prominent position of Flore Lane Wharf, as well as its sensitive relationship with BN27.

10. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires that special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. Section 66(1) of the Act states that special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
11. For the reasons set out above, the proposed development would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, and it would not preserve the setting of BN27. The proposal would therefore be harmful to the significance of the designated heritage assets, and this would amount to less than substantial harm, given that the harm would be relatively localised. In accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the development including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
12. I have carefully considered the public benefits put forward by the Appellant. The proposal would renovate the building including the restoration of period features. It would also remove some of the more unsympathetic recent additions and would rectify some structural defects. In addition, it would improve the energy efficiency and performance of the building which would ensure it remains viable for future generations. However, these benefits are of a limited nature overall and would amount to no more than a modest public benefit. Consequently, the benefits would not be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage assets and the great weight I must apply to these, in line with the Framework.
13. In summary, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA, and it would fail to preserve the setting of BN27. The proposal would therefore conflict with the statutory presumptions under Section 72(1) and Section 66(1) of the Act. It would also conflict with Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (2014), Policies SS2, SDP1, HE1, HE5 and HE6 of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2) (2020) and Policies BE3 and BE5 of the Nether Heyford Neighbourhood Plan (2023). Amongst other matters, these policies require that developments are of a good design quality which maintains or enhances the character and appearance of the building and its surroundings, respects the character and appearance of conservation areas in terms of scale, massing, design, materials and detailing, as well as preserving the setting of listed buildings.

Other Matters

14. I acknowledge that the Appellant seeks to invest in the building as their long-term family home and that there is government support for the sorts of energy efficiency measures the Appellant is proposing. Whilst such an investment in the building is positive, it does not overcome the harm of the proposal identified to the heritage assets.
15. Concerns regarding the way in which the council determined the planning application, including inconsistencies in decision making, response to amendments and pre-application advice are not land use planning matters and do not justify the harm of the proposal identified under the main issue.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. I have concluded that less than substantial harm would be caused to the identified designated heritage assets, but that this would not be outweighed by the identified public benefits. I afford great weight to the conservation of the designated heritage assets.
17. The proposed development would therefore conflict with the development plan and there are no other material considerations, including the provisions of the Framework which would outweigh this finding. I therefore recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

T Morris

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR