



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 July 2025

by Robert Fallon B.Sc. (Hons) PGDipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/D/25/3365950

The Old Smithy, Pound Lane, Woodnewton, PETERBOROUGH, PE8 5DY

- 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 and Mrs Charles and Tallie Hopkins against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is NE/24/01000/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as “first floor extension and single storey side extension, including internal alterations to existing property”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the setting of the Grade II listed Willow Brook Farmhouse.

Reasons

Appeal site context

3. The appeal site consists of an attractive residential property of modest scale and height constructed in local limestone with a clay pantile roof, the origins of which hail from two simple barns that were converted and extended via a central connecting wing in the 1990s (the appellant’s heritage statement indicates that they were previously a working smithy and associated storage in the mid-late 19th century).
4. Woodnewton is an attractive Northamptonshire village, with its ‘Main Street’ characterised by 1.5 to 2-storey limestone dwellings topped with a mixture of thatch, stone, pantile and slate roofs. The appeal site lies on the outskirts of the village where settlement built forms begins to thin out.
5. The appeal site does not fall within the Woodnewton Conservation Area, which lies approximately 340m away to the north-west. Although the dwelling is of considerable age and aesthetic/historic interest, neither the Council or appellant consider it to constitute a non-designated heritage asset. The Grade II listed Willow Brook Farmhouse lies on the opposite side of Pound Lane, to the north of the appeal site.

The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the setting of the Grade II listed Willow Brook Farmhouse

6. The character of the existing dwelling is defined by its origins as two separate barns of simple linear form, with the taller northern barn reflecting its more prominent position at the front of the site. Although these were subsequently linked by a connecting wing in the 1990s, this was lower in height than the northern barn, thereby emphasizing the subservient character of this modern structure and that of the original southern barn. This subservience was reinforced by a simple uncluttered roof form on the connecting wing and southern barn, in contrast to the taller northern barn with two small dormer windows. When taken as a whole, I consider the dwelling makes a positive and important contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
7. By reason of the increase in wall plate and roof ridgeline heights to the connecting wing and southern barn building, the proposed development would undermine the prominence of the northern barn and be harmful to the overall character of the dwelling. These alterations would also result in the roof pitch above the connecting wing being lowered, which would be at odds with the steeper roof pitch above both the northern and southern barns.
8. The introduction of 5 large dormer windows to the southern barn and connecting wing would accentuate the increased height and further diminish the legibility of the historic evolution of the site, which I consider to be integral to the character of the host dwelling and the contribution it makes to the wider character and appearance of the area. The development is also positioned on a prominent corner plot at the entrance to the village, which would intensify its harmful impact.
9. The proposed single storey side extension would also result in an incongruous double pile gable roof, further eroding the simple form of the host dwelling and compounding the harm. This would be exacerbated by the introduction of a large front door opening with full height side-windows into the north-facing elevation of this structure, giving it a distinctly suburban appearance akin to that of a converted domestic garage, wholly out of keeping with the rural character of the host building and wider area.
10. Willow Brook Farmhouse is taller and wider than the northern barn on the appeal site and therefore has a more imposing character and appearance. Based on the visual and historical characteristics of the area, I consider the adjacent road and buildings to form part of its setting and where the heritage asset can be best appreciated from.
11. My assessment of the development's impact on the setting of this listed building has had particular regard to the following observations;- (1) there being no evidence before me of a functional or historical relationship between Willow Brook Farmhouse and the appeal dwelling; (2) the increased roof height of the connecting wing not exceeding that of the northern barn (which would therefore restrict views of it from Willow Brook Farmhouse); (3) there being adequate intervening distance between Willow Brook Farmhouse and the southern barn (with its increased height slightly exceeding that of the northern barn); and (4) there being limited intervisibility between Willow Brook Farmhouse and the proposed dormer windows (which would otherwise make the scheme's increased roof height appear more noticeable and distract attention away from Willow Brook Farmhouse).

12. In light of the above, I have determined that the proposal would not compete with the visual dominance of Willow Brook Farmhouse or intrude into any key views of it or from it and as a consequence, it would have a neutral impact on its setting and not affect how it is experienced or its significance.
13. As a consequence, the proposed development would preserve the setting of the listed building known as Willow Brook Farmhouse. The result is that the duties under the Act to preserve the listed building or its setting¹, which I have given considerable importance and weight to, would be met.
14. I therefore conclude that the scheme would not conflict with Policy EN12 of the Local Plan² and Policy 2 of the Core Strategy³, which collectively seek, amongst other things, for development to; (1) conserve, protect and enhance the character, appearance and significance of designated heritage assets (and their settings); and (2) protect and enhance key views and vistas of heritage assets.
15. However, I nonetheless find that the scheme's harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling conflicts with paragraphs 131, 135 and 139 of the Framework⁴ which collectively seek, amongst other things; (a) the creation of high quality buildings; (b) visually attractive development as a result of good architecture; (c) development that is sympathetic to local character and history; (d) development that maintains a strong sense of place; and (e) the refusal of permission for development that is not well designed.
16. In view of the above, I conclude that the scheme's conflict with the more up-to-date Framework outweighs its compliance with the development plan policies referred to in the reasons for refusal, which indicates that the proposal should not be determined in accordance with the latter.

Other matters

17. I recognise that the appellant has sought to address the Council's concerns raised at the pre-application stage by reducing the scale of the development and altering its design. However, I must consider the scheme on its own merits.
18. I also note the appellant's willingness to accept a planning condition to alter the design and scale of the dormer windows. However, such matters would constitute a material change to the scheme necessitating reconsultation with interested parties and hence require a fresh planning application. It would not as a consequence be appropriate to impose such a condition, and in any event, this would not address all of the harm I have referred to.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Fallon

INSPECTOR

¹ Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

² East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2, adopted December 2023, North Northamptonshire Council.

³ North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011-2031, adopted July 2016, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit.

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 12 December 2024 (as amended on 7 February 2025).