



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 May 2026

by Laura Bartle BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 July 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/M2840/W/26/3378242

Land at Blatherwycke Road, Kings Cliffe, Northamptonshire PE8 6XE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Estates Ltd against the decision of North Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref is NE/25/00810/PIP.
 - The development proposed is the erection of up to 9 self build or custom build homes.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for residential development comprising a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 9 self-build or custom build dwellings at Land at Blatherwycke Road, Kings Cliffe, Northamptonshire PE8 6XE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref NE/25/00810/PIP, dated 22 August 2025.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. I have determined the appeal accordingly.
4. I note that the postcode referred to by the parties differs from that given on the application form. As the appeal site is clearly identified on the submitted site location plan and there is no dispute regarding its location, I am satisfied that this matter is procedural only and does not affect my consideration of the appeal. I have therefore used the revised postcode for identification purposes only.
5. Since the Council determined the application, there has been a material change in circumstances in relation to its five-year housing land supply position. The Council has subsequently published updated evidence indicating that it is now only able to demonstrate a 4.6 year supply of deliverable housing land¹. The appellant was

¹ Interim Housing Position Statement, March 2026

afforded an opportunity to comment on this updated position, and I have taken the parties' submissions into account in reaching my decision.

6. The site falls within a Minerals Safeguarding Area for crushed rock/limestone under Policy 28 of the Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. Although no Minerals Assessment was submitted with the application, the Council is satisfied that the proposal would not prejudice future mineral extraction, having regard to the County's adequate crushed rock landbank. The Council also notes that it did not request such information during the application process. Accordingly, this procedural omission is not considered to be determinative of the appeal.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the site would be suitable for housing development having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

8. The spatial development strategy expressed primarily through Policies 11 and 29 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) adopted July 2016 and Policy EN1 of the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 (LP) adopted October 2023 directs housing growth towards the Growth Town of Rushden and a number of Market Towns. The role of rural settlements is, however, recognised and the relatively higher level of service and facility provision at King's Cliffe is reflected in its categorisation as a Large Freestanding (service) Village in the JCS.
9. Policy 11 of the JCS and LP Policies EN1 and EN2 limit residential development in Kings Cliffe to infill opportunities within the existing built-up area. The boundary of the built-up area is defined in the King's Cliffe Neighbourhood Development Plan (the NDP), made in October 2019. Although immediately adjacent to it, the site lies outside the boundary. Accordingly, I have treated the site as countryside for the purposes of the development plan.
10. Where sites are located at the periphery of the built up area, Policy 13 of the JCS, Policy EN3 of the LP and Policy H1 of the NDP support only Rural Exception Housing that delivers affordable homes which meet a demonstrable local need. The proposed open-market self-build housing would not meet this exception, and the location of the development and proposed land use would conflict with these policies.
11. Policy 28 of the LP provides support for self and custom build housing within freestanding villages, such as King's Cliffe, where proposals are consistent with other plan policies. Whilst there is agreement between the parties that the demand for self-build and custom build dwellings is not currently being met, the location of the site would not accord with other plan policies, as I have set out above.
12. The site comprises a grassed paddock and rough pasture area forming part of a wider agricultural landholding on the western edge of the village. The land is largely undeveloped, although it contains a small brick outbuilding and is used for outdoor storage of trailers and farm implements. It falls gently away from Blatherwycke Road and from within the site views are afforded across the surrounding countryside and towards Willow Brook.

13. Development of the site would extend the village along the southern side of Blatherwycke Road, beyond the low profile bungalows and four pairs of semi-detached dwellings that front the road. Whilst the site's frontage to Blatherwycke Road is defined by mature hedgerow and tree planting, it is open to views from the east and west. On the approach out of the village the openness of the site's rear boundaries provides a strong visual connection to the undulating surrounding countryside. Consequently, it forms an integral part of the transition from the built form of the village to the rural countryside beyond.
14. Should permission in principle be granted, the design of a scheme would be determined through the technical details consent. Based on the evidence before me and my observations on site, a scheme of up to 9 dwellings may be capable of sufficiently responding to the linear, low-density character of the adjacent semi-detached houses. Notwithstanding this, the site boundary extends beyond their rear gardens so the proposed development of the site for residential purposes would result in localised visual intrusion that would detract from the countryside setting of the village.
15. It is not disputed that, subject to appropriate design at the technical details stage, the site is capable of accommodating up to 9 houses and so the amount of development is acceptable. However, the proposed location and land use is contrary to Policy 13 of the JCS, Policy EN3 of the LP and Policy H1 of the NDP. Furthermore, the location of the proposed development would also result in harmful impacts on character and appearance contrary to JCS Policy 3, LP Policy EN2 and NDP Policy BE1.

Other Matters

16. Whilst I note the concerns raised by third parties on various matters including housing mix, air quality, ecology, and infrastructure and highways impact these are all matters that have to be assessed at the technical design stage.
17. I have had regard to the previous appeal decision relating to this site. However, that proposal involved development on a materially greater scale than that currently before me, with correspondingly different effects arising from its size and extent. Having considered the findings of the previous Inspector, I am satisfied that my conclusions are based on the particular facts and characteristics of the scheme now proposed and do not conflict with, nor undermine, the conclusions reached in that earlier decision.
18. My attention has also been drawn to other appeal decisions². Whilst I do not know the full circumstances that led to these decisions, I have considered these insofar as they are relevant to the scheme before me.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

19. There is no dispute before me that the Council cannot presently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. In this case, paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged. The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance do not provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Accordingly, the Framework sets out that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so

² Appeal references: 3353512 and APP/G2435/W/25/3360649

would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

20. The provision of between 1 and 9 additional homes would be a benefit of the scheme and the Framework indicates that small and medium sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement for an area. It supports self-build and custom housing, which the proposal would expressly provide. This benefit is reinforced by the undisputed evidence that demand for self-build and custom-build housing within the authority area is not currently being met. Whilst there is no executed Unilateral Undertaking before me for approval as part of this appeal, it could be secured at the Technical Details Consent stage.
21. The proposal would also give rise to short-term economic benefits during the construction phase, together with longer-term expenditure by future occupiers, at least some of which would be likely to support services in the local area to a modest extent. As such the proposal would contribute to the vitality of rural communities consistent with paragraph 83 of the Framework. When taken together with the Council's housing land supply deficit, these social and economic benefits attract significant weight in favour of the development.
22. The proposed location and type of use conflict with the spatial development strategy and I have found moderate harm to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. The development plan policies are broadly consistent with the Framework insofar as they seek to direct development to accessible locations and recognise the intrinsic character of the countryside as well as its wider benefits. However, paragraph 83 of the Framework adopts a more balanced approach to housing in rural areas and provides some limited support for the proposal as discussed above. In that context a rigid application of the development strategy would only further frustrate housing supply, and thus overall, the conflict attracts limited weight.
23. Taken together, the adverse impacts arising from the proposal attract no more than moderate weight.
24. Overall, the harms that I have identified would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits that would arise from the proposed development, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole. Consequently, the proposal benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is a material consideration that outweighs the conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and indicates that a decision should be taken which is not in accordance with the development plan.
25. Accordingly, the appeal is allowed.

Laura Bartle

INSPECTOR