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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2025

by **M James BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 November 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Y2003/W/25/3367920**

**Broughton Saw Mill, Ermine Street, Broughton, North Lincolnshire DN20 0AQ**

- 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 John Holmes against the decision of North Lincolnshire Council.
  - The application Ref is PA/2025/493.
  - The development proposed is the erection of a forestry workers dwelling to include demolition of existing structure.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. An updated site layout plan (BR/HO/MF/05 rev) was submitted after the determination of the application by the Council. The revised plan corrects an error with the previous version which showed a larger dwelling as considered in a previous application. However, the revised plan is consistent with the size of the proposed dwelling identified in the block plans that were considered by the Council when refusing the application subject to this appeal. For the avoidance of doubt, this decision is informed by the revised site layout plan.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
  - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the open countryside; and,
  - whether there is an essential need for a forestry workers dwelling, including its size and scale.

### Reasons

*The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the open countryside*

4. The site forms part of a working sawmill which is set within a clearing of woodland. A large corrugated metal storage building with a mono pitched roof is situated within the site. The wider clearing surrounding the site is open in nature with an open framed storage structure, a timber shed and containers with one hosting a kiln for the drying of logs with grassland and shrub beyond.

5. Tall and mature trees largely surround the entirety of the clearing with a gap in the woodland for an unsurfaced access track which connects the main body of the site to Ermine Street to the east. Gadbury and Lundimore Wood ancient woodland forms part of the woodland in the vicinity. The site is located outside of the settlement boundary of Broughton which is on the opposite side of Ermine Street with residential properties facing west towards the woodland.
6. The proposal is to demolish the large corrugated metal storage building and construct a two storey three-bedroom forestry workers dwelling in its place. The dimensions of the dwelling would be approximately 65m<sup>2</sup> smaller than the building that it would replace at approximately 7.6m x 15m with an eaves height of around 5.2m. Materials for the dwelling include reclaimed bricks, grey roofing tiles, aluminium window frames, timber boarding and an off-white render to the eastern elevation that would form the frontage to the property. A 1.4m high post and rail fence would enclose a garden to the rear of the dwelling with a gravelled parking area to the eastern side.
7. The proposed dwelling would be smaller than the building that it is to replace. Moreover, due to its location and surrounding woodland and vegetation, the dwelling would be well screened from view, including from Ermine Street and the adjacent residential area.
8. The design of the dwelling is intended to be reminiscent of a traditional lodge in a woodland setting. The appellant states that this would be an improvement on the building that it is to replace and the dwelling would complement the site whilst making a subtle statement.
9. However, whilst the dwelling would be well screened, when in view, the property and accompanying garden space would be incongruous in its setting within the yard of a sawmill in the open countryside and surrounding woodland. Its contemporary design and scale that would be higher than a traditional two story dwelling would contribute to harm to the character and appearance of the open countryside. Furthermore, due to its location, the dwelling would appear detached and isolated from the existing residential area in Broughton. Although the building that the dwelling would replace has no particular architectural merit, it is typical of the type of construction that would be expected in its setting and is reflective of the other buildings that would remain on site.
10. Overall, whilst the harm would be limited by the extent of screening, the proposed development would conflict with North Lincolnshire Core Strategy (NLCS) 2011 Policy CS5 which requires development to be well designed and appropriate for its context. It would also conflict with Policy RD2 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan NLLP 2003 as the development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the open countryside.
11. In this regard, the proposed development would also conflict with paragraph 84 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) as it would not enhance its immediate setting or be sensitive to the characteristics of the local area.

*Whether there is an essential need for a forestry workers dwelling, including its size and scale*

12. The forestry workers dwelling is proposed to support the onsite sawmill business and is intended to facilitate the 24-hour operation of a kiln that has been installed

close to the proposed dwelling to expand the business. The kiln has been installed by the business to dry firewood for sale. The appellant considers that the development is essential as a forestry worker living on site would enable an operator to empty and refill the kiln as soon as possible around the clock which would maintain optimal efficiency when compared to a 9 to 5 operation. The appellant considers that this offers environmental benefits as less energy is wasted in heating up the kiln after a cool down period in addition to commercial benefits from a 24-hour operation which could increase turnover and lead to the employment of more staff.

13. Other benefits cited by the appellant include improved safety as leaving the kiln unattended is a fire risk, improved site security and a better work-life balance for staff. In addition, better facilities would be provided for staff with approximately one third of the ground floor of the proposed forestry workers dwelling to be occupied by space for staff on site with a kitchen, office, changing room, shower and toilet.
14. The proposed forestry workers dwelling would be located outside of the defined limit of a settlement. Under the provisions of Policies CS1, CS2 and CS3 of the NLCS 2011, only development that is essential to the functioning of the countryside will be allowed. This includes forestry uses. Policy RD2 of the NLLP 2003 also strictly controls development in the open countryside. Under the terms of this policy, planning permission can be granted for development which is essential to the efficient operation of agriculture or forestry provided that specified criteria are met. They include whether the open countryside is the only appropriate location and development cannot be reasonably accommodated within defined development boundaries.
15. I acknowledge the commercial and environmental benefits of the 24-hour operation of the kiln and the need for a presence onsite to manage the process efficiently as set out by the appellant. Information provided by the supplier of the kiln indicates that the blower should be filled at regular intervals, usually of 2 to 3 hours to ensure efficiency. The regularity with which the blower should be filled to maintain efficiency would indicate that it would be impractical for this role to be undertaken by someone visiting the site periodically during the night. An onsite presence would also assist in managing any safety issues with the kiln as soon as possible. However, the appellant has not considered alternative options to the proposed development that could achieve this. It is also not clear why any potential security benefits of a dwelling on site could not be achieved by other means.
16. As identified by the Council, alternatives to a dwelling may include the provision of staff facilities onsite within an existing or new building to support extended working hours, including night shifts. As indicated by the appellant, extended working hours may increase turnover of the business and support the employment of more staff that could facilitate such shift patterns. However, no explanation has been provided by the appellant as to why this is not possible. Furthermore, it is not clear to me how the provision of a dwelling would ensure that a staff member would be present on site to manage any safety or security issues or reload the kiln in a timely manner any more than the provision of staff facilities to enable night-time working would do.

17. I note the views of the appellant that the provision of a forestry workers dwelling would support a better work life balance. However, it is possible that this could be achieved by other means.
18. Accordingly, I do not consider that the case that the proposed development is essential to the efficient operation of the forestry business has been made.
19. I understand that a previous application for a forestry workers dwelling of a larger size on the site was refused by the Council. Whilst the proposed development subject to the appeal may have been reduced in size, I must consider the development before me. The size and scale of the proposed development reflects the fact that it would incorporate staff facilities on the ground floor in addition to the floorspace designated for the three-bedroom dwelling with en-suite bathrooms. As indicated above, I consider that the case for the essential need for the forestry workers dwelling has not been made. As such, based on the evidence before me, I consider that the size and scale of the proposed development would be excessive in relation to the needs of the business.
20. The appellant considers that the Council has reached an inconsistent conclusion in determining that the size and scale of the dwelling is excessive in relation to the functional requirements and highlight an example related to a kennel business nearby that secured consent. Nevertheless, I make this decision based on the evidence before me and the current policy context.
21. I acknowledge the support for development that delivers a thriving rural economy as expressed in Policy CS1 and Policy CS11 of the NLCS as well as measures to support growth and productivity more generally as identified in paragraph 8 of the Framework. However, I do not consider that these policies override Policies CS2 and CS3 which seek to restrict development in the countryside or Policy RD2 of the NLLP which requires development in such locations to be strictly controlled.
22. For the reasons above, I consider that the proposed development would conflict with Policies CS1, CS2 and CS3 of the NLCS 2011 as well as Policy RD2 of the NLLP 2003 which seek to restrict development in the countryside without an essential need being demonstrated.
23. In addition, for the reasons above, I also consider that the proposed development would conflict with paragraph 84 of the Framework as none of the required criteria that would support the development of an isolated dwelling in the countryside have been met. This includes whether there is an essential need for a rural worker to live at or near to their place of work in the countryside. Similarly, the evidence before me does not fully address the related guidance in the National Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 67-010-20190722). This includes the consideration of whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on site taking into account their scale, appearance and local context.

## **Other Matters**

24. The appellant identifies that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS). As such, the appellant considers that the Council placed too much weight on local policies in determining the application and that paragraph 11d of the Framework applies. The Council's Appeal Statement does not contest

this position but considers that the proposed development is contrary to both local policies and paragraph 84 of the Framework.

25. The extent of the shortfall in housing supply is not before me. Nevertheless, as the Council cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS, paragraph 11d of the Framework is engaged.
26. I have found that the proposed development would conflict with NLCS 2011 Policy CS5 and Policy RD2 NLLP 2003 as it would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the open countryside. As this harm would be limited by the degree of screening, I attached little weight to this harm. I have also found policy conflict with Policies CS1, CS2 and CS3 of the NLCS 2011 as well as Policy RD2 of the NLLP 2003 which seek to restrict development in the countryside without an essential need being demonstrated. I attach significant weight to this harm with both local and national policy seeking to restrict development in the countryside without the case for an essential need being demonstrated. I conclude that the need case has not been made.
27. The proposed development would be beneficial in supporting the housing needs of the area. However, a single dwelling would not make a significant contribution to this need and I attach little weight to it. As considered above, the proposed development would also provide economic benefits by supporting the growth of the business and the rural economy for which there is policy support in NLCS 2011 Policy CS1 and Policy CS11 and in the Framework. I attach moderate weight to these economic benefits.
28. Overall, I conclude that the proposed development would conflict with the development plan as a whole as policy that supports economic growth should be read in the context of policy that seeks to restrict and strictly control development in the countryside.
29. I also conclude that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework.

### **Conclusion**

30. The proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including those of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
31. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

*M James*

INSPECTOR