

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 September 2025

by **A Caines BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/25/3370211

Lyneve, Mile Road, Widdrington Station, Northumberland NE61 5QW

- 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 Mrs Amy Walton against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00970/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a cattery.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - The character and appearance of the area;
 - The living conditions of neighbouring residents, particularly in relation to noise, disturbance, and waste management;
 - Highway safety, particularly in relation to parking arrangements.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site consists of a detached bungalow with a generous rear garden, enclosed by boundary fencing approximately 1.6 to 1.8 metres (m) in height. Located at the edge of the village, the property forms part of a ribbon of low-density, predominantly single-storey dwellings with modest domestic outbuildings. Open fields lie to the north and south, reinforcing the area's spacious, semi-rural character.
4. The proposed cattery building, measuring approximately 24m x 12.7m with a flat roof height of 2.75m, would occupy a significant portion of the rear garden. Its rendered blockwork and mesh fencing construction, combined with its considerable scale and utilitarian appearance, would contrast with the domestic character of neighbouring plots. While views from public vantage points may be limited, the building's massing and functional design would nonetheless introduce a visually discordant element into the site, eroding the prevailing sense of spaciousness and domesticity.
5. The proposal would also significantly intensify the use of the site. With 30 pens, the operation would be at the larger end of cattery businesses, representing a scale of activity notably greater than what is typically associated with small-scale,

home-based enterprises in quiet residential areas. This level of intensity would increase comings and goings, noise, and general activity, resulting in a noticeable change to the character of the site from a private domestic garden to a busy commercial operation. Such a shift would be at odds with the established pattern of development and the tranquil residential environment of the locality.

6. Policy ECN11 of the Northumberland Local Plan (2022) (the NLP) supports businesses in residential areas subject to amenity and other considerations. Policies QOP1 and QOP2 of the NLP require high-quality design that respects local character and context. For the reasons above, the proposal would be out of keeping with the character of the area and is contrary to these policies.

Living conditions

7. Cats may vocalise for a variety of reasons, including stress, territorial disputes, mating calls, feeding, and general communication. In a cattery of the proposed scale, the frequency and intensity of such vocalisations would be inherently unpredictable and likely to peak during feeding times, cleaning routines, or when unfamiliar people or animals are nearby. Importantly, this would not be confined to the stated opening hours of the business, as animal care routines and environmental triggers can occur at any time of the day. The proposal would also introduce a level of visitor activity significantly above what is typical for a residential property, including daily customer visits, regular waste collections, and collection/delivery of food, litter, and cleaning supplies. Given the proximity of neighbouring properties on both sides, the cumulative risk of noise and disturbance is considerable.
8. The relationship to the neighbouring property 'Lynwood' is a particular concern. The driveway and commercial parking area would wrap around the small rear garden of this property and lie close to several windows. Consequently, noise from both the cats and day-to-day operations would be experienced at close quarters, especially during warmer months when windows and doors are open or when residents are using their garden. This proximity heightens the potential for intrusive disturbance.
9. No noise assessment has been submitted to quantify the likely impacts, nor has a management plan been provided to demonstrate how cat vocalisation or operational noise would be controlled or mitigated. The Planning Practice Guidance on noise advises that applicants should provide sufficient information to demonstrate that noise impacts have been properly considered. While the appellant states that the building will be insulated and that they will be living on site to manage noise, these assurances are not supported by technical evidence or detailed mitigation measures. The responsibility lies with the developer to provide such information upfront with the application.
10. The absence of details regarding drainage for wastewater, waste storage and disposal, and odour control further undermines confidence in the proposal's ability to safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring residents. Without clear evidence that these matters can be managed, it would not be reasonable to defer their consideration to planning conditions.
11. While the appellant asserts that not all pens would be occupied simultaneously, this does not adequately address concerns regarding the scale and capacity of the proposed building. The structure is designed to accommodate a significant number of animals, and its internal layout could be modified to increase capacity without

requiring further planning approval. Even if some pens remain vacant periodically, the planning system must assess the maximum potential impact, not just the appellant's intended use. Enforcing a restriction on the number of cats would be inherently challenging, likely requiring frequent and intrusive inspections or reliance on neighbour complaints. The possibility of double occupancy of pens further complicates monitoring and increases the risk of exceeding permitted numbers, regardless of stated intentions.

12. Similarly, a condition to ensure that customer visits are by appointment only would be difficult to monitor and enforce. There is no practical mechanism for the local planning authority to verify compliance on a day-to-day basis, and breaches could easily go undetected. Even if visits were staggered, the cumulative impact of vehicle movements and associated disturbance would remain significant, particularly given the constrained access and close proximity to neighbouring dwellings. Consequently, this is not a case where planning conditions could reasonably be relied upon to render the development acceptable.
13. The lack of objection from the Council's Public Protection team and the existence of licencing controls are acknowledged. However, these factors do not override the concerns identified above. Planning and licensing operate under distinct frameworks, and it is the role of the planning system to assess the potential for harm at the outset, rather than relying on post-approval regulation.
14. In light of the above, the proposal fails to demonstrate that it would safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to noise, disturbance, and waste management. It therefore conflicts with NLP Policies QOP2 and POL2, which require development to avoid unacceptable impacts on neighbouring properties and to demonstrate effective mitigation of adverse environmental effects.

Highway safety

15. The proposal includes three resident parking spaces at the front of the property, with one visitor and two staff spaces at the rear. However, the local highways authority has advised that the layout at the rear does not meet the minimum standards set out in Appendix E of the NLP. Although a swept path analysis has been provided, it fails to convincingly demonstrate that vehicles can manoeuvre efficiently within the constrained rear parking area, particularly for larger vehicles and when other vehicles may be present.
16. The appellant anticipates approximately 15 customer appointments per day, which, in addition to servicing and residential activity, would generate a significant number of vehicle movements entering and exiting the site. Given the narrow width of the driveway and the limited space for parking and turning, there is a realistic prospect that vehicles may need to reverse onto Mile Road or wait within the driveway. This increases the potential for conflict between incoming and outgoing vehicles and pedestrians, as well as queuing on Mile Road. The risk is amplified by the residential character of the area and the lack of alternative on-street parking options nearby.
17. While there may be some scope to revise the parking layout, the current scheme fails to demonstrate that safe and convenient access can be achieved for all users, including staff, customers, and service vehicles. The deficiencies in parking layout and manoeuvring space would result in an unacceptable impact on the safety and

operation of the local highway network. As such, the proposal is contrary to the highway safety requirements of NLP Policies ECN11 and TRA4.

Other Matters

18. The appellant contends that an outbuilding of similar size could be constructed in the rear garden under permitted development rights (PD), and therefore the visual and spatial impact of the proposed cattery building should not weigh against the scheme. However, for a claimed ‘fallback position’ to be a material consideration, there must be a real prospect that it could be implemented, and its planning impacts must be comparable to those of the proposal.
19. In this case, PD for outbuildings under Class E of the General Permitted Development Order apply only to structures that are incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse, such as sheds, garages, or garden rooms used for purposes ancillary to residential use. The proposed cattery, by contrast, would be a commercial operation, with associated customer visits and servicing requirements. Such a use would not be “incidental” or “ancillary” to residential occupation and would not benefit from PD. There is no evidence before me that a building of this size could lawfully be erected and used for a cattery under PD.
20. Even if a building of similar scale could be erected under PD for domestic purposes, the planning impacts of its use as a cattery are fundamentally different. A domestic outbuilding would not generate the same level of noise, comings and goings, or waste as a commercial cattery. The assessment of this proposal must therefore focus on the actual use and operational impacts, not simply the physical presence of a building. The existence of PD for domestic outbuildings does not justify granting planning permission for a materially different and more intensive commercial use.
21. For these reasons, I give little weight to the claimed fallback position. The prospect of a domestic outbuilding being constructed under PD does not alter my conclusions regarding the harm arising from the proposed cattery.

Conclusion

22. The employment benefits and addition of further pet care services are positive aspects of the proposal. However, these do not outweigh the significant harm identified in relation to character and appearance, living conditions, and highway safety. The proposal conflicts with Policies ECN11, QOP1, QOP2, POL2, and TRA4 of the NLP, and therefore with the development plan when read as a whole. The material considerations presented in this case do not justify a departure from the development plan.
23. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR