

Working to Protect the New Forest



PLANNING COMMITTEE

Reply to: -

Brookley Farmhouse Sway Road Brockenhurst Hampshire SO427RX
01590 623935 brookleyfarmhouse@btinternet.com

Sent as attachment to Email only

30 November 2014

Deborah Slade
New Forest National Park Authority
Lymington Town Hall
Avenue Road
Lymington SO41 9ZG

Dear Deborah,

Application 00886 FIVE THORNS COTTAGE, NORTH WEIRS, BROCKENHURST, SO42 7QA New dwelling; detached carport

1. New Forest Association (NFA) objects to this application.

Before the studies that resulted in the creation, after due consultation and inspection, of the National Park and the Weirs conservation area, planning was granted for a dwelling on this site. Early in 2011 an application to renew that permission was rightly refused. It is relevant that development of the site continued between these dates with two extensions to the Five Thorns cottage itself. National planning references may have changed since 2011, but nothing of relevance to this site in the National Park. The 2011 reasons for refusal are equally valid today.

2. This area is sandwiched between the boundary of Crown land and the old manorial boundary. While the Crown land has remained pristine, in the land beyond the manorial boundary have developed colourless estates whose dreary architecture and animal-free roads could be located anywhere from Surrey to Cheshire. This funnel of land between remains quite distinct as the area to which *local distinctiveness* applies. A fuller description of the origins of this funnel of land is contained in the character appraisal of *The Weirs* conservation area.

Policy CP9 seeks to protect the local character of the villages of Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst and Sway. The *distinct* area described above contains homes in very spacious gardens. Back garden development is rare and out of place; more would allow the blandness of the estates to encroach into the *distinct* area -expanding the worthless and reducing the worthwhile. NFA believes the need to maintain local distinctiveness in this conservation area means there is no place for another dwelling on this site. NPA further maintains that the granting of this application would be a precedent and could lead to more back and side garden development off and along North Weirs.

3. The application site is within the 400M exclusion zone around the new Forest SPA and CP1 applies. It is not just in the zone, it is within a few yards of the SPA. I will remind the Authority that CP1 was included at the insistence of national government and reflects the first purpose of the Authority. The "loose change" solution to the second part of policy CP1 contained in *Development Standards SPD* might just be satisfactory if the Authority managed its new dwelling provision in line with central government targets, but it is not satisfactory when they are allowed to run at over twice that rate. NFA have had some correspondence with Natural England on this matter who have accepted in principle that the formula would need revision if housing provision changed significantly. Indeed it must be questionable if the inclusion of any of the 400 metre zone within the village boundaries could resist a legal challenge.

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The SPD is not satisfactory when the proposed dwelling is within yards of precious heathland and where so much evidence has been produced in other objections of the high ecological value of the application site. The SPD is by definition a guideline and in this case a totally unsatisfactory one. The guideline amount is less than one third of the cost of a refurbished Aga and NFA believes a figure one hundred times this (30 refurbished Agas) is the minimum realistic figure.

The application land was originally pasture and is subject to the rights of common of pasture, mast and marl. (Verderers' map 80-1. Reference is most probably 227, but might be 228, 229, 231, 232, 235, 230a, 230b, or any combination). Further North Weirs track is part of the SPA and an additional dwelling exiting onto this track cannot help but cause further degradation to the protected landscape at a time when the Authority is targeting an extra improvement. (Initial Draft Management Plan for informal consultation 2014 LH2). A Forestry Commission licence will be required to access the proposed dwelling from North Weirs and NFA will urge the FC to refuse such a licence. On the question of mitigation, I would draw the attention of the Authority to appeal decision APP/Q1255/V/10/2138124, *land south of Wallisdown Road, Poole*.

5. There is no community benefit resulting from this application. In a local context there is no need for this additional market dwelling. Nationally, in consideration of the need to preserve the environment, the social needs of local communities and needs of the local economy, the Government decided the Park should produce 11 dwellings per annum of which 50% should be affordable. Given the significant oversupply NFA believes allowing yet more dwellings is actually contrary to the national interest in that the needs of the environment are being relatively neglected.

This is especially true given the Authority's lamentable performance in providing affordable homes for the disadvantaged of the local community. Given the bazaar practice of calculating the affordable contribution **after** the very significant contribution under CP1 that will be required in this case and after the significant cost of a FC licence, we will find again that once the developer's expenses are paid, there is nothing left for the Authority's duty to promote social well being. The solution is simple - refuse the application. NFA will support NFNPA at any appeal against such a decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Graham Baker'.

Graham Baker, NFA Planning Committee