



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 May 2025

by F Cullen BA(Hons) MSc DipTP MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/24/3353623

Meldon Park, Road to Meldon Park, Meldon Park, Northumberland NE61 3SW

- 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 Duncan Gass against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01945/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of single storey garden pavilion within the paddock to the east of Meldon Park.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of single storey garden pavilion within the paddock to the east of Meldon Park, at Meldon Park, Road to Meldon Park, Meldon Park, Northumberland NE61 3SW, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 24/01945/FUL, 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 the following approved plans: Location Plan; Drawing No SP-01 Existing Site Plan; Drawing No 01.C Site Plan Proposed Pavilion Marked; and Drawing No P-10.A Proposed Plan, Elevations, Aerial View.
 - 3) No development above ground level shall take place until details and samples of materials of the aluminium frame, glazing, aluminium roof blades, and suspended floor, to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details and materials.

Main Issue

2. The Council's two reasons for refusal cite perceived effects of the proposed development on the 'character of Meldon Park' and the 'setting of the Grade II* listed buildings on the site'. There is a degree of overlap in the assessment of these issues. I have therefore considered them together under the single main issue below.
3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the special interest and significance of the adjacent Grade II* listed buildings.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

4. 'Meldon Park'¹ and 'Conservatory adjoining north-east corner of Meldon Park' (the Conservatory)² are Grade II* listed buildings and, as such, designated heritage assets of the highest significance. Meldon Park is a country house dating from 1832 which was designed by architect John Dobson for Isaac Cookson. It is largely constructed of ashlar stone with a slate roof. Adjoining Meldon Park is the Conservatory which dates from the early 19th century, also designed by John Dobson. It is constructed of ashlar stone with a partly glazed and partly slate roof. The two heritage assets are part of a group of 19th century buildings and structures set in parkland that denote this historic country estate.
5. From the evidence before me, the special interest and significance of Meldon Park and the Conservatory are mainly derived from their historic and architectural interests. Important contributors in these regards include their grand Classical style, surviving historic fabric, association with John Dobson, and their group value with other listed buildings nearby.
6. Pertinent to the appeal, special interest and significance are also drawn, in part, from the assets' setting³. Their immediate and wider surroundings have historic, functional, physical and visual links with the listed buildings which support their Grade II* status.
7. The assets' immediate setting includes an open square grassed lawn, and an enclosed rectangular grassed area further to the east which is referred to by the appellant as 'the paddock' and of which the appeal site forms part. The square lawn displays a consciously designed layout, being flanked on two sides by Meldon Park and the Conservatory, bordered by a footpath and incorporating a centrally positioned Grade II listed fountain⁴. Whereas, in comparison, the rectangular lawn which is bound by a Grade II listed wall⁵ to the north and a timber post and rail fence with metal gates to the other sides, appears to historically have had, or has evolved into a space with, a less formal, secondary character. That said, both of these grassed areas allow the assets to be experienced and appreciated, and contribute in a positive way to their special interest and significance.
8. Furthermore, the surrounding parkland, woodland and fields, particularly to the south, provide long-range views from and to Meldon Park and the Conservatory, and permit an understanding of the conscious design choice of this location by the architect. In these respects, the assets' wider setting also contributes in a meaningful way to their heritage merit.

Proposal and Effects

9. In assessing the development, as required by section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I have had special regard to

¹ National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1042899.

² National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1304157.

³ National Planning Policy Framework, Glossary – Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

⁴ Fountain on Lawn to East of Meldon Park. National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1370618.

⁵ Wall on North of Garden to East of Meldon Park. National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1042900.

the desirability of preserving the listed buildings or their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. In addition, as required by Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2024 (the Framework) I have given great weight to the assets' conservation, mindful that, the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

10. As development within the setting of Meldon Park and the Conservatory, the proposal would not affect the historic fabric of these Grade II* listed buildings or their value as part of a group. Moreover, the majority of the immediate setting as well as all of the wider setting of these assets would remain undisturbed, maintaining the more formal garden spaces and key views from and to the buildings. On this basis, these elements which are integral to the assets' special interest and significance would be preserved and not harmed as a result of the proposal.
11. I acknowledge that the pavilion would be a sizeable structure. Nonetheless, it would be clearly subordinate in size, scale and massing to the adjacent Grade II* listed buildings. Furthermore, whilst its main orientation would be at a right angle rather than parallel to the nearby listed wall, it would not project beyond the southern building line of the Conservatory. In these regards, it would not compete with, nor detract from, Meldon Park and the Conservatory when the buildings are viewed together.
12. The pavilion's subservience within this sensitive historic context would also be perceptible through its minimalist and contemporary form, design and materials. In these respects, even though it would comprise design features, materials and finishes that are not represented in any of the nearby historic buildings, I am satisfied that it would be read as a lightweight and honest insertion into the space, not a starkly discordant addition. Additionally, the imposition of an appropriately worded condition would ensure that the component parts and materials are of an appropriate quality and appearance.
13. In coming to my decision, I have also had regard to the historic presence, until at least the 1950's, of a 'glass house' or 'glazed structure' of a similar size to that proposed and located within the appeal site, albeit against the listed northern boundary wall⁶.
14. Drawing all of the above together, whilst the proposed pavilion would result in change within the setting of Meldon Park and the Conservatory, by virtue of its location, form, design and materials, it would not lessen the assets' intrinsic heritage value, including the positive contribution made by their setting. It would not alter the authenticity of how the assets are experienced, nor would it diminish the ability to appreciate their special interest and significance.

Conclusion

15. Overall, having regard to the specific details of the appeal site and the proposal, in this instance, I am satisfied that the proposed development would preserve the setting and special interest, and would not harm the significance, of the adjacent Grade II* listed buildings. On this basis, there would be no conflict with the statutory presumption set out in section 66(1) of the Act and the provisions within

⁶ Forum Heritage Services: Heritage Statement dated May 2024. Glass House as illustrated on Historic Maps Figure 2: Extract Ordnance Survey 25 inch mapping 1896, Figure 3: Extract Ordnance Survey 25 inch mapping 1922 and Figure 4: Extract Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 1950.

the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment. It would also comply with Policies ENV 7, QOP 1 and HOU 9 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036, adopted March 2022 (the NLP) which, amongst other things, seek development to conserve and enhance the significance, quality and integrity of Northumberland's heritage assets and their settings; respect and enhance the historic environment; and respect, complement and not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the setting of an existing dwelling or on the character of the surrounding area.

16. In finding no harmful effects to the special interest and significance of the Grade II* designated heritage assets, the requirements of Paragraphs 213, 214 or 215 of the Framework are not engaged.

Other Matters

17. The appeal site is also proximate to a number of Grade II listed buildings including 'Terrace Walls and Steps to South of Meldon Park'⁷; 'Wall on North of Garden to East of Meldon Park'⁸; and 'Fountain on Lawn to East of Meldon Park'⁹. From the information before me and my observations on site, the special interest and significance of these assets primarily stem from their historic and architectural interests, as well as their value as part of a group. Additionally, they are also derived, to a greater or lesser extent, from their respective formal, largely open and verdant settings.
18. Given the location and nature of the proposed development in relation to these heritage assets, I find that their settings and thus special interest would be preserved and their significance not harmed. Consequently, no conflict would arise in relation to the statutory presumption set out in section 66(1) of the Act; the provisions within the Framework which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment; and Policy ENV 7 of the NLP, referred to above. I note the Council raised no concerns in these respects either.

Conditions

19. The Council has submitted suggested conditions were the appeal to be allowed. I have considered these having regard to the advice set out in both the Framework¹⁰ and the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG)¹¹.
20. Planning permission is granted subject to the standard three year time limit condition. I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant plans as this provides certainty.
21. In the interests of the special interest and significance of the adjacent heritage assets, a condition regarding the submission of details and samples is necessary. Having regard to guidance in the PPG, I have not required these details to be submitted prior to the commencement of the development.
22. The condition suggested by the Council relating to the use of the pavilion is not necessary as, should it be used for anything other than uses ancillary or incidental to Meldon Park as the host dwelling, the Council could take enforcement action.

⁷ National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1153808.

⁸ National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1042900.

⁹ National Heritage List for England – List Entry Number: 1370618.

¹⁰ Framework Paragraph 57.

¹¹ PPG Paragraphs: 007 Reference ID: 21a-007-20180615; and 017 Reference ID: 21a-017-20190723.

Conclusion

23. The proposed development would not conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given and subject to conditions, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

F Cullen

INSPECTOR