

Railway Cottages, 59-61 Langstone Road

Principal Conservation Officer – Objection

Site and description of works

59 – 61 Langstone Road were a pair of 18th century symmetrical cottages that are Grade II listed and located at the very top (north) of the Langstone Conservation Area. They front onto Langstone Road and are prominent features.

A devastating fire destroyed the buildings on the 18 December 2018. Due to the intensity of the fire very little of the structures are now left. The proposed works are to dismantle the remains of the cottages and rebuild a detached cottage in a form which is sympathetic to the original building

Legislation and Policy background

Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ("1990 Act") requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest when considering whether to grant listed building consent.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires planning authorities, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires planning authorities, when considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a Conservation Area, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area

The need for the decision taker to attach considerable or special weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings has been reinforced through two recent high court decisions of: Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited vs. East Northamptonshire District Council et al (2014); and North Norfolk District Council vs. DCLG and Mack (2014).

The above statute and its subsequent and consistent interpretation in recent high court decision emphasises the need for the policies of the NPPF to be implemented whilst always having regard to the need to give special or greater weight to the preservation of the setting of a listed building.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the policies that the Council must take into account when determining planning applications. The 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2', states at paragraph 4:

'The significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its archaeological, architectural, historic, and artistic interest' and provides at paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 that in order for the Local Planning Authority to make decisions in line with legal requirements, the objectives of the development plan; and, the policy requirements of the NPPF, great importance is placed on understanding the nature, extent and level of the significance of the heritage asset.

The revised NPPF sets out in Chapter 16, the core principles relating to development affecting Heritage Assets that local planning authorities should consider in making planning decisions in the following paragraphs:

‘184. Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

189. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

190. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

191. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

192. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Considering potential impacts

193. 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). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

194. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional

Local Policies

Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development that:

Protects and where appropriate enhances the borough's statutory and non statutory heritage designations by appropriately managing development in or adjacent to conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, archaeological sites, buildings of local historic or architectural interest.

Policy CP16 (1a) of the Core Strategy states Planning permission will be granted for development that is designed to a high standard, which helps to create places where people want to live, work and relax. All development should demonstrate that its design:

Identifies and responds positively to existing features of natural, historic or local character within or close to the proposed development site.

Policy DM20 of the Allocations Plan states that development proposals must conserve and enhance the historic assets of Havant

Assessment of Significance

In terms of the significance of 59 -61 Langstone Road as a designated heritage asset, it is considered that the external appearance makes an important contribution to the historic and architectural character of the townscape, exhibiting the original appearance of a restrained and simple form of architecture dating from the 18th century. This design of building is not found elsewhere within the conservation area and makes a very important contribution to the area's character and appearance. Thus, the external appearance of the building has significance both in terms of historical value and in terms of aesthetic value.

The interior of the cottage was in a poor state of repair. Nonetheless, the form of the original timber framing and weatherboarding were very much evident. The form and function of space within each room and on each floor, would have also contributed to the significance of the asset. The interior elements which contribute to the building's significance do so in terms of historical value and aesthetic value.

The cottages also had significance in terms of the Langstone Conservation Area. Langstone Conservation Area can be characterised as primarily residential, its original commercial raison d'être having been surpassed. There is a strong linear form, with an intricate relationship between tidal water and buildings. Unquestionably 59-61 Langstone Road had a positive impact on the character of the conservation area. The link between the former railway and the cottages also helps to understand the historic development of the area.

Assessment

The application has been submitted with very thorough and commendable documentation that has outlined the significance and condition of the building. This has included:

- Full analysis of the building's condition and a method statement of the approach to recording
- Survey drawings (sections and elevations) of the surviving structure to show its design, configuration and associated fire damaged areas annotated and cross referenced to a condition survey.
- Proposed drawings (sections and elevations) to show the proposed works. These, clearly distinguish and justify works of replacement and renewal. An acceptable material and

window schedule has also been included for clarity and avoids the need for further conditions.

- A well detailed and accurate heritage statement.

Following some initial concerns (regarding the height, privy block and construction method) the applicant's architects have worked hard to bring forward an amended scheme which better reflects that of the original cottages. The height has been reduced (by 300mm) and whilst this is still 500mm taller than the original cottages I fully believe the amended plans better reflect the more squat historic proportions of the building. The building will also be built of a timber frame with painted feather edged timber boarding and clay tiles to match the previous appearance of the cottage. A privy block (to be used for storage) is also to be constructed on the site to reflect that of the original structure. Whilst this is not located in the same location as the previous structure I believe it adequately reflects and gives a good historic nod towards the former privy block.

One point of change is the position of the chimney stacks. These were important features on the original dwelling and are one of the only features partially left standing. However, it is evident that the existing chimneys cannot be saved as they have lost their structural integrity. In turn the applicant is proposing to situate the stacks in a slightly different position than was originally intended. I believe this alteration will not be readily noticeable once the cottage has been rebuilt. The chimneys are still contained within the roof slopes the position works better for a layout as one dwelling. Twin flues are also proposed rather than quad flues but again I am not of the view this will harm the significance of the building.

As to the guttering, this was wooden, which would be replaced with cast iron (together with the rainwater down pipes, which was previously cast iron), which is an acceptable alternative material.

Concerning the proposed windows they are of a style and appearance derived from the Georgian period, and therefore are appropriate, as are the Conservation style rooflights to the rear.

Overall, the proposals appear to be well conceived and will ensure that the building is rebuilt following its loss from fire. It was very regrettable losing so much of the structure in the fire. However, it is clear the applicant is trying to re-create the cottages as faithfully as possible whilst also ensuring the building is more viable for modern living standards.

To conclude the recreation of the building is both essential and correct. The scheme respects the importance of the heritage asset whilst providing a more viable use for the space. I therefore have no objection to the scheme.