



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 November 2024

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B9506/D/24/3344779

Arniss Farmhouse, Southampton Road, Godshill, Hampshire SP6 2JX

- 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 Mr Antony Sweeney against the decision of New Forest National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is 23/01620FULL.
 - The development proposed is creation of first floor balcony.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for creation of first floor balcony at Arniss Farmhouse, Southampton Road, Godshill, Hampshire, SP6 2JX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/01620FULL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing numbers DR1, DR2 and 22214/01A.
 - 3) Prior to the installation of any external lighting on the balcony hereby permitted, full details including height, design, location and intensity of the external lighting shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The lighting installation shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details and maintained as such thereafter.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to its location in the New Forest National Park (NFP) and the Western Escarpment Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site consists of a residential dwelling that has a single storey addition with a flat roof. The proposal is to use the flat roof as a balcony that would be facilitated by the installation of balustrading. A similar scheme was previously refused by the National Park Authority (NPA) in July 2023¹. The appeal proposal includes the positioning of planters around the edge of the balcony in an attempt to address the previous refusal by the NPA.

¹ New Forest National Park Authority application reference 23/00508FULL

4. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in protected landscapes. Moreover, I am conscious of my duty to seek to further the two statutory purposes of the National Park, which are to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
5. Part of the NFP's special qualities are its outstanding natural beauty and a unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage. In terms of the landscape area around the site, the Ancient Forest Farmlands and Heath Associated Smallholdings and Dwellings area is characterised by traditional settlements with retained historic building styles and landscape settings, which includes traditional grazing land. There is also a strong local vernacular of red brick cottages and farmsteads surrounded by small enclosed fields.
6. The dwelling is situated within the CA and countryside to the south of Godshill. According to the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA), the use of the site as a farmstead had its origins in the 13th Century, but the dwelling is more contemporary. The site itself has significant mature planting on the boundaries of the property and the dwelling therefore benefits from considerable screening.
7. The Framework requires that when considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Additionally, in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA.
8. The CACA confirms that the CA encompasses numerous settlements including Godshill. The significance of the CA derives in part from its landscape and historic dispersed settlement pattern. The CA retains its character as a series of dispersed linear rural settlements, and has a unique cultural identity, topography and landscape, developed over more than a thousand years.
9. The proposed balustrading would be constructed from glass between stainless steel posts. I acknowledge that the development would be a relatively modern addition to the existing built form of the dwelling that appears to have some historical interest. However, it would be constructed on a flat roof and adjacent to a conservatory, which are existing modern parts of the building that have limited historical interest. As such, the balcony would at least conserve, and make an arguable improvement to, the character and appearance of that part of the dwelling and its immediate setting. Furthermore, the substantial screening of the site would also help to reduce the visual impact of the development on the wider area.
10. I note the concerns about light spill from the balcony and the doors that would provide access to it. However, light that would be associated with use of the proposed balcony would be likely to be experienced in conjunction with existing artificial light emanating from the conservatory, a higher gable end window and rooflights serving the dwelling. Accordingly, with an appropriately worded condition to restrict the installation of external lighting without prior approval from the NPA,

the development would not result in a materially harmful increase in light pollution that would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

11. Taking the above factors into account, the development would conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the NFNP, and the extent to which this contributes to its special qualities. The proposal would also conserve the significance and historical interest of the CA.
12. For these reasons, the proposed development would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to its location in the NFNP and the CA. Consequently, the proposal would comply with Policies DP2, DP18, SP15 and SP16 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016 – 2036, which collectively seek, in part, that development is appropriate and sympathetic in terms of scale, appearance and form, respects the natural, built and historic environment and landscape character and reduces the impacts of light pollution on the 'dark skies' of the National Park to prevent artificial lighting from eroding rural darkness and tranquillity. The proposal would also comply with the Framework's landscape and historic environment protection policies.

Other Matter

13. Godshill Parish Council stated that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on local wildlife, particularly birds and bats. I acknowledge that the installation of doors to provide access to the balcony and potential external lighting on the balcony may create light spill. However, a condition requiring details of external lighting to be approved by the NPA would provide control over the impact on protected species, particularly bats. With the attachment of the appropriately worded condition, the material increase in light spill would be minimal and there would not be a harmful effect on protected species.

Conditions

14. The NPA have suggested various conditions in the event that I am minded to allow the appeal. I have considered these against the six tests set out in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance and made changes to the wording to add clarity and preciseness as appropriate.
15. The standard time limit condition and a condition listing the approved plans are necessary for planning certainty. A condition requiring the installation of external lighting to be carried out in accordance with pre-approved details is necessary and reasonable in the interests of character and appearance and the site's location within the NFNP and the CA.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR