
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 December 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B9506/D/21/3274515

Passford Farm Cottage, Southampton Road, Boldre SO41 8ND

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Guy Parsons against the decision of New Forest National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 20/00599, dated 19 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is replacement oak framed summerhouse/outbuilding (with removal of timber framed and glazed outbuilding).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the refusal of the planning application and the submission of this appeal, a revised version of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. I have taken the revised Framework into account where relevant to my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the setting of a Grade II listed building, Passford Farm Cottage.

Reasons

4. The site lies within countryside north of Lymington. It forms part of a collection of detached buildings, which are surrounded by mature trees, the Brockenhurst to Lymington railway line and the A337 Southampton Road. Access is via a shared unmade access track from the west side of the A337. The site lies within the Buckland Conservation Area (BCA).
5. Passford Farm Cottage (PFC) is a Grade II listed building (listed as 'Passford Farmhouse') dating from the 17th century. It is a picturesque timber frame cottage with painted brick infill and metal casement windows incorporating decoratively shaped glazing. It comprises two and a half storeys under a thatched roof, with a later 20th century single storey tiled lean-to at one side. There is also a more recent, single storey extension to the rear.
6. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, (the Act) requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its

setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest.

7. The rear elevation of PFC faces onto, and is closely associated with, a large pleasant lawned garden. This is enclosed by mature landscaping and fencing, demarcating its function as external amenity area in association with the cottage. Much of the grassed area is sited in an elevated position in relation to the ground level of the appeal property, as land levels rise away from the rear of the building.
8. In my view, the special interest of the listed building, insofar as it relates to this appeal, derives principally from its architectural form and historical importance as a surviving 17th century rural farmhouse set within largely undeveloped grounds. The open grassed rear garden, within close proximity of the building, contributes to the significance of this heritage asset, and enables it to be appreciated.
9. The garden contains a small swimming pool with an adjacent timber deck and jacuzzi, together with a low-key single storey summerhouse building, with attached shed and lean-to wood store. These are the only buildings and structures within the lawned rear garden of the property. Despite their higher ground level, they are clearly perceived as subservient in scale and function to the main property due to their small size and obvious ancillary recreational purpose.
10. Due to the juxtaposition of the cottage and the existing summerhouse/shed/log store, they are both visible together in various views from within and outside the appeal site, including from the shared access lane.
11. The existing structures are not of any notable historic merit or historical significance per se. Notwithstanding this, when viewed together with PFC, the existing summerhouse/shed/woodstore structure has the appearance of a low-key subservient building which occupies an unassuming presence within the garden, merely serving to provide facilities in association with the domestic sized swimming pool, jacuzzi and decking.
12. The structures sit unobtrusively within the site and have a light-weight appearance which does not visually compete with the host property, thereby reinforcing the perception that the listed building is the most notable and historically significant building within the collection of buildings which share the access lane. This is due to a combination of their simple design, small scale, low height, visually permeable predominantly glazed nature of the summerhouse, and the obviously functional design of the buildings, reflecting their role as outbuildings providing domestic-scale ancillary use.
13. Moreover, the existing summerhouse also has a degree of design affinity with the low height, single storey rear addition to the host property. This incorporates a shallow roof form, light-coloured horizontal panelled walls, and large white framed glazed elements, which combine to give it a more contemporary light-weight appearance than the main building, and a subservience in relation to the host property.
14. The appeal proposal would replace these visually light weight and low-profile pool-side structures with a more substantially built, oak framed building. By replacing the existing separate structures with a single, bulkier structure, the

proposal would appear more visually dominant within the site and in relation to the listed building. It would be longer, wider and higher than the existing structure, and incorporate more solidly constructed walls finished in oak cladding above brick plinths. The roof would comprise a notably more bulky barn-end pitched tiled roof. Accordingly, the proposed building would have a significantly greater visual presence within the site than the existing building due to its combined height, scale, materials and roof form.

15. The vernacular style of the proposed outbuilding, whilst being rural in character and appearance, would not relate as well in design terms as the existing summerhouse, to either the adjacent pool and decking or the main farmhouse building.
16. Moreover, the proposal would incorporate overtly residential design detailing, including a porch feature and bifold doors on its front elevation, which is one of the most visible aspects in wider views of the building, and domestic style fenestration on other elevations. This residential-like design would appear at odds with the adjacent pool facilities with which the new building is intended to be functionally associated.
17. Due to its size, domestic design elements, and elevated position in relation to the host property, the proposal would appear more akin to a small dwelling than a recreational pool-side building, and would visually compete with PFC and erode the open setting currently provided by the rear garden of the site. This would be to the detriment of the setting of the listed building, visually undermining the importance of the cottage.
18. I have noted that there are a number of existing, more modern, timber outbuildings and other temporary structures within the original curtilage of PFC, which have eroded the openness of the wider setting of the property, some of which are unsympathetic to its setting, and which appear to be in separate ownership. I have not been provided with details of the planning status of these structures, and they do not justify the harm to the setting of the listed building that would arise from the appeal scheme, which has a closer affinity and a more obviously direct relationship to the listed building, having regard to its position within the enclosed rear garden of the appeal site and its proximity to the host property.
19. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the setting of the Grade II listed building of PFC, and would therefore harm its significance as a heritage asset. As such, it would be contrary to Policies DP37 and SP16 of the *New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016 – 2036* (2019). These policies, amongst other things, require domestic outbuildings to be proportionate and clearly subservient to the dwelling they are to serve in terms of their design, scale, size, height and massing, and for new development to protect, maintain or enhance the significance of designated heritage assets.
20. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Policies of the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment, as set out in Chapter 16.
21. The statutory duty in Section 66 of the Act is a matter of considerable importance and weight. In terms of the advice in Paragraph 202 of the Framework, the harm to the setting of the listed building of PFC would be '*less than substantial*'. Less than substantial harm does not equate to less than

substantial planning objection. Consequently, the Framework sets out the need to address the '*less than substantial harm*' in a balanced manner against the public benefits associated with the proposal. No public benefits have been put forward in respect of the development to outweigh the identified harm to the setting of the listed building.

Other Matters

22. As the site lies within the BCA, I therefore have a duty under Section 72(1) of the Act to consider the effects of the appeal scheme on this designated heritage asset. The Council has not found any harm to the character and appearance of the BCA as a result of the proposed development, and, on the basis of the evidence before me, neither do I.
23. The appeal site lies within the character area of 'Buckland Rings and setting', as defined within the National Park Authority's Buckland Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA). This is a rural area dominated by the Iron Age hillfort of Buckland Rings, with its heavily treed banks and open central area. PFC is described in the as the only listed building within this character area of the BCA, and as being located within an extensive curtilage and historically isolated in the landscape.
24. The appeal site comprises part of an area described in the CACA as a heavily wooded area formed by Buckland Wood and the trees in the dispersed residential development to the north of the hillfort. Moreover, the CACA states that the majority of the northern part of this character area is formed by Buckland Wood, with trees being important in the character area, and that the grounds to PFC are surrounded by mature trees on three sides, with Tuckermill Copse extending beyond to the northwest.
25. Unlike listed buildings, the significance of a conservation area is dependent upon how it is experienced. Under such circumstances, proposals must be judged according to their effect on a conservation area as a whole, and must therefore have a moderate degree of prominence. Despite the harm that would be caused to the immediate setting of the listed building, I do not find that the proposal would be detrimental to the character or appearance of the BCA and the significance of the conservation area as a whole. In coming to this view, I have had regard to the rural nature of the BCA as a whole, and the isolated position of the built development comprising PFC and its grounds, and their enclosure by mature trees and landscaping.
26. I have noted that the appeal scheme represents an amended proposal following discussions with the Council, including a reduction in building footprint and height and the removal of a feature chimney. However, this does not alter my findings in respect of the current proposal, which I must consider on the merits of the scheme before me.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR