



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 August 2024

by P Terceiro BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2114/W/24/3339784

Luccombe Manor, Popham Road, Shanklin PO37 6RG

- 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 Steven Wells (Garden Isle Hotels) against the decision of Isle of Wight Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02020/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of a 10 bedroom extension, with revisions to existing first floor bedrooms and inclusion of 3 x new bedrooms within existing extensions ground floor; creating a total of 13 new rooms.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development cited in the application form differs to that contained within the decision notice. There is no evidence that this change was formally agreed, nor do the plans reflect the description contained within the decision notice. For the avoidance of doubt, I have used the description as included in the application form on the banner heading above and for the purposes of my assessment.
3. During my site visit I observed that a section of the Coastal Path near the site was closed off to the public. Nevertheless, I was able to view the site from the top of the steps at the corner of the Coastal Path where it turns northward. The Council has confirmed that it carried out its assessment from this location. The appellant has been given the opportunity to comment on this matter and I have taken into account any comments received in my assessment below.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and of the area.

Reasons

5. Luccombe Manor is a large manor house of Victorian / Edwardian descent that is in use as a hotel. The manor house has been previously enlarged, including with a two-storey flat roofed extension and a conservatory. Despite their more modern appearance, these extensions are subservient to the manor house and so its original character remains discernible. The manor house sits on spacious grounds and features a large garden.

6. Popham Road, in the site's vicinity, normally comprises large, detached buildings of different architectural styles which sit in spacious landscaped grounds. Mature trees and other vegetation provide a leafy and attractive setting for the buildings, thereby making a positive contribution to the visual quality of the road and verdant character of the area. From the footpath adjacent to the site the manor house is seen in the context of its spacious grounds, and the gap to Luccombe Hall Hotel allows for views towards the trees and other vegetation in the backdrop. As such, this gap provides an attractive visual break between the existing built form.
7. Due to its varied nature and lack of homogeneity in style, the area is tolerable to new design. However, the proposal would connect to the existing two storey flat roofed extension and, due to its considerable length and height, it would result in a substantially large addition that would overwhelm the original manor house, thereby failing to respect its proportions. Consequently, the extension would harm the character of the host building.
8. The extension would stretch towards the common boundary with Luccombe Hall Hotel. Given its large scale, bulk and height, it would substantially reduce the gap between both buildings, thereby harming the attractive view from the footpath across the site towards the vegetation and mature trees in the backdrop. As such, the proposal would harm the spacious setting that the manor house currently enjoys and appear at odds with the character of the area.
9. The proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host building and of the area. It would be contrary to Policies DM2 and DM12 of the Isle of Wight Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document 2012 (the CS), where these policies support development of a high-quality design that conserves and enhances the landscape.
10. The Council's reason for refusal quotes CS Policy DM11 and my attention has been drawn to the Shanklin Conservation Area (CA). The plan before me shows that the site is located outside the CA. The Council has not set out any reasons to justify the proposal's harm to the CA. On this basis, I do not find this policy to be relevant in the context of this appeal.

Other Matters

11. The site is within a zone of influence of the coast and water environments of the Solent International Sites. The Solent has recognised problems from nitrate enrichment; high levels of nitrogen from human activity and agricultural sources in the catchment have caused excessive growth of green algae which is having a detrimental impact upon protected habitats and bird species.
12. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires that, where a project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, the competent authority must, before any grant of planning permission, make an appropriate assessment (AA) of the project's implications in view of the relevant conservation objectives.
13. As such, I cannot rule out, in the first instance, that the proposed development would cause likely significant effects on the integrity of the Solent International

Sites through increased residential use and associated nutrient discharge. Had I been in a position to otherwise allow this appeal, it would have been necessary to consider this matter within a separate AA. As the appeal is being dismissed for other reasons, I have not done so.

14. I note a third-party comment received in support of the proposal. However, the matters raised, individually or combined, do not justify allowing the development.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

15. The appellant considers the CS to be out of date. Paragraph 11d) of the Framework states that, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
16. In this case, I have found that the most important policies for determining the appeal relate to design, landscape and tourism. The Framework seeks to ensure that development adds to the overall quality of the area and is sympathetic to local character, so Policies DM2 and DM12 of the CS are broadly consistent with the Framework. Further, the Framework seeks to create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, so CS Policy SP4, which supports proposals that increase the quality of existing tourism destinations and accommodation across the Island, is broadly consistent with the Framework. Consequently, paragraph 11d) of the Framework is not triggered in this instance.
17. The proposal would support the tourism industry. It would expand an established hotel to meet the current demand and improve the quality of accommodation provided on a deliverable, small-scale site within The Bay Key Regeneration Area that is within walking distance to Shanklin Old Village. I attach these benefits moderate weight.
18. The proposal would support the expansion of an existing business. It would create new jobs and provide locals with opportunities to learn and grow within the hospitality and tourism sector. Visitors would be economically active in the local area and there would be some economic benefits accrued from the construction process. The proposal would support economic growth and productivity and I ascribe these benefits considerable weight.
19. However, the Framework sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. I have found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and the area. This harm would be long lasting and would be contrary to the design aims of the Framework. I ascribe this matter substantial weight. The benefits of the proposal, in this instance, do not therefore outweigh the harm that I have identified.

20. 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. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

P Terceiro

INSPECTOR