



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 September 2025

by J G Wellstead BA(Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/25/3370789

Nogs Barn, Towcester Road, Litchborough, West Northamptonshire NN12 8JA

- 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 Jon Barker against West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/0868/FULL.
 - The development proposed is erection of a 2 Storey Side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The West Northamptonshire Local Plan¹ is being prepared and has not yet been adopted. Paragraph 49 of the Framework says that The West Northamptonshire Local Plan is being prepared and has not yet been adopted. Paragraph 49 of the Framework says that weight may be given to emerging development plan policies. However, in this case, for the reasons that follow, the relevant emerging policies are not so materially different to the relevant adopted policies that even if they were afforded full weight this would not have altered the outcome of the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a converted barn in an area of open countryside on the outskirts of the village of Litchborough. It comprises an L-shaped detached stone building with a short private driveway leading on to Towcester Road. Part of the building is two-storey, with a one-storey projection nearest the road. A public footpath abuts the north of the site, with open fields beyond. Mature hedgerows and established trees line sections of Towcester Road adjacent to the appeal site, contributing to the area's verdant character and rural setting.
5. The appeal site lies within a designated Special Landscape Area (SLA), recognised locally for its valued landscape qualities. The area is characterised by its distinctive vistas, gently undulating topography, and open rural setting, all of which contribute positively to its scenic quality and sense of place. The existing dwelling on the site

¹ West Northamptonshire Local Plan – 2041 (Regulation 18) Consultation Draft April 2024

plays a contributory role in reinforcing the rural character of the locality through its siting, scale, and relationship with surrounding landscape features. Its presence, together with associated landscaping and boundary treatments, forms an integral part of the established character and visual coherence of the area.

6. Policy NE2 of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011 - 2029 states that development within SLAs but outside settlement boundaries must avoid harmful impacts on the character and appearance of the area. Proposals must pay particular regard to design, materials, siting and land use, and should contribute to the conservation or enhancement of the landscape.
7. In addition, Paragraph 7.57 of the South Northamptonshire Design Guide² generally discourages extensions to agricultural and functional rural buildings due to the potential harm to their traditional character and setting.
8. The proposed two-storey side extension projecting out from the rear of the two-storey portion of the existing dwelling would result in a T-shaped building. The extension would have a pitched roof with roof lights. Chapter 7 of the South Northamptonshire Design Guide discourages the use of rooflights.
9. The appeal site benefits from previous planning approvals, including the conversion of the barn to a residential dwelling and a single-storey side extension. The extant planning permission for a single storey side extension offers a realistic fallback position if the proposal before me were to fail.
10. The fallback scheme is in the same position as the appeal scheme and also features roof lights, albeit at a lower elevation and therefore decreased prominence than the appeal scheme.
11. The appellant states that the two-storey design is only marginally larger than the fallback scheme. However, I consider that the additional height, scale and mass of the appeal scheme would be significant and create an unbalanced design to the property that would not be subservient to the host building nor in keeping with its character. In this respect the proposal differs from and is more harmful than the fallback scheme.
12. In addition, the proposed extension of the size, scale and height proposed would stand out as a dominant feature within its immediate surroundings and as such would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding environment, including the SLA.
13. Despite the site's elevation, I accept that there would be limited longer-range views of the appeal scheme because of its position towards the rear of the site, and due to the natural screening provided by trees and hedges. However, although the site would benefit from mature trees and hedging screening the appeal site, in winter when deciduous trees are without leaf and hedging is generally less dense, the appeal property would be more visible from Towcester Road. The scheme would also be visible from close-range from the public footpath. Regardless, limited visibility does not remove the need for good design that accords with the local development plan.

² South Northamptonshire Design Guide, An analysis of existing settlements and informal guidance on future developments, 2017

14. Taken as a whole, the appeal proposal would fail to respect the form and massing of the original dwelling. The introduction of a second storey would substantially increase the height, scale and bulk of the built form, resulting in a visually dominant development that would be at odds with the established character of the surrounding area. Within the context of the SLA, such an intensification of built form would be particularly harmful, eroding the openness and rural qualities that the designation seeks to preserve.
15. Furthermore, the prominence of the rooflights at second-storey level would constitute an inappropriate and visually intrusive addition. Their elevated position would disrupt the modest and low-profile character of the host dwelling, introducing a discordant feature that would be especially conspicuous in views from the surrounding countryside and public vantage points. In the SLA, where the landscape's openness and tranquillity are of value, such features would draw undue attention to the built form. The second storey would compound this harm, introducing a level of height and massing that is inconsistent with the prevailing character of the area.
16. Rooflights at this height are more commonly associated with urban or suburban development and, in this context, would appear incongruous within the gently undulating and largely undeveloped landscape setting. Their reflective surfaces and potential for internal illumination during hours of darkness would further exacerbate their visual impact, introducing light spill and a degree of artificiality that conflicts with the area's natural and tranquil qualities.
17. The appellant considers that Policy NE2 which seeks to preserve the character and appearance of the SLA against unsympathetic development is not intended for proposals of this scale. However, this position has not been substantiated by evidence and so I have no reason to find that this should be the case.
18. The appellant states that Para 7.57 of the Design Guidance should not be applied in this case due to its date of publication, non-statutory nature and the conflict between the Guidance and the fallback position. However, paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, considering any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents. I have therefore taken Para 7.57 into account in my considerations.
19. Reference has been made to other proposals within the area in recent years. However, the circumstances in each proposal are likely to be different, and in any event the fact that apparently similar development has been granted permission is not a reason, on its own, to allow unacceptable development. I have considered this appeal scheme on its own merits and concluded that it would cause harm for the reasons set out above.
20. The use of matching materials, utilisation of garden land, retention of garden space and inset of the appeal scheme roof are acknowledged as aspects that may contribute positively to the overall design. However, these measures do not alter my conclusions. Even if some of these elements are beneficial in isolation, they do not outweigh the harm I have found in relation to the scale, height, and visual impact of the proposed development. In particular, the cumulative effect of the second storey and associated roof lights would result in a form of development that

is materially harmful to the character and appearance of the area, especially within the sensitive context of the Special Landscape Area.

21. Consequently, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies SS2, NE2 and SPD1 of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029. For the same reasons it would also conflict with Chapter 7 of the South Northamptonshire Design Guide and paragraphs 135 and 139 of the Framework. These policies and guidance, amongst other things, seek to ensure new development does not harmfully impact the character and appearance of the area.

Other Matters

22. The evidence indicates that due to the site's isolated location the proposal would not harm living conditions of any other residents. However, this is a neutral matter. I also note the comments with regard to the Councils handling of the proposal and that the additional space is needed to accommodate a family in a dwelling that has significant practical, historical and sentimental value to them. However, I have determined the appeal on its planning merits only and these matters or any others raised do not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, the scheme would conflict with the development plan as a whole, and there are no other material considerations which indicate a decision should not be taken in other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

J Wellstead

INSPECTOR