

APP/15/00598 – 45a, Portsdown Road, Havant PO9 3JU

This development adjoins 47 Portsdown Road, a notable modernist “sunspan” building by Wells Coates. Such buildings have been accorded greater significance in recent years. This building is a particularly complete example. It is currently accorded grade II status but may be worthy of upgrade.

I am familiar with the correspondence from the C20 Society which sets out in some detail the historical background to the modern movement, the pre-eminence of the architect and the philosophy of the design approach. I endorse what is stated.

To make an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the listed building and its setting I have viewed from within, its grounds and further afield (Auriol Drive) . There can be no doubt that the development site falls within its setting. Under the legislation listed buildings are included within a wider grouping termed “heritage assets”.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) s.128 requires ‘ ..*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.*

This would normally be covered in a Heritage Statement. The current application is deficient in this regard.

The present property (no 45a) and those in the immediate vicinity sit in a commanding position enjoying uninterrupted views of the coast, Chichester Cathedral and Fawley. The houses sit in deep sloping plots, with in some cases creative use of changes in level. The houses maximise the plot width by being built close to the side boundaries.

Setting.

Although the houses are built relatively close together, the diminished scale of 45a, minimises its visual impact. As viewed from the road there is a sense of spaciousness around no 47 which serves to isolate and add to its significance. Similarly, in views looking back, no 47 is the most conspicuous element aided by its distinctive form and the lack of buildings of competing scale.

The current building at 45a has little architectural distinction. Its recessive nature is its most positive feature. The proposed replacement building due to its size, mass, scale, location and design will be a dominant element when viewed close to and from afar. It is built very close to the boundary. The impact on no.47 is exacerbated by the conscious design for its orientation.

The local planning authority has a statutory duty under s.66 of the P(LBCA) Act 1990 to ...have special regard to the desirability of preserving the .. setting .. of a listed building. S.132 of the NPPF also states

*“132. 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. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. **Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.** (my emphasis)*

Although the proposed development will not have a direct physical impact on the listed building, it will cause significant material harm to its setting. This in itself is grounds for refusal. In closely balanced cases it is appropriate to consider and weigh up other public benefits that might arise. No such benefits exist in this case and the presumption (as confirmed by the Courts) is heavily weighted in favour of protecting the asset and its setting.

Apart from the scale and mass there is little to commend the design of the replacement building which in contrast to its neighbour, lacks any cohesive design approach or context. S.56 of the NPPF states:-

56. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

CONCLUSION

Aside from any amenity considerations a key issue is the impact of the proposed development on the adjacent iconic “sunspan” listed building. Although some limited contextual information is provided, from the information I have seen, the application lacks any clear acknowledgement of the significance of the listed building, what contributes to its setting and the steps that have been taken in the formulation of the design to respond to this. My own findings identify the scale, visual separation and overall dominance of the listed building as important factors. The proposals fail to reflect this and as a result the replacement is not only of poor design, but it will have a significant detrimental impact on the building’s setting which will detract from its special architectural interest. Accordingly I must recommend REFUSAL on grounds of:-

1. The application lacks an assessment of the adjacent listed building, its setting and how the proposed development has been designed to preserve and take account of this. It therefore falls short of the requirement set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and related guidance.
2. Notwithstanding the above, the proposed development by virtue of its design, scale, mass and proximity will have a significant detrimental impact on the neighbouring listed building (no.47). As such it is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning

Practice Guidance (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment; Design), related Historic Environment Good Practice Advice and policy CS11 of the adopted Havant Borough Core Strategy (2011)

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