



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2025

by M J Francis BA (Hons) MA MSc MCIfA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 January 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/M9496/Y/25/3368852

Swythamley Hall, North Wing, Three Pools, Swythamley, Rushton Spencer, Staffordshire SK11 0SN

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr James Mack against the decision of Peak District National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref is NP/SM/0425/0386.
 - The works proposed are alterations to two-storey apartment.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposed works relate to a listed building. Therefore, as required by section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve the grade II listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

Special interest and significance

4. Swythamley Hall (the Hall) is a grade II listed, large country house with classical, Italianate and Jacobean elements to the front. While there was a manor house on the site from the 17th century, much of the original house was destroyed in a fire in 1813. Following a rebuild, there were further alterations and extensions to the house throughout the 19th century, and a large, two-storey porch added to the west front in the early 20th century.
5. The special interest and significance of the Hall, in relation to this appeal, derive from it being an example of a country estate with attendant lodges, stable block, chapel, kennels, estate office and workshops within extensive landscaped grounds, including what was originally a deer park. Although the hall and buildings have been converted to several residential units, following planning permission in 1989, it retains evidence of the wealth and influence of landowners, particularly during the 19th century.

6. The building also has a historical association with the Brocklehurst family, particularly Philip Lancaster Brocklehurst, who extensively altered and extended the hall in the latter part of the 19th century. This included the addition of a billiard room in c.1860 to the north side of the hall which was later converted into a library in 1920 and then used as a private drawing room. This remains a drawing room in the North Wing, and has oak panelling, a decorative carved fireplace, and wooden shutters to the windows. The master bedroom is located on the first-floor above this room.
7. The entrance hall, kitchen extension with bedrooms above, and morning room, all part of the North Wing, are thought to date from c.1935-1938, or shortly after. A number of internal alterations, the addition of a large entrance porch, and the conversion of the garage to what is now the morning room are the result of the creation of the North Wing apartment.

Effect on the listed building

8. The proposal includes a number of internal alterations, including the insertion of a new staircase in the main entrance hall, the removal of both the ground floor WC and the existing staircase, and new openings between the corridor and hall; enlarging an existing opening between the landing on the approach to the master bedroom; inserting a high level internal glazed screen; and creating an opening between the kitchen and the morning room.
9. Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2024, (the Framework) advises that when considering the impact of development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and that any such harm should have a clear and convincing justification.
10. The appellant has stated that the works in general affect non-significant late 19th or 20th century construction. However, I have not been provided with plans of the Hall that show the known dates and phases of the building, and the existing and proposed alterations made to this part of the building when it was converted. Therefore, whilst the appellant considers that the original subsidiary function of the servants' staircase has been lost following the conversion of the Hall, without knowing the plan form and the location of other staircases, there is no compelling evidence that supports this.
11. I saw the layout of the apartment and understand that the appellant is seeking improved circulation and an enhanced entrance hall. The existing hall where the new hardwood staircase is proposed, has a modern dado rail, new skirtings, modern internal doors and cupboards. However, there is only limited substantive evidence as to the effect on any historic fabric of installing a new staircase and the creation of an access through what is now a cupboard, and whether this is an appropriate option for the listed building.
12. The morning room and utility area were converted from a former garage. To connect the kitchen with the morning room, the proposed works would remove part of the original fabric of the two-storey building. However, there is limited justification and substantive evidence to support this.

13. I could see from outside the building the small sash window on the first floor, next to the wall that it is proposed to remove between the lobby and the landing. This would, from what I saw, remove part of the flank wall of what is likely an earlier part of the Hall. However, I have not been provided with any compelling evidence that justifies the removal of the historic fabric. On the other hand, the first-floor ensuite has a partition wall between it and the adjoining corridor. Consequently, the insertion of a high-level glazed screen would be a practical option to introduce additional light into the bathroom,
14. Therefore, I conclude that whilst Swythamley Hall has been altered and adapted over the last two hundred years, the proposed works would fail to preserve the listed building and its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. This would harm the significance of the heritage asset which I must give considerable importance and weight.

Public Benefits and Balance

15. The Framework advises that great weight must be given to an asset's conservation, which is irrespective of the level of harm. In this case because of the proposed removal of historic fabric and the staircase, I find the level of harm to be less than substantial, and at the lower end of the spectrum. Where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate securing its optimum viable use.
16. The Planning Practice Guidance¹ sets out what may be regarded as public benefits, such as works to a listed private dwelling which secures its future as a designated heritage asset. The appellant has set out that the North Wing has been for sale for five years, mainly because the layout of the apartment means that it is not a conducive place to live. They consider that there is a public benefit in maintaining a viable and functional use for the building.
17. I acknowledge that the appellant seeks to improve the circulation of the building and make it more appropriate to their needs. However, I saw that the apartment is occupied and I have no evidence that it continues to be for sale. Whilst there would be some economic benefits from the proposed building works, this would be a limited public benefit and would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.
18. Consequently, the proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and paragraph 212 of the Framework. It would also conflict with policy L3 of the Peak District National Park Core Strategy Development Plan Document, 2011, and policies DMC5 and DMC7 of the Peak District National Park Development Management Policies, 2019. Cumulatively, these state that development is not permitted if it would harm the significance of a heritage asset.

Conclusion

19. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

¹ Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723, 23 July 2019

M J Francis

INSPECTOR