
Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 1 April 2014

Site visit made on 1 April 2014

by Jacqueline Wilkinson Reg. Architect IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 16 May 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/E/13/2210725

Porch House, School Hill, Soberton, Southampton SO32 3PF

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Annie Ward against the decision of the South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/13/00443/LIS dated 25 January 2013 was refused by notice dated 19 June 2013.
 - The works proposed are demolition of existing timber framed barn, prior to the erection of a replacement barn with a tiled roof.
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Procedural matters

1. The above description of the works was agreed with the parties at the Hearing.
2. I have had regard to the National Planning Policy Framework: Planning Policy Guidance, which was published on 6 March, 2014. I have concluded that it has no additional impact on the issues relating to this appeal.
3. PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide (The PPS5 Guide)* remains current.

Decision

4. The appeal is allowed and listed building consent is granted for demolition of existing timber framed barn, prior to the erection of a replacement barn with a tiled roof at Porch House, School Hill, Soberton, Southampton SO32 3PF in accordance with the terms of the application Ref SDNP/13/00443/LIS dated 25 January 2013 and the plans submitted with it subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) Within one month of the date of this decision, details of a scheme of recording shall be submitted to the local planning authority in writing.
 - 2) The scheme of recording shall be carried out in full within 3 months of the date of approval in writing by the local planning authority.

Background

5. The appellant purchased Porch House and the appeal barn in 2003. Planning permission and listed building consent¹ were granted in 2006 for alterations to Porch House, which included re-roofing of the barn with tiles.
6. The barn was demolished in October 2012. Planning permission² was granted in June 2013 for a replacement barn, which has now been built, but the application for Listed Building consent to demolish the barn was refused.
7. The appeal barn is listed Grade II by virtue of its curtilage connection to the principal listed building, Porch House. The *PPS5 Guide* states, in paragraph 95: "Some buildings are deemed designated as listed buildings by being fixed to the principal building or by being within its curtilage and pre-dating 1948. Whether alteration or demolition of such buildings amounts to substantial harm to the designated heritage asset (i.e. the listed building together with its curtilage and attached buildings) needs considering carefully. These buildings may on occasion be of limited individual or group value".
8. In the light of this guidance I have taken the designated asset to be Porch House and its attached and curtilage buildings as a whole, not the appeal barn in isolation. I have assessed this appeal on this basis.

Main issue

9. The main issue is therefore whether the proposed works would preserve the principal listed building (Porch House) or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

The architectural or historic interest of the barn

10. The 1868 Ordnance Survey map shows a range of farm buildings located adjacent to Porch House and a barn existed on the same footprint as the appeal barn at that time. The 1896 Ordnance Survey map shows the barn in isolation, the other structures having been demolished. The appellant's historic assessment indicates that the barn is likely to date from around the 1860's and this date is also estimated by the author of the Condition Survey³ of 2001.
11. In the absence of any other evidence, it is reasonably safe to assume that the barn was built around the mid-nineteenth century, although it is possible that some of the timbers may have been re-used from earlier buildings. A direct historical association with Porch House has not been established and so is a matter of conjecture, although it is reasonable to assume that these pre-existing farm buildings were likely to have been used by, if not owned by the occupiers of Porch House.
12. The photos⁴ of the barn taken by the appellant between 2008 and 2012 reveal that the structure was a simple braced frame, resting on a brick and flint plinth wall, with two tie beams with curved braces. The original roof was missing, having been replaced at some time in the mid 20th century by widely spaced

¹ Ref 06/0048/FUL, 06/00499/LIS

² Ref 13/00426/HOUS

³ Document 1 submitted at the Hearing.

⁴ Appendices 21 to 43 of the HeritageCollective statement

modern poles, supporting a corrugated sheet roof. Whilst originally clad in horizontal boarding, some of this had also been replaced by corrugated sheets. There was a set of vertical planks set into a panel above the west door, for which there seems to be no explanation, other than as "make-do" infilling.

13. The Council has submitted as part of its evidence, the design statement prepared as part of the 2006 applications. The Council stated at the Hearing that it gave some weight to the credentials of the architect as a locally experienced conservation specialist. Whilst the statement concentrates on the proposed works to the main house, the architect also noted that while the brick and flint wall of the existing barn was an important feature, the timber structure was not of historical importance, although the intention was to repair and make good the timbers.
14. The building dates from the mid/late-nineteenth century and due to its simple construction and altered state, it would not have met the statutory tests for listing in its own right. I therefore conclude that the building was of limited architectural or historic interest.

Deliberate neglect

15. It is the Council's case that deliberate neglect by the appellants had caused the deteriorated state of the appeal barn. Before the case for demolition is assessed, I am required by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) paragraph 130, to assess whether or not there is evidence of deliberate neglect. Where there is such evidence, the deteriorated state of the asset should not be taken into account in any decision.
16. Over a period of approximately nine years, the appellant stated that she and her husband carried out some works to the building, such as reducing soil levels, removing ivy growth and trees and saplings from around the base of the building. They added some cross braces, but they left the roof exposed where the corrugated sheets had blown off, in accordance with the advice of a structural engineer. However, I am not convinced that this advice, taken alone, was the correct course of action. These efforts were too little and too late and much more could have been done in the way of supporting and bracing the structure and protecting it from the wind and weather. Further advice could have been sought.
17. I accept the Council's point that there was a continuing decline in the condition of the building, as seen by comparing the photos taken in 2006 and the later photos. However, this does not in my view amount to deliberate neglect and I accept the appellant's assertion that she had no intentions other than to repair the barn in the longer term.

The condition of the barn

18. The 2001 Condition Survey and the testimonials of others, who went inside the barn before the appellant owned it, indicate that the structure of the barn was in poor state even before the appellant and her husband bought it in 2003. The Council acknowledges that the condition of the barn had been known for some time. The implications of a change in the weight of the roofing material and the roof pitch were clearly not appreciated by either party at the time of granting the listed building consent in 2006. A structural survey and a specification for the repair works for the barn could have been required by

attaching a condition to the 2006 listed building consent, so that the Council could have controlled the method of the works to the barn. Further details of the roof could also have been sought, in order to resolve the question of the roof pitch and the additional weight. It would have also been open to the Council to have required the works to the barn to have been completed by a certain time, in order to prevent further decline.

19. It comes as no surprise that the roof of the building fell apart when the builder took off the remaining sheet cladding. Once destabilised, historic timber frame structures in poor repair are exposed to a high risk of collapse. Neither the builder nor the appellant made an attempt to contact the previous architect about the question of the roof pitch and no attempt was made to prop up the structure or to contact the Council as soon as the problems arose. It was incorrectly assumed, without reference to the Council, that it was acceptable to change the pitch of the roof, not by raising the ridge, but by lowering the wall plate, which would have required significant and destructive alteration to any surviving timbers.
20. I was told that the remaining timbers were stored on site at the back of the new barn for some time after the demolition of the appeal barn and were finally burnt over the winter of 2013/14. The salvaged flints and some bricks are now all that is left of the original materials from the appeal barn and these have been re-used in the new barn.
21. The appellant's photos confirm what was already evident at the time of the 2001 Condition Survey. The repair of the barn would have involved dismantling the frame, the rebuilding of a significant part of the plinth and an entirely new roof. How much material would have been re-usable can only now be matter of conjecture, but I consider that it is likely that there would have been a high proportion of new timbers in the re-assembled structural frame. The plinth wall possibly could have been partly salvaged, but the new tiled roof would have been considerably heavier than the existing roof and it is likely that some additional strengthening of the structure and the plinth would have been necessary to carry it.
22. I therefore conclude that the resultant structure would have been of little historic or architectural interest in its own right.

Effect on the significance of the heritage asset

23. I have read the many letters of support from local people, who welcome the improvement in appearance over the old barn, which is typically described as having been an eyesore. Whilst I appreciate that the new barn is undoubtedly neater and visually more attractive than the old one to the passer-by, it is the hidden historic value of the structure behind the façade which I am required under the above Act to assess in this appeal.
24. The appellant considers that the new barn has had a positive effect on the setting of Porch House. However, there would have been an equal level of improvement to the setting of Porch House through the refurbishment of the existing building in accordance with the approved plans.
25. The significance of the refurbished barn would have rested in solely in its visual appearance as a vernacular building, the fact that it is likely to have been part of a larger farm group, now lost, and its position in the setting of the principal

listed building, indicating the possibility of a functional link to the former occupiers.

26. In granting the planning permission in 2013 for a new barn and discharging its duties under Section 66 of the above Act, the Council has, in its own assessment, reached the view that these aspects of the significance of the listed building, Porch House, and its setting have been preserved by the rebuilding of the barn on the same footprint to approximately the same external appearance.
27. I therefore conclude that the neither the significance nor the setting of Porch House has been harmed by the demolition of the barn.

Conclusions

28. The research and photographic evidence demonstrates that the appeal barn was of limited historic or architectural interest in its own right. Although its condition was very poor, I have concluded that this was not as the result of deliberate neglect. I have also reached the view that its repair would have necessitated dismantling the whole of the frame and most likely the rebuilding of the whole of the plinth. A large amount of new material would have been introduced into the frames and the roof would have been entirely new. The refurbished barn would therefore have been of little architectural or historic interest.
29. I therefore conclude that the demolition has not harmed any feature of special architectural or historic interest within the curtilage of Porch House and that the building of the replacement barn has preserved the significance and setting of the principal building, Porch House.
30. The works would therefore comply with the requirements of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and Section 16 of the above Act and the broad aims of the Winchester Local Plan cited by the Council.
31. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Conditions

32. In the light of the loss of the physical evidence of the historic materials in the barn, I consider that it is essential that all the photographic and other research material in the possession of the appellant is collated and lodged with the appropriate archives, in the appropriate format, in order to support any future research on the principal building or the village. I have therefore imposed a condition requiring a scheme of recording to be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing, within one month of this decision and for that scheme of recording to be carried out within 3 months of the date of the local planning authority's approval.

Jacqueline Wilkinson

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Jeremy Pike	Counsel
Mrs Ward	Appellant
Mr Ward	Co-owner
Dr Edis	Heritage Consultant

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Alison Davidson	Head of Historic Environment.
Beth Harding-Rennie	Planning Officer

INTERESTED PERSONS:

Captain Antony McEwen	Local resident
Duncan Colin-Jones	Local resident (at the site visit).

DOCUMENTS

- 1 Condition Survey 2001 (Council)
- 2 Second witness statement for the appellant signed and dated 31 March 2014. (Appellant).
- 3 2 photos of the appeal site garden taken on 17 April, 2014 by the Planning Officer. (Council).
- 4 Copies of the decision notices relating to the 2006 approvals (Council).

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