
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2024

by Paul Griffiths BSc(Hons) BArch IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/N1160/W/24/3347205
56 Staddon Lane, Plymouth PL9 9SP

- 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 Andrew Mann against the decision of Plymouth City Council.
 - The application Ref.23/01774/FUL, dated 20 December 2023, was refused by notice dated 26 March 2024.
 - The development is a proposed storage outbuilding and alpaca stables.
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Preliminary Matters

1. No.56 Staddon Lane is a new dwelling. I need not dwell on the planning history; it is sufficient to say that it is one of a group of dwellings built on the site of what was a farm complex. The originally submitted proposals included an 'L' shaped storage building sited adjacent to a storage building that sits behind No.58 Staddon Lane, and a field shelter further to the north. The proposals were revised in the course of the application to the effect that the field shelter would be located to the immediate north of the proposed storage building facing west.
2. The Council made its decision to refuse planning permission on the basis of these revised proposals. However, to complicate matters further, I saw at my site visit that a field shelter, that appeared to be larger than that proposed, has been erected on the site proposed (approximately) for the field shelter, but orientated to face north, along with hardstanding, and tree planting. There is no indication that this building or the associated hardstanding has been authorised through a grant of planning permission. In that overall context, I intend to proceed on the basis of the revised proposal that the Council took its original decision upon.

Decision

3. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

4. The Staddon Heights Defences which include Fort Staddon, Brownhill Battery, Watch House Battery, Staddon Height Battery, Staddon Battery, and associated features and structures are designated as a Scheduled Monument. The proposals lie to the east of Staddon Fort, adjacent to the glaxis.
5. In that context, the main issue to be considered is the effect of the proposals on the setting, and thereby the significance of Fort Staddon, and the Scheduled Monument as a whole.

Reasons

6. Fort Staddon, and the Staddon Height Defences as a whole were, or are, part of a network of forts (the Palmerston Forts) that were intended to protect the landward approaches to the Naval Dockyard at Devonport from an invading force. The glacis, to the east of Fort Staddon, slopes down from the fort, and was designed to give the defenders a clear field of view over the eastern approaches to the fort, so that any attacking force would have to advance uphill towards the fort, exposed to defensive fire, with no available cover.
7. The open nature of the glacis is therefore fundamental to an understanding of the glacis itself, but also its function relative to the fort, and the Scheduled Monument as a whole.
8. No.56 and the group of dwellings it is a part of, while outside the confines of the Scheduled Monument, interrupt the open approach to the glacis and as a result, they have a detrimental effect on the setting of the fort, and thereby its significance. That said, the view may have been taken that the effect was no worse than that of the farmstead that was formerly in place. I can appreciate that, but I can also understand why the Council would want to manage incremental additions to the dwellings that might lead to further harm to the setting of the Scheduled Monument and its significance.
9. To my mind, additions of the form proposed here are not 'negligible' as they have been described. They are accretions that add further clutter, interrupting the open nature of the glacis and the approaches to it. As a result, they detract from an understanding of the glacis itself, and its function relative to the fort. In that way, the proposals would cause harm to the setting and thereby the significance of the fort, and as a result, the significance of the Scheduled Monument as a whole.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) tells us that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). The Framework distinguishes between the approaches to take when the harm that would be caused to the significance of an asset would be 'substantial' or 'less than substantial'. In this case, bearing in mind the scale of the Scheduled Monument, the harm that would be caused to its significance would be less than substantial.
11. In that case, the Framework says that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The public benefits in this case are limited at best and appear to me largely private in nature. On that basis, bearing in mind that I must give great weight to the conservation of the asset, these benefits are nowhere near sufficient to outweigh the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset that would be caused. That conclusion means that the proposals also fall contrary to Policy DEV21 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan that was adopted in March 2019. There are no material considerations in play that might justify a conclusion contrary to the approach of the development plan in this case.
12. As an aside, I would also observe that irrespective of whether they would be within the residential curtilage of No.56, both buildings proposed (and indeed the building and some of the associated development that I saw in place at my

site visit) would appear to sit partially within the confines of the Scheduled Monument. As such, they may well require Scheduled Monument Consent. The tone of the responses from Historic England suggest to me that this would be very unlikely to be forthcoming.

Conclusion

13. For all those reasons, I dismiss the appeal.

Paul Griffiths

INSPECTOR