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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 August 2025

**by Mr R Walker BA HONS DIPTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/Y/24/3354263**

**18 Benefield Road, Oundle, Oundle, Northamptonshire PE8 4ET**

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
  - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs A Fitch-Holland against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
  - The application Ref is NE/22/01052/LBC.
  - The works proposed is a single storey rear extension.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. As the scheme relates to a listed building and is within a conservation area, I have had special regard to section 16(2) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

### Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed works would preserve the Grade II listed building, known as Number 16 (incorporating Number 14), 18, and 20 Benefield Road or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses and the extent to which it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Oundle Conservation Area.

### Reasons

#### *Special interest and significance*

4. Nos 18 and 20 form part of a row of terrace properties. The two properties have been amalgamated into one, hereafter referred to as No 18. It dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is constructed in stone, with the front partly rendered and it has a slate roof. The listed building has a distinct linear and narrow plan form, which create an intimate quality internally, which remains evident despite the amalgamation. This, along with its robust materials and traditional construction techniques, solid to void ratio and fenestration pattern make important contributions to its aesthetic and historical values which are evident from both the front and rear.
5. There are variations between the properties in the listed building, including from later alterations to the rear and from the amalgamation of properties. Nonetheless, the broad consistency of height, original narrow plan form, materials, and brick to void ratio, are still legible and result in a cohesive appearance.

6. There have been several modern interventions to the appeal property, including a single storey extension to the rear and internal works to facilitate the amalgamation into one larger dwelling. The small lean to rear extension at No 18 is constructed with rendered concrete block and these materials overtly clash with the materials on the host property. However, its narrow depth, and lean to form do preserve the hierarchy of rooms on the ground floor and the intimate qualities of the house remain evident. Overall, it has a minor negative impact on the significance of the listed building.
7. The listed building is experienced from the rear gardens by the residents of and visitors to the dwellings in the terrace. Trees and planting within the gardens, provide a pleasing soft relief and texture that positively contrasts with the newer buildings that dominate to the side of the rear garden of the appeal property. In these respects, their verdant qualities and setting, makes a small but positive contribution to the significance of the listed building.
8. The appeal site is located within the Oundle Conservation Area (CA). Its character and appearance are largely derived from the surviving elements of its historic layout, open spaces, and street pattern, combined with the architectural richness of its historic buildings. The heritage interest and value of the historic residential properties within this part of the CA, including the appeal premises, positively contribute to its character and appearance as a whole, and thereby to its significance as a designated heritage asset.

#### *Appeal proposal and effects*

9. The proposal would result in an extension of considerable depth relative to the depth of the original cottage. Its footprint, including the large open plan kitchen and garden room would weaken the hierarchical importance of the front ground floor rooms, and erode the distinctive narrow plan form of the listed building. Moreover, its size, and the open spacious qualities, would contrast starkly with the more intimate front ground floor rooms. This would be exacerbated by the modern appearance of the extension with its flat composite roof, lightwells and patio doors, which would not harmonise with the more rustic traditional appearance of the surviving original rear façade.
10. The design would maintain a clear delineation of the original form of the cottage. However, this would not overcome my concerns from the design of the scheme and the overtly contrasting form.
11. The terrace group contains several extensions to the rear of differing forms and alterations, including the existing extension to the rear of No 18. However, I have already taken them into account when considering the significance and special interest of the listed building. Moreover, none project out from the original rear façade as much as the appeal proposal would. As such, even though they are part of the building's narrative, and of varying designs, they do not justify the harm from this proposal.
12. The proposal would be hidden from views from Benefield Road and Stoke Doyle Road, and as such the attractive streetscape that forms this part of the CA would not be materially affected. However, harm is not predicated on visibility from the public realm as this may change and the proposal would be visible from the rear in private views. In this regard, given my findings above in relation to the rear elevation of the listed building, I also consider that the proposal would, in turn,

harm the character and significance of the CA. Consequently, whilst the magnitude of the harm may be concluded to be minor adverse in the context of the CA as a whole, it would nevertheless fail to preserve it.

13. Drawing the above together, the proposal would fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building, and would fail to preserve or enhance the character of the CA. As a result, the expectations of the Act have not been met, and the proposal would harm the significance of these designated heritage assets.

#### *Public benefits and heritage balance*

14. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that great weight be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
15. With reference to paragraphs 214 and 215 of the Framework, in finding harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, the magnitude of that harm should be assessed. Although, for the purposes of undertaking the heritage balance, the Framework does not require the decision maker to place the harm on a spectrum, I acknowledge that within each category of harm, the extent of the harm may vary.
16. In this instance, as the harm would be confined to the rear of the listed building, the harm to the listed building and the CA, individually and cumulatively, would be 'less than substantial' and at the lower end of the spectrum but, nevertheless, of great weight. Under such circumstances, paragraph 215 advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
17. There would be some economic, social, and environmental benefits resulting from the construction works, the general investment into the property and improvements to the local housing stock. This includes the improvements in energy efficiency and the expected lifespan from the proposed extension in comparison with the existing extension. However, the nature and scale of the associated public benefits that would flow from the scheme to the public at large would be minimal. Instead, the proposal would principally be of private benefit to any occupier of the property in providing additional space and an improved standard of accommodation in comparison with the existing extension. As such, the associated public benefits carry little weight in favour of the appeal.
18. Moreover, the continued viable use of the appeal property as a residential dwelling is not dependent on the proposal as the building has an ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence.
19. Overall, the weight that I ascribe to the public benefits that would result from the proposal, would not be sufficient to outweigh the great weight that I attach to the harm I have identified. In so far as it is a material consideration the works would conflict with the requirements of Policy 2 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy EN 12 of the Council's Local Plan, when taken together and in so far as they relate to this main issue. These say, amongst other things, that in considering proposals that affect a designated heritage asset or its setting great weight will be given to the asset's conservation.

### **Other Matters**

20. The appellants made changes to their scheme during the application process following discussions with the Council with a view to finding a solution. That said, this is not a matter for my consideration as part of this appeal, and I have assessed the proposal on its own merits.

### **Conclusion**

21. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

*Mr R Walker*

INSPECTOR