

LM/PD12122

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Dear Richard

**LAND EAST OF POSBROOK LANE, TITCHFIELD
APPLICATION REFERENCE P/19/1193/OA
HERITAGE MATTERS**

As you know, I acted as Fareham Borough Council's expert witness on heritage matters in relation to a public inquiry following the Council's refusal of a 150 dwelling scheme for the land east of Posbrook Lane to the south of Titchfield (appeal reference APP/A1720/W/18/3199119, "the Appeal"). The Appeal was dismissed.

Foreman Homes ("the Applicant") has revised the scheme, reduced the number of proposed dwellings to 57, and submitted an application for outline planning permission (application reference P/19/1193/OA, "the Application"). You have therefore requested that I provide a heritage assessment of the revised scheme, to inform your decision on the Application.

I have reviewed the Application material, including the Design & Access Statement, Heritage Statement, Illustrative Site Layout. I have been mindful of the findings of the Inspector in the Appeal Decision in forming my advice. I have also had regard to the consultation responses on the scheme from Historic England, who identify less than substantial harm to the listed buildings, but do not object.

Summary History of Great Posbrook

The Application site is located to the north of Great Posbrook, an ancient farmstead, which contains two highly graded listed buildings. I therefore briefly summarise the history of the farmstead. Both this history and the assessment of the significance and setting of the heritage assets is based on the analysis I carried out for the Appeal.

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The farmstead was acquired by Titchfield Abbey in 1243-4, relatively soon after the establishment of the monastery. The historic connection with the Abbey continued until 1838 at least.

The oldest buildings to survive at the farmstead are a substantial 10 bay aisled barn, which has been dated by dendrochronology to the late C16 or early C17, and an early C17 farmhouse. These two buildings are of a broadly similar date range and may have been constructed as part of an Estate renewal in the decades following the Dissolution. There are C19 additions to the farmhouse to the south and west, and evidence that the east end of barn may date from the C18.

There are a number of other historic farm buildings at Great Posbrook, comprising a former stables, cartshed/piggery and small barn/granary. The farmstead originally had a loose courtyard plan.

The farm was disused from 1995 and fell into disrepair. An enabling scheme in 2005 (application reference P/05/1663/FP) secured consent to demolish the modern farm buildings, to convert the former stables and piggery into four dwellings, construct six new dwellings and convert the barn into a garage/storage space for the residents. The enabling scheme was sensitively designed to respect the setting of the listed barn and farmhouse and won a local architectural award; it reinstated the courtyard plan and in many cases the new buildings were built broadly on the footprint of historic farm buildings.

The Heritage Assets

The two relevant designated heritage assets located in the Great Posbrook farmstead are the farmhouse and large aisled barn; both are grade II* listed. There are some other historic farm buildings within the farmstead, largely converted to residential use, which are locally listed (non-designated heritage assets).

The farmhouse is of historic interest as a manorial farmhouse and the focus of the ancient farmstead. It is likely to date from the early C17, so the original fabric is of considerable historic interest. Furthermore the farmhouse originally had a very unusual T-shaped form, which is particular architectural interest because of its rarity

The barn is of considerable historic interest for the age of its fabric which has been reliably dated to between 1570 and 1622 by dendrochronology. The barn is post Dissolution but its substantial scale and fine roof carpentry are reminiscent of earlier examples. The wagon entrance and opposing door indicate it was used for threshing. The timber frame and roof structure are of architectural interest as an example of very large aisled barn, with a Queen-Strut roof, in substantial members, with arched braces indicating its early date. The roof covering of corrugated steel is not of special interest but it is a light weight material commonly used on agricultural buildings

The setting of the listed buildings can be summarised as follows:

- Both buildings are located in the west side of the Meon valley, so the land slopes gently towards the canal and river to the east.
- The land to the north, south and east of the farmhouse remains largely open, and the land to the south and east of the barn is open.
- The farmhouse has been subdivided into three dwellings. The separate drives and harder boundaries to the north and development of a detached house (Posbrook House) to the north of the drive have created a more suburban character to the north. The soft boundaries and access between the gardens to the south mean it is possible to readily appreciate that the farmhouse was once a single dwelling.
- Along the north and east boundary of farmstead there are mature evergreen Holm Oaks, which enclose the garden of the eastern wing of the farmhouse (Great Posbrook), provide privacy and limit views both in and out, although there is a glimpsed view of the listed farmhouse from the PROW between the application site and farmstead.
- The enabling scheme has changed the character of the setting of the barn and a lesser extent the farmhouse, so that it is more suburban. Nevertheless it is still possible to appreciate this was an historic farmstead because three other historic farm buildings survive and the modern development has been sensitively designed to reinforce the historic courtyard form, in the idiom of vernacular agricultural or domestic buildings.
- The setting of the farmhouse and barn in an historic farmstead makes an important contribution to the appreciation of their significance as a former manor house and agricultural building.
- The barn is a substantial structure with a distinctive deeply sloping roof clearly indicating that this is a historic barn, even without its original roof covering. The openness of the barn's setting to the south and east reinforce its visual prominence in views from the south.
- The farmhouse and barn can be seen together as a group in views from the PROW and Posbrook Lane to the south.
- The post-WWII council housing to the south of Titchfield adversely affects the experience of the listed farmhouse and barn because its proximity reduces the sense of the farmstead being in open countryside.
- The Application Site makes an important contribution to the openness of the setting of the listed buildings and to the appreciation of the significance of the farmhouse and barn as being part of an historic farmstead, separate from Titchfield.
- The application site comprises land that was farmed from Great Posbrook so there is also a historic functional relationship with the listed buildings.

The Appeal Decision

The Appeal Decision related to a larger scheme where proposed housing bounded Great Posbrook farmstead to the north and east, and removed the gap between Great Posbrook and Titchfield.

The Appellant and Council agreed that the Appeal scheme would result in less than substantial harm to the listed farmhouse and barn. The Appellant considered that the harm would be at the low end of the less than substantial spectrum, while the Council considered it would be in the middle of the spectrum. The Inspector agreed with the Council, and gave the following reasons. I have highlighted the main points in bold:

“This would bring the settlement of Titchfield up to the cluster of buildings and in effect subsume that once separate element into the broader extent of the settlement. This would reduce the connection of the existing farmstead and listed buildings to the rural hinterland and obscure the separation from the nearby settlement. The character of that change would be noticeable and harmful. It would be perceived when travelling along Posbrook Lane when leaving or entering the village and would be readily appreciated from Bellfield and the adjacent existing settlement edge. There are also public footpaths running through the land. These would be both static and kinetic views when moving along and between the various views. This would be a significant and fundamental change.” (paragraph 41)

“The proposed development would intrude into these views [of the barn] and in the short to medium term would be readily distinguishable as suburban housing. In the longer-term landscaping may reduce this negative effect by the introduction of a woodland feature at its edge, which the appellant argues is reflective of the historic landscape pattern in the area. However, this would introduce a sense of enclosure around the farmstead and listed buildings that would detach them from the rural hinterland and reduce that historic functional connection with the adjoining open land.” (paragraph 42)

“There would also be views of the relationship between the farmhouse and the proposed development in views on the public paths to the east. Again, these would be significant and harmful in the short to medium term.” (paragraph 43)

“The urbanisation of the remaining area that separates the farmstead and listed buildings from the settlement is significant and whilst the rural hinterland remains to the south and west the dislocation from the existing built up area is an important and fundamental component of that setting that would be lost as a result of the development. The effect is therefore significant and would not in my view be at the lower end of the less than substantial scale as contended by the appellant but more in line with that suggested by the Council.” (paragraph 44)

Heritage Assessment of the Application Scheme

There is a significant reduction in the quantum of dwellings in the Application scheme, in comparison with the previous scheme (it is 38% of the Appeal scheme), so that housing is now only proposed to the north of Great Posbrook and not to the east.

There is currently a gap of between c. 62m and 88m between the southern edge of Titchfield (including the Bellfield Play Area) and Great Posbrook. The Illustrative Site Plan indicates that there would a gap of between c. 28.5m and 33m between the back fences of the proposed dwellings and the fence around the northern perimeter of Great Posbrook. I appreciate that this is illustrative given it is an application for outline planning permission; however, this gap could be controlled at Reserved Matters stage.

The proposed housing would be accessed from Posbrook Lane. The Illustrative Site Plan indicates a spine road broadly east-west, which loops to the north along the northern boundary, with a north-south street to the west along the Posbrook Lane frontage, forming a loose perimeter block, and a further north-south street to the west. The housing is generally arranged so that the rear gardens face the boundary of the Site, including the south, with the exception of the frontages to the playground and Posbrook Lane, where the rear gardens are enclosed by the perimeter block.

Landscape screening is proposed along the south and west boundaries, with a depth of c. 7m to the south indicated on the Illustrative Site Plan. I understand that more extensive woodland was proposed to the south, to entirely fill the gap between Great Posbrook and the proposed development. The Heritage Statement explains that the proposed planting was reduced as a result of Pre-Application discussions with Historic England, who apparently considered that less planting would retain views of the Meon valley from Posbrook Lane. I agree that it is preferable that this remaining gap is not filled with woodland, to retain a sense of open land and the perception of a break in development when travelling between Titchfield and Great Posbrook along the road or PROW.

In the short to medium term the proposed housing to the east of the Site would be visible in conjunction with the listed farmhouse and barn in distant views from the PROW to the south, and would bring the built form of Titchfield closer to the listed buildings. Once established, there is potential that the landscape screening would improve the distant views of the southern edge of Titchfield which can be seen in conjunction with the listed farmhouse and barn from the PROW to the south, subject to further testing. The land to the east of the farmstead would be remain open in these views, so I do not think the landscape screening would detrimentally enclose the historic farmstead or listed buildings.

The proposed development would bring built form closer to the listed buildings and reduce the gap between Titchfield and Great Posbrook. The historic farmstead would not be entirely subsumed by Titchfield; the two settlements would remain separated by gap of a minimum of c. 28.5m. This is a relatively narrow gap, and the proposed development would urbanise part of the rural hinterland of the listed buildings. As a result it would make it harder to understand that Great Posbrook was originally a separate farmstead, surrounded by open farmland, and harm the appreciation of the significance of the listed farmhouse and barn as being part of an ancient farmstead.

Nevertheless the degree of harm has been reduced by retaining a gap between the settlements and removing the proposed housing to the east of the farmstead. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the listed farmhouse and barn, at the lower end of the spectrum.

I am aware of the Shimbles judgment (*Shimbles v City of Bradford and third parties including the National Trust* EWHC 195 [2018]), which concluded it is necessary to decide whether harm to a designated heritage asset is substantial or less than substantial, but it is not necessary (as a matter of law) to define the degree of harm in each category. However, this does not preclude an assessment of the degree of harm, because this has a bearing on the planning judgment of harm versus benefits.

The Government's recently updated planning guidance has clarified that the degree of harm should be identified. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) was updated on 23 July 2019, which provided some guidance on the assessment of harm, and states:

"Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated." (Paragraph 018, Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723 Revision date 23 07 2019).

I consider that the proposed development would not harm the Titchfield Conservation Area, nor the locally listed buildings within the Great Posbrook farmstead.

I trust this is clear and of assistance.

Kind regards,



LUCY MARKHAM
ASSOCIATE
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