Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 February 2026

by E Catcheside BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 March 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/25/3368700
Land at 516 Great North Road, Eaton Ford, St Neots PE19 7GH

- 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 HW Unique Developments Ltd against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
- The application reference is 24/02228/FUL.
- The development proposed is erection of two-bedroom barn-style property & associated works.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have had regard to a previous appeal decision[1] at this site. However, I have necessarily considered the proposal before me on its own merits.

3. As the proposal is in a conservation area and lies close to a listed building, I have had regard to sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act).

4. The appellant's evidence refers to some Scottish case law. I have had regard to the judgement insofar as it has been described in the evidence. However, because I have not been provided with a copy of the court summary or transcript, I have not cited the judgement in my decision.

5. Concerns have been raised regarding insufficient site visitation by the Council. I have assessed the scheme based on my own observations of the site and the area, as well as the evidence that is before me.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of St Neots Conservation Area (the CA) and whether the setting of the Grade II* listed building known as Crosshall[2] would be preserved.

Reasons

Heritage assets, setting and significance

7. According to The St Neots Conservation Area Character Assessment (October 2006) (CACC), the modern town of St Neots is an agglomeration of previously

[1] Appeal decision reference: APP/H0520/W/20/3249223, dated 25 March 2021
[2] List entry number 1331024

separate historic settlements that developed around an ancient river crossing over the River Ouse. Those settlements include St Neots and Eynesbury, which lie on the east side of the river; and Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford, and Crosshall which were formed on its west bank. These historic settlements, and the river in between, lie within the designated area of the CA.

8. The appeal site lies within the former hamlet of Crosshall, which was associated with the Grade II* listed Crosshall manor. The manor was built at a historically strategic crossroads where the Great North Road met the road from Cambridge to Northampton via St Neots. The A1 dual carriageway now enables through-traffic to bypass the area. However, a short stretch of the Great North Road's original alignment has survived, with the manor occupying a site at its junction with Crosshall Road.

9. As it is acknowledged in the CACC, the character of Crosshall has eroded over time, and it now has a suburban character owing, in part, to the modern housing that has developed to the northeast of the manor on Great North Road. This, combined with the frontage housing on the southwestern side of Crosshall Road, on land outside of the CA, has had a significant urbanising effect on this area which would once have had the character of a small settlement. The CACC recognises that the potential of Crosshall will not be fulfilled without a well-planned enhancement scheme. However, the area remains historically important due to the surviving road junction, the associated listed building, and the green space that lies to the northeast of Crosshall Road which, alongside the golf course, provides a visual and spatial connection to the surrounding rural land and the natural environment.

10. No 204 is the only significant building between the manor and the golf club on the northeastern side of Crosshall Road, thus its presence has led to some degradation of the otherwise largely undeveloped, verdant character of the land that extends away from the road. It is common ground that the appeal site once formed part of the manor grounds but that it has been in separate ownership for some time; and it is clearly separated from the manor by well-established fencing. The site contains some hardstanding, and it is used for the storage of containers and trailers. However, the absence of large and permanent buildings within the site, and its treed frontage, nonetheless enable the site to contribute to the general sense of space and verdancy that characterises this part of the CA.

11. The significance of the CA, insofar as it is relevant to this appeal, lies in the rich mix of historic buildings and spaces, the old strategic road network, and the spatial relationship between the built form and the surrounding natural environment, including the River Ouse. Together, these features reveal information about the origins of the town and its evolution over a long period of time.

12. Crosshall Manor is a Medieval, timber framed house that has been re-fronted and altered. Amongst other things, the list description describes the building as red brick with 1st floor bands and a tiled roof, and with an original basic plan of 2 ground floor rooms with internal chimney and an additional rear room. It has special architectural and historic interest due, in part to its age and the surviving historic fabric, which reveal information about the construction methods at the time in which the building originated and has since evolved.

13. The manor also gains significance from its setting, including its association with this historic crossroads and its spacious, leafy surroundings, which include its curved setback from the road and its large garden. These aspects of the setting give the building a sense of hierarchical importance, and they help to reveal its origins as a prominent building in a small, strategically located settlement thus they contribute to its special interest. Notwithstanding the fencing, there is visual connectivity between the listed building and the appeal site, and the absence of large and permanent buildings within the site enables it to provide separation space between the manor and No 204. For this reason, and because it once formed part of its grounds, the site contributes to the manor's significance.

Effects of the proposal

14. As was noted in the previous appeal decision at this site, the effects of the proposal on the significance of the manor could only be by way of affecting its setting. Like the former scheme, this appeal proposal would not require any further changes to the boundaries of the adjacent listed building as the site has already been separated, fenced off, and has its own access to the public highway. No harm would arise through the proposed fencing, which would either be retained as is, or would otherwise be short in length and relatively low in height.

15. Although the proposed dwelling is stated to have a reduced scale compared to the previous appeal scheme, it would nonetheless be a large structure that would occupy a significant proportion of this plot that is currently devoid of buildings. Moreover, at 5.4 metres high, the single-storey dwelling would rise significantly above the fencing between the site and the adjacent listed building, encroaching into both the ground and air space around the manor. Indeed, the dwelling would be much larger and taller than the containers and trailers that are shown in the photographs and that were stored on the site at the time of my site visit, and as such it would be significantly more prominent in views across the former grounds from the manor.

16. Whilst the dwelling would be set back in keeping with the sweeping arc of development near to the junction, it would fill much of the gap between the manor and No 204, causing some erosion of the hierarchical and historical status of the building, and the ability to appreciate its past as a prominent structure standing at the crossroads.

17. Due to its length, width, and height, the proposed dwelling would also degrade the spacious character on this side of Crosshall Road which, in the absence of the appeal scheme, continues across the land to the rear and towards the rural surroundings. Thus, it would exacerbate the harm that has already been caused to the CA by No 204, which interrupts the otherwise undeveloped character of the frontage between the manor and the golf club.

18. Whilst the site is reasonably well-screened at present from the road, the replacement of the frontage trees would, in the short term, be likely to expose the dwelling, hardstanding, and other typical domestic paraphernalia to public views from Crosshall Road and the adjacent footpath whilst the replacement hedge becomes established. Therefore, there would be a loss in the greenery that is characteristic of this stretch of the roadside. Moreover, even once the replacement hedge had become established, views of the dwelling and the associated development would be gained through the site entrance. The additional built form

in this location would detract from the sense of space that is characteristic to this part of the CA, thus harming the ability to appreciate the visual and spatial connection between the wider built form and the natural environment.

19. With its half-hipped roof, wide door openings, and timber boarding, the design of the dwelling seeks to reflect an agricultural barn. Whilst there could historically have been barn-like buildings within the grounds of the manor, there is no evidence to indicate there was previously a barn in this part of the manor's former grounds. Therefore, the barn-like design would lack authenticity. However, given there is a wide mix in the style of buildings in the area, including other barn-like buildings, the design of the proposed dwelling would not, in and of itself, render the scheme unacceptable.

20. Overall, and having regard to my duties under the Act, I conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA, and it would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II* listed building known as Crosshall. It follows that there would be harm to the significance of these assets, including to the listed building through development within its setting.

21. Conflict would arise with policies LP2, LP11, and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019) (LP), and Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2019 (24 February 2016 Final Plan) (NP) insofar as they seek to ensure development conserves, enhances, and responds positively to the historic environment and contributes positively to local character, reinforcing its distinctiveness. There would also be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the National Design Guide insofar as they seek to secure high-quality design that is sympathetic to the surroundings.

22. Policy LP34 of the LP seeks to avoid harm to heritage assets unless that harm is outweighed by public benefits. I consider this further in the overall heritage and planning balance later in this decision.

Other Matter

23. A Unilateral Undertaking (UU) provides for a financial contribution towards the provision of wheeled bin facilities for the development. Because I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, it is not necessary for me to consider the UU further.

Heritage and Planning Balance

24. The harm that would be caused to Crosshall Manor and the CA would be less than substantial in the terms of the Framework and to a low degree. However, less than substantial harm should not be equated to a less than substantial objection and I ascribe great weight to the conservation of the designated heritage assets, as the Framework requires me to do. The Framework states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification; and that the less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

25. The proposal would undoubtedly offer social, economic, and environmental benefits that are also public benefits. Benefits would arise through the delivery of housing, increasing the supply in an area where the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing. Economic benefits would arise relative to the construction phase and in the longer term through increased

spending in the area. The scheme would also increase biodiversity as this would be a mandatory requirement.

26. Given its proximity to the services and facilities in St Neots, and to public transport connections, the site is well-connected and its future occupants would not be reliant on the private car to meet their daily needs. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that the LP supports infill proposals for housing within existing settlements, where appropriate. The proposal would make use of a site that is used for storage and would not lead to the loss of greenfield land; and the dwelling would incorporate energy efficiency measures. The sustainability of the site and the proposed building do not weigh against the proposal. That no harm has been identified in respect of highway safety and parking, living conditions, biodiversity, and flooding are neutral matters that weigh neither for nor against the scheme.

27. The social, economic, and environmental benefits, which are also public benefits, associated with one dwelling would be modest. Even taking account of the current housing land supply position of 4.03 years, the cumulative weight of the benefits would be moderate and would not be sufficient to outweigh the great weight that the conservation of designated heritage assets carry. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with the historic environment provisions of the Framework.

28. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and this is reflected in the wording of the Framework. It is also well-established that a proposal does not necessarily need to accord with every policy in the development plan to accord with the development plan when read as a whole.

29. I have found that the proposal conflicts with Policies LP2, LP11, and LP12 of the LP and Policy A3 of the NP. Given my conclusions in respect of the heritage balance, there would also be conflict with Policy LP34 of the LP, which requires public benefits to outweigh harm to heritage assets. In this instance, I find that the conflict with these policies brings the proposal into conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. Planning permission should therefore be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

30. Due to the housing land supply position, paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged. I have already found that there would be harm to the significance of designated heritage assets that would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal, which provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed under the provisions of paragraph 11(d)(i) of the Framework. The balance in favour of granting planning permission given by paragraph 11(d) of the Framework, therefore, does not apply.

Conclusion

31. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

E Catcheside
INSPECTOR