
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2025

by **David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/25/3360171

Land At Turner Street, Amble NE65 0DH

- 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 Ms S Gelley of Culsmore Ltd against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01157/FUL.
 - The development proposed is development of 2no. dwellings with associated parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - The character and appearance of the area, with due regard to the Amble Conservation Area;
 - Highway safety;
 - Habitats sites; and
 - Other considerations relevant to the planning balance.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site consists of an unsightly open plot of land which is used for informal parking. It is located close to Amble Town Centre, but the streetscape of Turner Street is primarily residential in character. The extant state of the land and its use for parking detract from the character and appearance of the area.
4. The site is located within the Amble Conservation Area (CA), although Turner Street is part of the boundary of the CA and the opposite side of the streetscape to the appeal site is outwith the CA. The CA Appraisal¹ includes a character analysis of the CA, including that the predominant domestic building form in Amble is the terraced row, with an almost exclusive use of traditional dual pitched roofs. This gives the CA and the townscape of its wider setting a pleasing uniformity, which contributes to the character and appearance of the area and the importance of the CA as a designated heritage asset.

¹ Amble Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Matters 2008

5. This reflects the streetscape of the CA in the vicinity of the appeal site which includes buildings varying between 1-3 storeys with pitched roofs. There are some flat roofed buildings, but these are primarily single storey extensions or utility buildings, including a 2-storey flat roofed extension adjacent to the appeal site.
6. Within the CA the principal wall material is sandstone, generally in course blocks. This is reflected in buildings in the CA in the vicinity of the site, although there is also some use of other materials including render. Buildings outwith the CA opposite the site make much greater use of render, although these also include some elements of brick and wood cladding.
7. The appeal proposal is a relatively unorthodox design, consisting of 2 detached flat-roofed 2-storey dwellings separated by parking and amenity spaces. Within the context of the area, the design of the detached dwellings would appear unduly box-like, and would jar with the predominant terraced form and use of pitched roofs within and around the CA. Although there are flat roofed buildings in the vicinity of the site, including the adjacent 2-storey extension, these are primarily secondary extensions or utility buildings, and do not set a context which justifies the use of flat roofs for principal residential buildings. Indeed, the flat roofed 2-storey extension served to confirm the awkward appearance of this design of roof in this location.
8. The long narrow vertical windows on the elevations facing onto the street would also be incongruous features, even given the varying window designs in the area. The appellant refers to a number of severe 2-storey stone elevations with either no windows or a high solid to void ratio with windows of varying sizes and designs. However, based on my own observations as well as the photos submitted by the appellant, elevations of this nature are predominantly side elevations of a terrace or building and are clearly secondary to the main elevation. The elevations of the proposal facing onto the street have the arrangement and context of primary elevations, and on that basis the narrow vertical emphasis and of the windows on those elevations would be jarring and incongruous features within this streetscape.
9. The front elevations and the partial returns onto the side elevations would be of natural coursed sandstone which would complement the use of materials in the area. However, the side and rear elevations would make extensive use of larch boarding, which would add to the incongruous appearance of the buildings. Although the side and rear elevations would be less prominent within the streetscape, the use of this material would be apparent in views through gaps between the buildings. There are some examples of the use of wood cladding in the area, but this is not of a scale or extent that would justify that proposed. I am mindful of the benefits of using wood cladding compared to more traditional materials, including its carbon footprint. But these do not outweigh the harm arising from the incongruous extent of this material on the elevations.
10. Taken on their own terms, the proposed dwellings are an attractive modern design, and contemporary designs can sometimes be acceptable in traditional settings. The extant appeal site is also unsightly and detracts from the character and appearance of the area and the CA, as is recognised in the CA Appraisal. However, the design of the proposed dwellings is not suitable for the context of the site even allowing for the varied character of the streetscape, and I am mindful that development of a more appropriate design could also bring the site into a productive use.

11. I conclude that due to their design and location that the proposed dwellings would lead to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies STP3, QOP1 and HOU9 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2022 (the Local Plan) which seek to ensure residential development conserves and enhances the built environment, makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, and is of a high quality design.
12. Even allowing for the existing unsightly appearance of the site, the harm arising from the design of the proposal would negatively impact on the significance of the CA. Given the scale and nature of the proposed development, the harm arising to the CA would be less than substantial. I note that the Northumberland and Newcastle Society support the proposal and consider that it would not be harmful to the CA. However, this does not lead me to a different conclusion based on what I have seen and read. Policy ENV9 of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) require that less than substantial harm is balanced against any public benefits. I will return to this matter below.

Highway Safety

13. The proposal would include 4 parking spaces which would be accessed from an unadopted extent of highway. The Council's Highways consultee has expressed concern about potential conflicts arising from manoeuvres associated with these parking bays and potential conflicts with other highway users. In particular, reference is made to a lack of evidence in respect of visibility splays and whether these would be affected by existing or proposed buildings.
14. The appellant has submitted a site plan showing vehicle tracking manoeuvres from these parking bays. However, this indicates that existing and proposed buildings would limit the intervisibility between drivers of vehicles using the parking bays and other highway users. This limited visibility would increase the potential for collisions between vehicles and other highways users with significant harm to highway safety. The proposed installation of convex traffic mirrors is indicative of the limited visibility provided for the parking bays. In the absence of evidence regarding defined visibility splays, I am not persuaded that the mirrors would sufficiently mitigate for the poor visibility afforded by the parking bays.
15. Furthermore, the vehicle tracking plan indicates that vehicles would have to manoeuvre across the full width of the highway to access or egress the parking bays. I saw that there was on-street parking on the opposite side of the highway to the appeal site which would limit manoeuvring space. This would be likely to lead to convoluted vehicle manoeuvres associated with the parking bays which would further increase potential conflict with other road users.
16. The comments from the Council's highways consultee refers to other issues including footpath widths and kerb lines, but I consider that these have been addressed by further evidence submitted by the appellant.
17. The appeal site is currently used for informal vehicle parking and the proposal may therefore represent a reduction in vehicle movements, although the space afforded by the existing site gives a greater degree of visibility and manoeuvring space compared to the appeal proposal. The site is also in a location with good access to services and facilities by sustainable means of transport, which may further reduce the number of vehicle movements. However, these matters do not negate my concerns in respect of visibility and manoeuvring space.

18. The appellant emphasises that the Highways consultee has not commented on the revised details. However, this does not indicate that the consultee supports the amendments and does not negate my own observations on this issue.
19. I conclude that insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the vehicle manoeuvres associated with the proposed parking bays would not lead to conflict with other highway users and significant harm to highway safety. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the sustainable transport and safe access and egress requirements of Policies TRA1, TRA2 and TRA4 of the Local Plan, as well as the Framework with regard to an unacceptable impact on highway safety

Habitats Sites

20. The development would be located within the 'zone of influence' for European Sites (habitats sites). Residents of the appeal proposal could place extra recreational pressure upon these designated coastal sites and result in potential disturbance to the qualifying features for which the habitats sites are designated.
21. The Council's ecologist refers to a Coastal Mitigation Service, and that a contribution to this service by the developer through a S.106 agreement would enable a conclusion of no adverse effect on the integrity of these coastal sites. However, a completed S.106 agreement has not been submitted by the appellant. They have indicated that they accept that a financial contribution needs to be made and that this can be secured by condition.
22. The Planning Practice Guidance specifies that a negatively worded condition limiting the development that can take place until a planning obligation or other agreement has been entered into is unlikely to be appropriate in the majority of cases. Such a condition should only be used in exceptional circumstances where there is clear evidence that the delivery of the development would otherwise be at serious risk, which may apply in the case of particularly complex development schemes. Although the delivery of the proposal may be at risk, the development is not particularly complex and exceptional circumstances for the proposal have not been established.
23. In the absence of a S.106 the proposal would lead to an adverse impact on habitats sites contrary to the biodiversity requirements of Policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan as well as the Framework in respect of conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Other Considerations

24. The proposal would have a number of benefits. It would utilise brownfield land, and the Framework gives substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes. The proposal would also lead to the development of an unattractive site for a productive use. However, these benefits could also be achieved through the development of the site for homes of a more suitable design, and this therefore carries limited weight in favour of dwellings of the design proposed. Given the nature of the identified harm, I am not persuaded that the appeal proposal is the optimum viable use of the site.
25. The use of green roofs would add biodiversity value, although given the scale of the proposal this benefit would be limited. Green roofs may also help flood attenuation through moderating rainwater flows, although there may be other technical

solutions that could achieve this. The appellant refers to the benefits of green roofs with regards to carbon emissions, but similar benefits may also be achieved through pitched roofs of a sustainable energy efficient construction. The proposed dwellings would be energy efficient, although this would primarily relate to managing the emissions from the dwellings themselves. These matters therefore carry only limited weight in favour of the proposed design of the dwellings, and would not outweigh the harm arising from the incongruous design including the flat roof form.

26. The proposal would add to the supply and mix of housing in the area in a location with good access to services and facilities. However, given the number of units proposed this benefit would be limited.

Other Matters

27. I have had regard to the comments made in support of the development and I note that Amble Town Council has also stated that it has no objections to the proposal. But this does not lead me to a different conclusion on the harm arising from the scheme based on my own observations.
28. I have had regard to the appellant's concerns regarding the Council's handling of the planning application, including the timing of its decision and the consideration of comments from consultees. However, these matters do not alter or outweigh my findings on the proposal before me, which I have considered on its planning merits and based on the submitted evidence.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

29. I have concluded that the proposal would lead to significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and would also harm the significance of the CA. Although the harm to the CA would be less than substantial, the Framework sets out that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. The proposal would have a number of benefits, but even considered cumulatively these benefits only carry limited weight in favour of the form of development proposed.
30. The limited public benefits arising from the proposal would not outweigh the great weight I give to the harm to the CA, and the proposal would therefore conflict with Policy ENV9 of the Local Plan in respect of the effect on the CA, as well as the Framework with regard to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
31. I have also concluded that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan and the Framework with regards to highway safety and the effect on sites of nature conservation.
32. There are no material considerations that indicate the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR