



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 July 2025

by **S Brook BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M2325/W/25/3361860

21 North Houses Lane, Lytham St Annes FY8 4NT

- 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 Gavin Harris against the decision of Fylde Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/0275.
 - The development proposed is Change of use of existing dwellinghouse to five self-contained apartments including associated extensions and alterations to building comprising erection of additional storey to form a second floor level, single storey, two storey and first floor side extensions, first floor and single storey rear extensions, external alterations to all elevations, and alterations to site access, landscaping and parking arrangements.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant refers to an agreed amendment to the description of the development from that used in the banner heading above. The amendment referred to the proposal being a re-submission of an earlier application, and so it did not describe an act of development. I have taken the above description from the application form.
3. Reference is made in some of the submission documents to the appeal site being accessed at present from the cul-de-sac of 'North Moss Road'. However, the plans indicate that this cul-de-sac is named South Moss Road and so I have referred to it as such in this decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a detached, two storey dwelling of flat roof design, with garage, carport and gardens. It sits on the northern edge of the town, on the corner of New Houses Lane (NHL), which extends to the south, and South Moss Road (SMR), a cul-de-sac extending to the west. Open fields lie to the north and east. NHL and SMR contain a mix of detached bungalows, dormer bungalows and two storey houses, differing in size, style and materials. Properties along NHL, are set back from the road and many benefit from generous plots which include front gardens and off-road parking, providing the area with a sense of space. Mature trees and planting gives the area a leafy, verdant appearance.

6. While the flat roof design of the existing dwelling contrasts with surrounding development, it sits comfortably on this corner plot. This results from a number of factors, including its set back position from the road, its two storey height, which is similar to the eaves height of 19 NHL, and its single storey sections up to the shared boundaries, which reflect the eaves height on the front elevation of Cherrywood, and allow views between the host property and its neighbour's, contributing to the sense of space. Further, the overall size of the existing dwelling relates well to that of its neighbours and to its plot.
7. The appeal scheme would see extensions at ground and first floor level, the addition of a second-floor level to part of the extended footprint of the building, as well as a range of external alterations. Notable alterations would include extended balconies along the east and north facing elevations, provided by a boxed-out design that would overhang the ground floor and would extend up and wrap around the northeast corner of the building, to provide a balustrade to a balcony at the second floor level.
8. The proposal draws on and responds to the unique design of the existing dwelling and the resulting design itself, is a cohesive one. The mix of materials would not be excessive and would not be out of character, given the mix in the area. The proposal would not extend the built form beyond the appeal site, and so the landscape buffers to the immediate north and east, which delineate the urban edge and filter views of the appeal site from the north and east, would be unaffected.
9. However, when considered in context with neighbouring residential development, the increased height and massing of the proposed development would be notably at odds with the appearance of surrounding housing which is generally two storey, or lower. Albeit the height of the proposal would be similar to the ridgeline of No 19, the bulk added by the addition of accommodation at second floor level would contrast markedly with the diminishing scale of development above eaves height on neighbouring properties, which results from the use of pitched roofs.
10. Further bulk would result from the extension of the hardwood timber cladding upwards to provide a balustrade to the balcony wrapping around most of the second floor. This would be at a high level and it would overhang the ground floor. This design feature would increase the height and mass of the building over the size of the existing dwelling, and in comparison to neighbouring development. While I accept that there is a mix of materials in the area, hardwood timber cladding in a dark finish is not prevalent and so the use of such a material would further draw the eye towards this increase in massing. I appreciate that a condition could be imposed to control the finished material, however, I am not convinced that this alone would be sufficient to address my concerns with the proposal.
11. I have not been directed to any local policies which restrict the density of development in this area. Nevertheless, the extensions at first floor level, albeit of a height that would be sensitive to the height of neighbouring dwellings, would reduce the degree of openness that exists between the host property and its neighbours, resulting in a diminished sense of space. This, combined with the proposed increase in height and size, would result in a development that would appear overly large in its setting, at odds with the more spacious, lower density development that surrounds it, and which presently provides a suitable transition

towards the open countryside. Consequently, the proposal would impact detrimentally on the character and appearance of the area.

12. In addition to the existing trees to the north and east of the appeal site, there are further mature trees to the front of No 19 to the south. A number of trees are proposed for retention within the appeal site itself, and some additional tree and landscape planting is proposed. In combination, this would provide some screening of the development. However, it would not screen the development in its entirety, particularly in the winter months when some trees would not be in leaf. As such, this would not be sufficient to mitigate the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area.
13. My attention has been drawn to a number of developments¹ involving properties on NHL that have involved extension or re-build, and so have involved changes to the size and massing of other houses. Albeit close by, these other examples did not involve three storey development, nor do they share the same relationship to neighbouring properties as the appeal scheme. As such, these other examples are not directly comparable to this proposal and I have based my assessment on the particular circumstances of this case.
14. I have also been referred to a development of flats at Ballam Road², allowed on appeal. However, this development lies in a different part of Lytham St Annes, with differing site characteristics, particularly the distance from the development to neighbouring residential properties, which affords a greater sense of space between the new development and existing, and allows for the increase in massing. Consequently, there are notable differences between the appeal scheme and this development at Ballam Road, and so it does not lead me away from my earlier findings.
15. The plans indicate that a line of five parking spaces would be introduced along the boundary with NHL, each one accessed directly from the road, with a further two positioned off SMR in a similar location to the parking provided for the existing dwelling.
16. NHL has no defined footway, with the carriageway typically lined by grass verge to both sides, which softens the appearance of the road. Existing housing along NHL has off street parking, usually to the front or side. In most cases, this is accessed by a single width driveway, with parking located behind front boundary walls or hedging. I acknowledge that some of the existing properties along NHL have large parking areas to their frontage and I have considered those examples provided by the appellant, including those that have benefitted from the planning permissions referenced above. Nevertheless, grass verges and single width vehicular entrances are generally retained, while front boundary walls, fences or hedging afford some screening to these parking areas. Even so, many properties along NHL retain landscaped front gardens with mature trees, as well as parking, which affords the area a leafy appearance.
17. The proposal would incorporate grasscrete to the parking areas, while removing existing astroturf and some hard paving, and providing additional landscape planting. Nevertheless, the proposed parking along the boundary of the appeal site with NHL, would take up a substantial part of this frontage. Albeit some screening

¹ 24/0311 and 24/0127

² APP/M2325/W/17/3181335

would be afforded by mature trees and planting on neighbouring land when approaching from the north or south, given the direct access from the highway to these parking spaces, this parking area could not be screened by boundary treatment or landscaping along the site frontage itself. When in use, the prominent position and extent of this frontage parking would be uncharacteristic of the area and such a car dominated frontage along NHL would harm the visual amenities of the area.

18. Overall, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area and there would be conflict with policies GD7, H2, H3 and ENV1 of the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 (incorporating Partial Review), December 2021, and policies DH1, HOU2 and TR3 of the St Anne's on the Sea Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 – 2031, May 2017, which collectively, seek to ensure that new development is of a high standard of design that responds to its context and reflects and enhances the local character of the surrounding area, through the consideration of matters including density, siting, layout, massing, scale and materials, proportion, building to plot ratio, and parking, while avoiding demonstrable harm to the visual amenities of the local area, including the loss of front gardens for residential car parking.

Other Matters

19. The appeal scheme was determined by the Council prior to the publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in December 2024. As part of the appeal submissions, the Council has provided an updated housing land supply figure in response to the revised Framework and maintains that it can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. This has not been disputed by the appellant and from the evidence before me, I have no reason to disagree.
20. The proposal lies within the settlement boundary of Lytham St Annes, a Key Service Centre, where there are established footpath and cycle routes, and where access to a range of services and facilities would be possible by means other than the private car. Through outward and upward extension, the proposal would make a positive contribution to the government's aim to significantly boost the supply of homes, along with housing mix, choice, and affordability. It would do so by making a more efficient use of an existing residential plot, which could alleviate pressure on greenfield sites. New housing typically brings with it a range of social and economic benefits to the local area, and the provision of smaller flats could enable those wishing to do so, to downsize, which in turn, could increase the availability of family homes in the area.
21. The proposal would provide active frontages, and I am advised that it would also incorporate Secured by Design principles, measures for solar gain, energy and water efficiency, together with storage for waste and recyclables. The Council appears to be satisfied that a net gain in biodiversity could be achieved. Given the small scale of the development, the benefits of the proposal attract modest weight.
22. The appellant considers that the proposal would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers, and it would not harm the living conditions of those occupying neighbouring dwellings, while access and parking provision would also be satisfactory. I note that local residents disagree. These matters were considered by the Council at the application stage and did not form part of the reasons for refusal, which I have dealt with in the assessment above. In any event,

a lack of harm is a neutral matter and so these matters do not accrue any weight in favour of the proposal.

23. The appellant has suggested some bias against apartments on the part of the Council. I have determined the appeal on its individual planning merits. Reference has also been made to the operation of a business from a neighbouring property. However, I have been provided with little substantive evidence to demonstrate any impact of this upon the character of the area.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

24. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no other material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
25. In reaching this decision, I have considered paragraph 125 of the Framework. There is dispute between the main parties as to whether the appeal site meets the definition of previously developed land, given the exclusion of residential gardens in built-up areas from the definition within the Framework. However, even if I were to accept the appellant's position in this respect and afford substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes, for the reasons outlined above, the proposed development would result in substantial harm to the character and appearance of the area.
26. Further, even if the Council had been unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, the adverse impacts of approving the development would have significantly and demonstrably outweighed the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies contained within paragraph 11 d), including securing well-designed places.
27. For the foregoing reasons, the proposal would not be sustainable development, and the appeal should be dismissed.

S Brook

INSPECTOR