

**LOCATION:** KNOLL HOUSE HOTEL, FERRY ROAD, STUDLAND, SWANAGE BH19 3AH  
**APP REF:** P/FUL/2022/06840  
**PROPOSAL:** REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING HOTEL TO PROVIDE NEW TOURIST ACCOMMODATION INCLUDING: 30 HOTEL BEDROOMS, APARTMENT AND VILLA ACCOMMODATION AND ASSOCIATED LEISURE AND DINING FACILITIES.  
**CASE OFFICER:** HUW WILLIAMS  
**SITE VISIT:** 13/01/2022

### **CONSERVATION & DESIGN OFFICER COMMENTS**

<b>SUPPORT</b>	
<b>SUPPORT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS</b>	<u>X</u>
<b>UNABLE TO SUPPORT</b>	
<b>NO OBJECTION</b>	
<b>REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION</b>	
<b>OTHER / PRE-APP</b>	

#### **SUMMARY**

The proposal will result in the following impacts on the significance of affected heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting:

	<b>Grade</b>	<b>No harm</b>	<b>Less than substantial harm</b>	<b>Substantial harm</b>
<b>Bowl barrow 100m NW of Studland Bay (1014298)</b>	<b>SM</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Bowl barrow W of Studland Bay House (1014297)</b>	<b>SM</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Pillbox NE of Knoll House Hotel (1411819)</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Pillbox E of Knoll House Hotel (1411815)</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>X</b>		
<b>Knoll House Hotel</b>	<b>N/A</b>		<b>X</b>	

#### **RELEVANT POLICY / GUIDANCE**

In assessing the proposals, due consideration has been given to the following:

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), ss. 66, 72
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): section 16, in particular paras. 194-208
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), s.v. 'Historic Environment'
- Purbeck adopted Local Plan, in particular Policy LHH
- Purbeck Local Plan (emerging), in particular Policy E2

- Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (2017)

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF AFFECTED HERITAGE ASSETS (NPPF, PARAS. 194-195)**

The affected heritage assets are scheduled below, along with relevant aspects of their significance, including any contribution made by their setting. Where potential impacts are indirect (i.e. affecting setting) only, then only relevant contributory elements of setting are outlined here.

#### **Designated Heritage Assets**

It should be noted that, owing to their high grading, Scheduled Monuments are considered to be 'assets of the highest significance' in the context of NPPF, para. 200.

- **Bowl barrow 100m NW of Studland Bay** (Scheduled Monument, 1014298) / **Bowl barrow W of Studland Bay House** (Scheduled Monument, 1014297)<sup>1</sup>
  - their spatial, functional and likely visual relationship to the dispersed barrows and barrow groups over Godlingston Heath (all likely to be of Bronze Age date);
  - their topographical relationship to areas of high ground around what was likely a waterlogged, marshy area at that time; and
  - their visual experience from Ferry Road and PRow SE22/38, which permits their form and position to be understood and appreciated
- **Pillbox NE of Knoll House Hotel** (Grade II, 1411819) / **Pillbox E of Knoll House Hotel** (Grade II, 1411815)<sup>2</sup>
  - their spatial and functional relationships to one another and other nearby military installations forming part of the coastal defence network in Studland of c. 1940 (e.g. the observation posts on Godlingston Heath and Fort Henry); and
  - their spatial and visual relationship with the coast, sea and Ferry Road.

#### **Non-Designated Heritage Assets**

- **Knoll House Hotel**

The earliest part of the building (the central part of the front range) is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset for the following reasons, taking into account the standards and criteria of the Council's emerging Local Heritage List:

- **architectural value:** The asset has moderate value owing to its somewhat unique and eclectic architectural form, but with distinct Arts-and-Crafts influence. Particular features of note include a full-width veranda, whose stone Doric columns support two prominent 'floating' gables, and a prominent central lantern; all of which inextricably link the design of the building to the sea views to the E;
- **historic associative value:** The asset has high value owing to its numerous associations:
  - with the Bankes family of Kingston Lacy and their wider Dorset estates; the building was constructed in the period 1901x1921 as one of several holiday homes for the Bankes family and was described by Viola Bankes in later life as a 'remote retreat in pine woods close to the sand dunes';
  - with the author, Enid Blyton who is known to have been a frequent visitor to the hotel in the 1950s and 1960s and who is believed to have written some

<sup>1</sup> Owing to these assets' proximity and share characteristics, they are considered together here for convenience.

<sup>2</sup> As above in footnote 1.

- of her novels there, or at least taken inspiration from the surroundings and local people for places and characters;
  - with the surrounding military installations as the hotel was requisitioned during the Second World War for troops engaged in erecting these defences as well as rehearsals for the D-Day Landings.
- **historic illustrative value:** The asset has little illustrative value owing to a vestigial ability to read the central core frontage as part of the original villa and some legibility of internal spatial arrangements, though there have been considerable internal alterations during its long use as a hotel.
- **aesthetic value:** The asset has moderate value owing to the particular design qualities of its front façade, in particular the ‘floating’ first floor and prominent gables, and the open setting with sporadic singular pine trees in the front garden, all of which contributes to evoking Viola Bankes’ description of the site.
- elements of **setting** which contribute to the asset’s significance include the following:
  - the open, expansive setting of the site, which contribute to its character as a rural retreat among the pine trees;
  - its topographical position on a small hill over the heath (the eponymous ‘Knowl Hill’) and the associated intentional visual relationship (reflected in its orientation and design) with the sea to the E; and
  - its historical relationship with the Second World War military installations in the surrounding area, for whose construction the hotel served as a base for troops.

## **IMPACTS ON AFFECTED HERITAGE ASSETS (NPPF, PARAS. 199-200)**

The proposals will result in the following impacts on the significance of identified heritage assets:

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

NPPF para. 199 requires that ‘great weight’ be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. In addition, para. 200 requires that any level of harm to their significance should require ‘clear and convincing justification’.

- **Bowl barrow 100m NW of Studland Bay** (Scheduled Monument, 1014298) / **Bowl barrow W of Studland Bay House** (Scheduled Monument, 1014297)

The above assessment identifies that the contributory elements of these assets’ setting are their topographical positions in the landscape; any spatial or residual visual links between them; and their visual experience from the road and adjacent footpath. The assets are located c. 170 m and 280 m respectively to the SSE of the application site are both located adjacent to Ferry Road, which separates them. The barrow at Studland Bay House is, additionally, set within the latter building’s front garden.

The proposals will result in some additional development on an already long developed site which is given over to buildings and car parking. The proposals will therefore result in no material change to the characteristics of the assets’ setting, which has already been compromised by existing development within the immediate landscape. In addition, the proposed development will not affect views of the assets from Ferry Road or from PRow SE22/38 or the resulting understanding and appreciation that derives from it.

For the above reasons, we consider that the proposals will result in **no harm** to the assets' significance.

- **Pillbox NE of Knoll House Hotel** (Grade II, 1411819) / **Pillbox E of Knoll House Hotel** (Grade II, 1411815)

Contributing elements of setting, as set out above, include the spatial relationships between these assets and other military assets in the vicinity, and their visual relationship with the coast and road.

The application site is situated in relatively close proximity to the first of these assets (c. 70 m) and c. 240 m from the second. In both cases the site is separated from the assets by Ferry Road. The development will result in changes within the envelope of an already developed site and so will not have any additional impact on the spatial or visual relationships between these assets or other military installations. The purpose and function of these assets, and the ability to understand and appreciate them, will remain unaffected.

For the above reasons, we consider that the proposals will result in **no harm** to the asset's significance.

### **Non-Designated Heritage Assets**

- **Knoll House Hotel**

The central core of the front range of the hotel has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset, primarily owing to its historic associations, but also because of its architectural eclecticism. The remainder of the front range and other buildings on the site are not considered to have heritage interest and therefore their removal is not considered objectionable.

The proposals will include the demolition of the central core of the original building, retaining only the front façade (i.e. gables, columns and ground-floor loggia). In contrast to the previous, recently refused application, the extent of demolition includes the roof lantern. The façade would also be altered by changes to the gables to insert balconies and by new fenestration. Aside from the general shape, the façade would therefore bear little resemblance to its current form and it is probably a fairer description to read this as a demolition and partial rebuilding 'in the style of'; the prevailing new style being one that matches the modern woodland-spa aesthetic of the remainder of the development. The interior spaces otherwise have little architectural interest in themselves, other than an ability to illustrate their long-standing hotel use by way of a lobby, bar and lounge with mid-20<sup>th</sup> century décor. The

The general setting of the historic part of the building has changed considerably from the remote woodland setting of the Bankes' time and it has been subsumed within a series of extensions and additional buildings. The replication of these in the proposals is therefore acceptable, though the large, three-storey crescent to the rear could beneficially be broken into two blocks to disaggregate the built-form in the way that it currently is. Though the latter is perhaps a valid design consideration for the Planning Officer, it is not considered to result in harm to the identified elements of significance of the building in heritage terms.

The site, which is certainly a key one in the area, is generally in need of investment and reinvigoration, with a collection of tired buildings which have little or no architectural or historical value beyond the small central core, whose associative significance remains largely as an intangible characteristic rather than an association with specific spaces. The bold, modern design approach is considered the right one overall in order to avoid a similar collection of nondescript, disconnected structures or one where pastiche of some selected element is the underlying philosophy. In any case, the Arts-and-Crafts idiom plays overall a very small part in the overall style of the site.

Taking everything into account, it is clear that the loss of part of the central core, including the lantern, will be detrimental to such significance as is derived from its moderate architectural value and high associative value, though neither will be entirely lost through the development.

For the above reasons, we consider that the proposals will result in **less than substantial harm** to the asset's significance.

## **PUBLIC BENEFITS / BALANCED JUDGEMENT (NPPF, PARAS. 201-203)**

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

The proposals will result in **no harm** to the significance of designated heritage assets and so neither paragraph 201 nor 202 is considered to be engaged.

### **Non-Designated Heritage Assets**

The proposals will result in **less than substantial harm** to a non-designated heritage asset, meaning that para. 203 of the NPPF is engaged, requiring a balanced judgement taking into account the significance of the affected asset and the scale of harm or loss.

Taking into account the need for a long-term sustainable future for the site and the relative significance of the heritage asset, the scale of harm or loss is considered supportable in this instance. However, as well as other conditions, a programme of building recording will be required in accordance with para. 205 of the NPPF (see below).

## **SUGGESTED CONDITIONS**

1. Prior to commencement, a programme of historic building recording (Level 2) of at least the original central core of the building, in accordance with an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation, is to be submitted and approved in writing. The record will be required to engage with sources for the historical associations of the building. Thereafter the record is to be deposited with the Dorset HER and any other agreed archival repository.
2. Samples and/or product details of all proposed materials for walling, roofing and external surfaces are to be provided and approved in writing.
3. Details of proposed window products/systems are to be provided and approved in writing.

### **Informative**

More information on historic building recording and the levels required can be found in Historic England, *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2016).

**OFFICER: Dr James Weir**

**TITLE: Senior Conservation Officer (Spatial Planning & Majors)**

**DATE: 19/12/2022**