
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2016

by Thomas Bristow BA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 01 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X1118/D/16/3159340
10 Meridian Place, Ilfracombe EX34 9HH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr David Wood against the decision of North Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref 61302, dated 1 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as the '*installation of external wall insulation to all elevations of the property in a neutral colour (white/ cream/ grey)*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the installation of external wall insulation to all elevations of the property in a neutral colour (white/ cream/ grey) at 10 Meridian Place, Ilfracombe EX34 9HH in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 61302, dated 1 June 2016, subject to the schedule of conditions in this decision.

Application for Costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr David Wood against North Devon District Council, which is the subject of a separate decision.

Procedural Matters

3. This appeal relates to similar development as proposed via appeal Ref APP/X1118/D/16/3159325. These appeals are made by the same appellant, the relevant properties are on opposite sides of the carriageway Meridian Place, and both were refused permission for similar reasons.
 4. Notwithstanding these commonalities, however, these appeals are separate proposals and I have determined them with reference to their individual merits. A judgement as to whether each proposal is acceptable is not reliant upon the other.
 5. The Council do not cite within their decision notice or elsewhere that the proposal would conflict with policies within the emerging *North Devon and Torridge Local Plan*. I have approached the appeal on this basis.
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Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether or not the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the *Ilfracombe Conservation Area* (the 'Conservation Area').

Reasons

7. No 10 is a modest terraced property of essentially traditional form which the Council explains, and the appellant appears not to dispute, dates originally from the nineteenth century. Although historic in origin, however, the property does not readily appear as such in character.
8. The original walls of the property have been rendered with a modern textured finish which is not of an historic vernacular, this texture resulting from what the Council succinctly describes as '*crude trowel marks*'. Various cracks and visible signs of water ingress are present.
9. The property hosts a wooden door and wooden windows, sills, and fascia boards of traditional design. However these features do not appear to be original but rather later additions, and were in a poor state of repair at the time of my site visit. There is little architectural detailing to the property, potentially obscured by render or more likely absent originally on account of the understated original design of the property.
10. There is no information before me related to the planning considerations, if any, that applied to latter modifications to the property. However there is no indication that such works were undertaken without relevant consents, that they represent anything other than ad-hoc incremental alterations to the property over the course of time, or that they amount to deliberate neglect.
11. The building line of properties along Meridian Place is inconsistent. Some are set-back from the carriageway, such as No 10 itself and Nos 9, 10 and 11. Others, such as Merridale,¹ are located such that their front doors open directly on to the carriageway, and there are incremental differences between the foremost elevations of others.
12. The property is accessed via a narrow private carriageway which cuts underneath properties facing the High Street. As a result, and as the property is nestled within a close-knit residential environment, there are few public vantage points other than along Meridian Place itself from which the property is readily apparent. Consequently No 10 is not prominent within the Conservation Area, and on account of its limited historic integrity contributes neutrally to the character or appearance thereof at present.
13. Properties along Meridian Terrace share a common historic origin and represent a more modest vernacular than the prevailing grander scale and fine detailing of the Victorian properties more commonly found in the surrounding area (such as those along surrounding Oxford Grove, Springfield Road, and Oxford Park).

¹ Also referred to as Merrivale Cottage by the appellant in respect of appeal Ref APP/X1118/D/16/3159325.

14. Saved policy DVS1 '*Design*' of the *North Devon Local Plan* adopted originally in 2006 (the '*Local Plan*') sets out that development will be permitted where it complies with relevant design principles explained in supporting text. Of particular relevance to this appeal is that development should integrate appropriately in terms of design with the characteristics of its surroundings. Whilst of some vintage saved policy DVS1 is broadly consistent with the encouragement given within *The National Planning Policy Framework* (the '*Framework*') to requiring good design.
15. Saved policy ENV16 sets out that development within a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area, which reflects the provisions of Section 72(1) of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the '*Framework*') similarly sets out that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, including Conservation Areas, and that any harm that would result from proposed development should be balanced against the public benefits that would arise.
16. The proposal is for the installation of external wall insulation and render which would be of fine-grain texture and neutral colour.² I understand that, following discussion regarding removing the existing render to the property,³ that it is intended that this would project approximately 70mm beyond that of the plane of the elevations of the property at present. The appearance of the proposal is illustrated on photomontages supporting the application,⁴ and associated technical details are contained within the documentation before me.⁵ I understand that it is intended that the proposal would also involve the installation of new uPVC window sills and eaves coverings.
17. Visually the proposal would result in a more well-kept appearance to the property by virtue of removing the existing compromised render and its replacement with render of a fine-grain texture which is more consistent with a simpler traditional style of render. Whilst timber window sills and fascia boards would be replaced, I have identified above how these existing features do not appear to be original and are in a poor state of repair. The installation of sound alternatives would not notably detract from the character of the property by virtue of their minimal form, notwithstanding their modern material. Given the existing appearance of the property, the change resulting from the proposal as a whole would not in my view materially detract from its appearance or remaining historic integrity.
18. Clearly the proposal would result in the principle elevation of No 10 protruding beyond that of adjoining No 9, albeit fractionally so. However the principle elevation of adjoining No 11 is already slightly proud of the foremost element of No 10, and as explained above there is little consistency in the building line of properties along Meridian Place. The drainpipe which falls between Nos 9 and 10 would furthermore reduce the appearance of this difference in forward projection, particularly as this is limited to 70mm rather than a greater extent,

² As illustrated on an information sheet supporting the application prepared by E-On Energy Solutions.

³ As explained by the appellant in an email sent to the Council on his behalf dated 8 August 2016.

⁴ Prepared by Wetherby Building Systems Limited (referenced OL-16-0356_A and OL-16-0356_B).

⁵ A document entitled *Context Statement*, prepared by RCA Regeneration, Ref RCA082, dated June 2013, and a further document prepared by Wetherby Building Systems Limited, Ref: S_15-17, dated 7 April 2015.

the properties are set back from the carriageway, and No 10 is inevitably viewed in conjunction with properties nearby which do not share a consistent building line.

19. For the above reasons the proposal in my view would have a neutral effect upon, and thus preserve, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Consequently as demonstrable harm would not arise it is unnecessary to consider the weight that can be accorded to the public benefits of the proposal. I therefore find that the proposal complies with the relevant provisions of saved policies DVS1 and ENV16 of the Local Plan and with relevant statutory provisions and elements of the Framework.

Other Matters

20. I understand that No 2 Highfield Road has secured permission from the Council for the installation of external wall insulation, Ref 58780. Although this property falls relatively close-by, it is located in an area hosting more modern and varied architecture at the fringe of the Conservation Area. As there is limited information before me in respect of the planning considerations that applied in respect of that proposal, and as all development must be considered with reference to its particular merits, that permission is not directly comparable to the circumstances in this case.

Conditions

21. It is necessary to require via condition that the development is carried out in line with the relevant plans and documentation supporting the application for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. It is further necessary to specify that the external wall insulation shall not project further than 70mm beyond the existing walls of the property, in order to avoid adverse effects to the appearance of the property relative to its surroundings.

Conclusion

22. For the above reasons, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the proposal accords with the development plan taken as a whole and the approach in the Framework, and therefore allow the appeal.

Thomas Bristow

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following documents supporting application Ref 61302:
 - information sheet prepared by E-On Energy Solutions,
 - photomontages prepared by Wetherby Building Systems Limited (referenced OL-16-0356_A and OL-16-0356_B) ,
 - *Context Statement*, prepared by RCA Regeneration, Ref RCA082, dated June 2013,
 - *Wetherby Building Systems Ltd: External Wall Insulation System & Polymer Cement Renders*, Ref: S_15-17, dated 7 April 2015.
- 3) The development hereby permitted shall extend no further than 70 millimetres beyond the plane of the relevant wall of the property as existing.