



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2026

by R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/25/3374613

Land adjacent to and north of 9a Upper High Street, Harpole, NN7 4DJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission
 - The appeal is made by Andrew Doughty of The Combined Harpole Charitable Trust against West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 2025/2249/FULL.
 - The development proposed is part demolition of existing wall and outbuilding and provision of new entrance into land.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission, for part demolition of existing wall and outbuilding and provision of new entrance into land, is refused.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's case confirms that had it determined the application, it would have refused to grant planning permission on the grounds that the development would be harmful to the Harpole Conservation Area (HCA).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the HCA.

Reasons

4. There is a statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
5. The appeal site comprises a predominantly open parcel of land fronting onto Upper High Street. The street boundary consists of a red brick wall with red and blue ceramic capping and the wall of a small red brick building, both of which are likely to have been constructed in the late 19th or early 20th century.
6. The Harpole Conservation Area Appraisal (HCAA) sets out the features that contribute to the distinctiveness of the HCA. These include, amongst other things, the sense of enclosure created by the positioning of buildings and walls close to the edge of the highway. The HCAA makes reference to both early ironstone walls and later red brick walls.
7. The building, despite being covered in Ivy, appears to be structurally sound. Although it is old, it is a simple structure and there is no evidence before me to suggest it is of any architectural or historic significance. Subject to its boundary adjacent to the footway being retained or replaced in line with the remainder of the

boundary wall to retain the sense of enclosure that is characteristic of the area, its removal would have a neutral impact on the HCA.

8. The enclosed walled frontage of the site is a prominent feature in the street scene due to its overall height and length. It is constructed in historic materials and makes a positive contribution to the historic character of the area. Such means of enclosure are identified within the HCAA as being significant and their loss is resisted.
9. The proposed new access would be a 4.5m wide shared private drive, extending approximately 9m into the site and resulting in almost 9m of the existing central section of the boundary wall being removed to create a splayed entrance. The remainder of the existing boundary wall would be reduced from approximately 1.2m to 0.6m in height. New splayed walls measuring 0.6m high would be constructed using bricks from the removed structures. No details have been provided of the new access surface material or of its gradient, despite the site sloping upwards from the highway. No details of any gates have been provided, which are likely to be required if the land is being retained in agricultural use.
10. I am advised that the new entrance is currently only required to provide tractor access three or four times a year, to cut the grass and maintain the land. A modest gated field access would suffice for such use, which would not require a surfaced road of the scale proposed. A tractor due to its raised driver height and infrequent use would not require walls or buildings removed to create a splayed entrance or increased visibility onto a road that does not carry busy or fast-moving traffic. Whilst I acknowledge that there may be plans to develop the site in the future, the access and visibility requirements of any proposed new use would be determined based upon its traffic implications at such a time.
11. I understand that access was previously obtained through an agreement with the adjoining landowner. However, it is unclear from the evidence before me whether that was an informal agreement, and what, if any, existing legal rights of access to the land exist for such purposes. Although stock proof fencing has been erected between the site and adjoining land, I have not been advised why a gate could not be provided through this.
12. I note that part of the boundary wall is currently leaning into the footpath, possibly due to recent ground disturbance and the removal of trees and shrubs that are shown on the submitted survey drawing but are no longer present. The ground level behind the retaining wall is notably higher than the footpath. As such, part of the wall is at risk of collapsing, although I see no reason why it could not be repaired or rebuilt sympathetically.
13. Whilst in principle, the removal of the building, the repair and alteration of the boundary wall, and the provision of a modest access may be achievable, the combined reduction in the length and height of the traditional brick boundary wall proposed, and the introduction of a substantial new modern shared access drive of the scale and nature proposed, would harmfully diminish the historic interest of the HCA and the traditional rural character of the area.
14. The proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the HCA. Nevertheless, in accordance with paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), great weight must be given to the conservation of the heritage asset. Paragraph 215 of the Framework states

that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Although a new improved access direct from the road would be a personal benefit to the appellant, no public benefits have been put to me that would outweigh the harm I have identified.

15. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be contrary to Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 2014, Policy HE6 of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029, and guidance in the HCAA, which seek to ensure development in conservation areas respect the character and appearance of the area in terms of scale, form and materials and to resist the loss of boundary walls that make a positive contribution to the area. The proposal would also conflict with the Framework, in so far as it relates to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

Other Matters

16. I acknowledge that front walls may have been removed or altered elsewhere within the HCA, but I am not aware of the circumstances of those cases, which may not have required planning permission or may have resulted in different benefits to those in the scheme before me. I also noted a similar, albeit narrower access, serving 9a Upper High Street, but this is to a modern dwelling outside of the HCA. As such these matters do not alter my conclusions.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Bartlett

INSPECTOR