



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2023

by R Barrett BSc (Hons) MSc Dip Hist Cons Dip UD IHBC MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/D/22/3297667

Ronans Lodge, Forest Road, Winkfield Row, BRACKNELL, RG42 7QB

- 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 R Birch against the decision of Bracknell Forest Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00424/FUL, dated 22 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is 'proposed extensions and alterations to the existing property'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs has been submitted by Mr R Birch against Bracknell Forest Borough Council. That application will be the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matter

3. On my site visit, I was able to fully view the appeal building and its surrounds. However, whilst I was unable to view Ronans close to or some of its historic ancillary buildings, I was able to fully understand the relationship between the appeal site and Ronans, aided by the evidence submitted with the appeal.

Main Issues

- Whether Ronans Lodge contributes to the setting of Ronans, a grade II listed building and heritage asset, and if so, whether the appeal proposal would preserve the special architectural or historic interest of Ronans, with particular regard to its setting;
- Whether Ronans Lodge is situated within the curtilage of Ronans, a grade II listed building and heritage asset, and if so whether the appeal proposal would preserve its special architectural or historic interest;
- The effect of the appeal proposal on protected trees.

Reasons

Setting

4. Ronans is an imposing dwelling, possibly once a hunting lodge, of early eighteenth century origin. It has been altered and added to throughout its history, mainly in the mid nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That included the addition of a remarkable Dutch Gabled wing and decorative porch. Its primary significance relates to its architecture and its historic fabric, as an example of an eighteenth/nineteenth century country house.
5. Mainly situated close to Ronans, are a number of other buildings that once formed the collection of ancillary buildings accommodating uses to service the main house. Those include a stable block, a dairy block and some domestic accommodation, along with the gate house, subject of this appeal. Those buildings, many of which are now in separate ownership and different uses, once had a functional and historic relationship with the main listed building as ancillary to it.
6. Even though later than Ronans and its primary history of rebuild and alteration, and situated beyond its immediate landscaped gardens near Forest Road, the gatehouse marks the entrance to the main house. It contributes to an understanding of its history and function and due to its location, it affects the way in which Ronans is experienced when approaching from the main entrance. It therefore contributes to the setting of Ronans. In turn its setting contributes to the significance of Ronans as a heritage asset, albeit to a lesser extent than other matters identified, including its architecture and historic fabric.
7. I acknowledge that there is a tree belt and planting that separates Ronans from the gatehouse and that the effect of planting has been to visually contain Ronans. Indeed it may be, given its later date and position near Forest Road, that the gatehouse was not part of the originally conceived layout. I also acknowledge that the gatehouse sits outside the main views from Ronans towards its landscaped gardens. However, those matters do not diminish the historic, functional, visual and ancillary relationship between Ronans and the gatehouse. That relationship is still appreciable in some views, including from some parts of the green areas around Ronan's, as evidenced in the appellant's photographs.
8. It is also noted that the relationship between Ronans and the gate house is not explicitly mentioned in the listing description. However, that is mainly for purposes of identification and does not determine the extent of setting.
9. In terms of the impact of the appeal development, it would significantly increase the size of the appeal building, such that its resultant mass, bulk and height would disrupt its ancillary relationship with the main house. It would alter every elevation of the appeal dwelling, such that the original building would be much changed. The introduction of a first floor, with windows breaking through the eaves, would disrupt the simple uninterrupted roof form. The re-orientation of the front entrance and addition of a large porch would further diminish its simple modest appearance. Further, double doors at first floor level and large glass doors at ground floor level would be alien to its simple Arts and Crafts character and appearance.

10. All in all, the alterations proposed would result in a much larger and ornate building which would significantly diminish the gatehouse's secondary and ancillary relationship with the main house, Ronans. That would materially alter the experience of Ronans as one progresses through its main entrance from Forest Road along its drive to the main house. That would be the case even though the appeal site and Ronans are not often seen in the same view, given existing planting and the drive's alignment.
11. I conclude that the appeal building contributes to the setting of Ronans. The appeal proposal would fail to preserve its special architectural or historic interest, with particular regard to its setting. It would therefore fail to accord with Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2002) (Local Plan) policy EN20 and Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) (Core Strategy) policy CS7. Those policies, together, seek development that is high quality design, respects the historic environment and is in sympathy with the appearance and character of the local environment.

Curtilage

12. The appeal site includes a modest single storey dwelling, sited adjacent to Forest Road. Built in the late nineteenth century, vaguely in the Arts and Crafts tradition, it has a neat simple single storey form and includes a prominent centrally sited chimney stack, uninterrupted tiled roof slopes, with slightly sweeping eaves and bonnet tiles, decorative brickwork and metal small paned casement windows, all reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts tradition. It has been added to in the past.
13. It is agreed between the two main parties that the appeal building was built as a gate house to the main house, the grade II listed building known as Ronans. It is also agreed that the appeal building dates from the late nineteenth century.
14. Section 1(5) (b) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (PLBCAA) states that any object or structure within the curtilage of the listed building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948 shall be treated as part of the listed building. That the appeal building was built prior to 1 July 1948 is not in dispute.
15. Caselaw has established a number of matters that should be taken into account when establishing the curtilage of a listed building. Those include the physical layout of the listed building and building in question, their ownership past and present and their use and function past and present, in particular whether the building was ancillary to the purposes of the listed building at the date of listing. I will examine each matter in turn.
16. Firstly, the appeal site is located near the end of a long driveway leading from Forest Road to Ronans. It is therefore physically detached from the main house, and located some distance from it, beyond Ronans landscaped gardens and intervening tree belt. In addition, the appeal building has a separate curtilage, defined mainly by planting and a fence, which includes its garden and parking areas. That situation existed at the time of listing and is unchanged today.

17. Ronans and the appeal site were in the same ownership at the time of listing and continued to be so until 2020. However, the appellant indicates that sometime before 2020 Ronans and the appeal site had separate legal titles. Overall, it is not disputed that the appeal site and Ronans have been in the same ownership for the greater part of their history.
18. It is agreed between the two main parties that the appeal dwelling had a historic use and function as a gatehouse to the main house. However, no evidence is before me to confirm that the appeal building was in use as a gatehouse at the time of listing. Its present use is as a dwelling independent of the main house and has been such since at least 2012.
19. Taking all of the above matters into consideration, including its physical detachment, location beyond Ronans' landscaped gardens, intervening planting, present ownership and function, based on the evidence before me including my observations on my site visit, I consider that the appeal dwelling falls beyond the curtilage of Ronans, and should not be considered as part of that main listed building as per section 1(5)(b) of the PLBCAA. Given that finding I have no reason to further consider the impact of the proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the appeal building.
20. I conclude that Ronans Lodge sits beyond the curtilage of Ronans, a grade II listed building and heritage asset. The appeal proposals would not therefore offend Local Plan policy EN20 or Core Strategy policy CS7, in that regard.

Protected trees

21. The appeal proposal would result in built development closer to protected trees, which are located outside the appeal site. The appeal application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Assessment & Method Statement, which was revised at appeal. Given the nature of the separation distance, intervening driveway and the nature of the appeal development, subject to appropriate tree protection during construction, no material harm to those trees would be a consequence.
22. I conclude therefore that the appeal development would not harmfully impact protected trees. It would therefore accord with Local Plan saved policies EN1 and EN20. Together those policies aim to protect tree and hedgerow cover, enhance the landscape and promote biodiversity. It would also accord with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 131, which has a similar aim.

Public Benefits

23. In accordance with NPPF paragraph 199, I accord great weight to the conservation of a designated heritage asset. I consider that the harm to the significance of Ronans, through development within its setting, would be less than substantial. That is a matter to which I attach considerable importance and weight. However, in this case, whilst I acknowledge the private benefits that would result for occupiers of the appeal property, no public benefits, as identified in NPPF paragraph 202, are before me, sufficient to outweigh the identified harm.

Other Matters

24. An appeal Decision on land nearby has been brought to my attention (APP/R0335/W/22/3298839). That relates to a development of six dwellings on land nearer to Chavey Down Road than the appeal site. However, although a different development, where applicable to this Decision, I have generally concurred with the views of that Inspector.

Conclusion

25. For the above reasons, and taking all other matters raised into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Barrett

INSPECTOR