



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

by **L Fern BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 JULY 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/24/3358168

Welford House, 1 West End, Welford, West Northamptonshire NN6 6HJ

- 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 DLP Planning Limited against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/3013/FULL.
 - The development proposed is construction of two storey link extension incorporating garage, upgraded access, new driveway and parking area requiring minor demolition. Window replacement, insertion of new rooflights and rear dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by DLP Planning Limited against West Northamptonshire Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for the proposed gated entrance, driveway and hardstanding parking area to the rear of Welford House (WH); and
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area, affording special attention to the Welford Conservation Area (WCA) and having regard to WH as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA).

Reasons

Location

4. Policy RA2 of the Daventry Settlements and Countryside Local Plan Part 2 (2020) (DSCLP) states that development outside the defined confines of the Secondary Service Villages, including Welford, will be acceptable only in specific circumstances. The circumstances include where: the Council cannot demonstrate an adequate supply of deliverable housing sites; the development provided would clearly meet an identified local need; the scheme is required to support an essential local service that may be under threat; or the proposal is for economic

development that will enhance the vitality or sustainability of a Secondary Service Village.

5. Furthermore, Policy RA6 of the DSCLP sets out the forms of development supported outside the confines of villages. The list includes developments that provide the optimal viable use of a heritage asset.
6. It is common ground that the proposed gated entrance, driveway and part of the hardstanding parking area to the rear of WH are outside of the defined confines of Welford and that WH is identified as a heritage asset.
7. The proposal does not meet the specific circumstances set out in Policy RA2 where development in such locations could be acceptable. Furthermore, there is no substantiated evidence before me to demonstrate that the proposed development would be required to maintain the optimal viable use of WH as a residential dwelling.
8. Although the proposed gated entrance, driveway and parking area would be associated with an existing residential use, they would nevertheless be contrary to Policies RA2 and RA6 of the DSCLP for the above reasons.

Heritage

9. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of WCA.
10. Furthermore, paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) directs me to consider the effect of the proposal on the significance of WH as a NDHA, taking a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss.
11. The special interest and significance of WCA derives from its largely retained medieval street pattern, with views along associated streets such as High Street and West End having changed little in the 20th century. The settlement's elevated ridge location provides views across the surrounding landscape, particularly to the west, reinforcing its rural setting.
12. Extensive archaeological earthworks exist to the west of Welford that form the remains of the shrunken medieval settlement, which make an important contribution to understanding how Welford developed as a settlement over time.
13. The village has a high number of designated heritage assets and strong local vernacular architecture, with red brick and Welsh slate being the predominant building materials. A variety of mature trees exist throughout WCA, which provide visual amenity, soften the built form, contribute to the settlement's rural character and enhance biodiversity.
14. WH is a large Victorian house that creates an impression of grandeur, which is reflected in its identification as a high-status building in the Welford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2020) (WCAAMP). It retains many elements of its original design and is an important NDHA within the WCA.
15. The building is set within substantial grounds that include formal gardens located closer to the house, and paddocks further afield. The paddocks are identified as

possible medieval croft enclosures in the WCAAMP, which have survived from the early development of the village and form part of the extensive medieval earthworks. The paddock adjacent to West End, which is accessed via a simple wooden field gate, contributes positively to the rural character of this approach to the village, despite the presence of residential properties opposite. There is no substantiated evidence before me to demonstrate that a formal access track ran through the paddock historically.

16. The proposal includes the provision of an ornately gated entrance to WH from West End, with associated driveway and hardstanding parking area to the rear of the house and the conversion of the existing outbuildings to provide additional residential accommodation, facilitated by the provision of a linked extension to the main house.
17. I appreciate that WH is identified as a high-status building, where ordinarily an impressive entrance would not appear out of place and indeed, examples of grand gated entrances in the wider surrounds have been forwarded by the appellant.
18. However, the gated entrance and driveway proposed in this case, which would include tall brick pillars, decorative metal railings, gravel with granite setts and a turning circle, would be strikingly domestic and formal in appearance when viewed from West End, would extend across a paddock that is outside of the bounds of WH's formal gardens and the defined village confines. The gated entrance and driveway, although lacking vertical emphasis, would be out-of-character with its rural setting and weaken the significance of the land's historical context.
19. For these reasons, the proposed gated entrance and driveway, would not be sensitive to the defining characteristics of its surroundings and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the WCA.
20. Despite being large, the proposed linear linked extension, due to its significantly lower ridge height and siting to the rear of the main building and prominent outbuildings immediately adjacent to West End, would be proportionate in scale to its host and would be read as a subordinate addition.
21. Furthermore, the proposed area of hardstanding at the terminus of the driveway, although being substantial in area, would be largely confined by built form. It is therefore not easily visible from the public domain. Also, having regard to the substantial size of the property and its extensive grounds, the area of hardstanding would not be disproportionate in scale to its host, detrimental to WH's character and appearance, nor reduce WH's contribution to the WCA.
22. Despite the proposed dormer window being an anomaly within its immediate context, it is located on a roof slope that is not prominent within the street scene. It would be sensitively designed with a pitched roof and be of an appropriate scale for its host. In this regard, the proposed dormer window is not considered to detract from the merits of WH or the WCA.
23. Similarly, given the large volume of chimneys existing on WH, removal of one would not lead to a tangible change in the character of the property and would not therefore be harmful.
24. Notwithstanding that other parts of the proposal would not be harmful; the proposed gated entrance and driveway would cause harm to the character and

appearance of the WCA. Within the terms of the Framework, this harm would be less than substantial. Nevertheless, paragraphs 212 and 213 of the Framework state that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, and that any harm to, or loss of, their significance should require clear and convincing justification.

25. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (in this case the WCA), this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
26. The existing vehicular entrance to WH is close to the edge of the highway and does not provide adequate space for drivers to move off West End prior to entering. Furthermore, due to the presence of boundary walls, visibility is reduced when exiting. For these reasons, the proposed relocation of the main vehicular access to a section of West End with greater visibility and space has the potential to improve highway safety. That said, this benefit is considered against the low speed and usage of West End as a rural village road.
27. There are also benefits associated with the proposal in terms of the employment of workers during the construction phase and proposed changes to the property to improve energy efficiency, such as replacement windows.
28. Accordingly, I attribute moderate weight to the above benefits. These benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm the proposal would have on the significance of the WCA as a designated heritage asset to which I am required to give great weight. The proposal would therefore conflict with the Framework.
29. The proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the WCA in conflict with Policies S10 and BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 (2014), Policies RA2, ENV7 and ENV10 of the DSCLP, and Policy W1 of the Welford Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017). These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure development protects, conserves and enhances the natural and built environment, heritage assets and their settings, and the form, character and distinctiveness of villages, including Welford.

Other Matters

30. The appellant surmises that the Council could now be in a position of being unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites following revisions to the Framework in December 2024. There is no substantiated evidence before me to suggest that this is the case, and in any event the proposal does not seek the provision of new homes, and this consideration is irrelevant to this appeal.
31. No objections have been raised by either statutory consultees or the Parish Council. However, a lack of objection does not equate to a lack of harm, and I have considered the proposal on its own planning merits.

Conclusion

32. The proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L Fern

INSPECTOR