
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 August 2025

by **A Hickey MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/25/3363035

Redhill House, Holcot Road, Walgrave NN6 9QP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr N Finlay against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2024/2873/OUT.
 - The development proposed is Outline Planning Application for the Erection of 1no. Self-Build Dwelling With All Matters Reserved Aside for Access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved except for access. I have dealt with the appeal on this basis, treating any other details shown on the plans as illustrative.
3. During the appeal process, both the main parties were provided the opportunity to comment on the Council's latest position with regard to Self and Custom Build properties in the authority area. I have considered the responses as part of my findings.
4. I have also taken into consideration several determined appeals¹, brought to my attention by the main parties, including an appeal at land to the east of Forest Road, Piddington² (Piddington appeal).
5. The appellant has submitted a planning obligation which seeks to secure the development as self or custom build. Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) (CIL Regulations) and paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) set out three tests that planning obligations must meet.
6. I am satisfied that the obligation is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms to secure a self-build dwelling. It is directly related to the development proposal and is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. I am therefore satisfied that the planning obligation would meet the requirements of the CIL Regulations and the Framework and have taken it into consideration as part of the determination of the appeal.

¹ Refs: APP/G2435/W/18/3214451, APP/G1630/W/20/3250825, APP/W2845/W/23/3323851, APP/P0119/W/17/3191477, APP/W2845/W/23/3330420, APP/J1860/W/21/3278117, APP/W2845/W/23/3321621, APP/G2435/W/25/3360649 and APP/K0235/W/25/3360479

² Ref: APP/W2845/W/24/3353512

Main Issues

7. The main issues are:

- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
- whether the appeal site is in a suitable location having regard to its location in the countryside and the provisions of the development plan.

Reasons

Character and appearance

8. The appeal site comprises a rectangular parcel of land located to the south of an existing dwelling (Red Hill House), which sits at a lower level. The site has its own existing access via Holcot Road. The appeal site is located between the settlements of Holcot, to the south, and Walgrave to the north. The nature of the road, with no street lighting or footway, limited built form alongside verdant boundaries onto open fields, gives a firm sense of being in the open countryside when near the appeal site.
9. The site is formed of a collection of low-level timber stables sited towards the road close to the access. The rear of the site, which is located within the red edge of the submitted location plan, contains an open equestrian arena. Red Hill House, including the annexe, are sited a short distance away to the north.
10. The physical presence of the existing stables and equestrian arena are features commonly found within countryside settings and, as such, do not detract from the tranquil and pleasant rural surroundings. The appeal site therefore has a rural character and a close association with the open countryside beyond and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
11. The proposal is in outline, and the layout, scale and appearance of the proposed dwelling are to be determined at the reserved matters stage. However, the appellant intends to deliver a high-quality self-build dwelling that responds to the character of the site.
12. Having regard to the indicative plans, the dwelling would be sited in proximity to the existing stables. However, a dwelling in this location would inevitably be of a greater scale than the stable buildings. It would require sufficient parking and adequate outdoor amenity space for future occupiers which would extend beyond the existing built form of the stables. This would have a significantly urbanising effect on the site. Moreover, domestic trappings would also be found within the wider site which extends further into open countryside at the rear of the site and would appear as intrusive features.
13. The proposed development would appear as an urban incursion into the countryside, introducing development that diminishes the contribution the appeal site makes to the tranquil rural character of the area. This would be readily apparent to persons travelling on the road, particularly during the winter months. In the wider area, this incursion would be visible from the open fields, particularly from the southwest. When taken together, the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area would result in significant harm.

14. Consequently, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the intrinsic character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would conflict with Policy RA6 of the Daventry District Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) (LPP2), which seeks to ensure development retains the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the open countryside.

Suitable location

15. The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended) places a duty on relevant authorities to give suitable development permission to enough suitable serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. The level of demand is established through the number of entries on a register the relevant authority is also under a duty to keep.
16. Whilst adjacent to Red Hill House, the site lies outside of any recognised defined development boundary, as identified within the development plan, and there is no dispute between the parties that, in planning policy terms, it is within the countryside.
17. West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (LPP1) Policy R1 sets out the spatial strategy specifically for rural areas and states that development in the rural areas will be guided by a rural settlement hierarchy. Outside the existing confines development will be permitted where it involves the re-use of buildings or, in exceptional circumstances, where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities or would contribute towards and improve the local economy. Further housing development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it would meet the requirements of the criteria set out within i) – V). Criteria i) states development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it would result in environmental improvements on a site including for example the re-use of previously developed land and best practice in design.
18. LPP2 Policy RA2 sets out circumstances where development outside the defined confines will be acceptable. LPP2 Policy RA6 states that the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the open countryside will be recognised. The policy also provides a list of the forms of development that will be supported in the open countryside outside of the confines of villages. Policy SA of the LPP1 is a broad policy that promotes the presumption in favour of sustainable development, broadly in line with the aims of the Framework.
19. The Council's latest delivery position on self and custom builds is set out in the Self and Custom Build Annual Monitoring Report 2024 (SCBR 2024), which has been provided as part of the appeal. The appellant raises significant concerns that not all the referenced planning permissions have in fact been delivered as self and custom builds. The appellant has provided several appeal decisions in both the Planning and Appeal statements to support their case.
20. Having regard to the guidance in the Framework, Planning Practice Guidance and the evidence presented by both the main parties, including the Piddington appeal, there is no substantive evidence to demonstrate that all of the planning permissions referred to in the SCBR 2024 would be delivered as self-build or custom build housing. I therefore find that it is not sufficiently clear whether there have been enough grants of planning permission for self-build and custom plots to ensure the need is being met.

21. Taking into consideration the requirements of the Act, the appeal scheme would contribute one self-build plot, secured by a planning obligation, which would help to meet the demand for self-build plots. However, for the reasons outlined above, even if the site was considered to be previously developed land, it has not been adequately demonstrated that the redevelopment of the site for residential use would not result in harm to the character, beauty and tranquillity of the open countryside. Moreover, the scheme fails to demonstrate how the re-use of the appeal site for residential purposes would result in environmental improvements or how best practice in design has been considered from the outset.
22. For the reasons set out above, whilst I have found a need for self and custom-build dwellings within the authority, the appeal scheme would be contrary to the development plan for homes in the countryside as set out in LPP1 Policy R1 and Policies RA2 and RA6 of the LPP2. It follows that there would also be conflict with Policy SA of the LPP1, which supports planning applications that accord with policies in the local plan.
23. Whilst seeking outline consent, the appeal scheme is for one dwellinghouse as such, it would not conflict with LPP2 Policy HO5, as this relates to outline applications of more than one dwelling.

Other Matters

24. Whilst the proposal may not result in harm related to other matters, including ecology or highway safety, this lack of harm is not a benefit in itself and weighs neutrally.
25. Whilst the presented appeals raise similar issues to those above, they are not directly related to or seen in proximity of the appeal site and are therefore materially different to the appeal scheme. For these reasons, I have allocated limited weight to these decisions. In any event, I have determined this Appeal on its own individual merits.
26. There would be small general economic and social benefits from the construction and occupation of a single dwelling, including accessing nearby services and amenities, which I give moderate weight. However, given the scale of the scheme, these benefits would be small.
27. In line with the Government's aim to boost the supply of housing, including for those wishing to commission or build their own homes, the proposal would add one additional dwelling to the supply of self-build and custom build accommodation. The proposal would therefore only make a small contribution in addressing the shortfall in self-build provision. This therefore limits the weight I attribute to this matter in favour of the appeal scheme.

Planning Balance

28. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act provides that the appeal should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
29. While I have found that a need exists for self and custom build plots, for the reasons outlined above, the location of the proposal would conflict with the Council's development strategy for the location of new housing. The spatial strategy of the development plan is broadly consistent with the provisions of the

Framework, which sets out the need to plan positively and set out a clear overall strategy for the pattern and scale of places for the provision of new homes. Additionally, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. Taken together, I attach significant harm to these matters.

30. In view of the above, I am also mindful that the Council has a sufficient housing land supply. Whilst there is a need for self and custom build housing that weighs in favour of the proposed development, in my judgement, the provision of one self-build dwelling and additional limited benefits is not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have found. The proposed development would therefore conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

31. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Hickey

INSPECTOR