



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 May 2020

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/U1105/W/20/3245326

St John Close, High Street, Honiton, Devon EX14 1PN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr G Britton against the decision of East Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/1788/FUL, dated 31 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is a new two bedroom dwelling.
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Decision.

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Reasons

3. The site is in the historic core of Honiton. Burgage plots remain evident on plans and on the ground stretching back from buildings lining High Street. In places, the plots have been truncated and additional dwellings have been inserted. However, the overall integrity of the plots remains and this contributes positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area and its significance.
4. The appeal site is within this historic development pattern. It is at the end of St. John Close, a terrace of dwellings, that stretches back from High Street aligned with the burgage plots. It has been separated from St John Close by a brick wall. Whilst the area provides a break between more modern development at Charles Road, strong built form is therefore characteristic of this part of the otherwise open and verdant area. In this context, despite concerns of the Council's Conservation Officer, I see no reason to disagree with the Council's overall assessment, set out in the officer report, that some form development on the appeal site may be appropriate.
5. However, whilst a residential use would be characteristic of the surrounding area, dwellings in the area are predominantly two-storey, of traditional form and proportions. Other buildings, whilst varying in design, tend to be single storey, clearly subservient to the main residential buildings. By contrast, the proposed dwelling would be two-storey yet have a mono-pitched roof at odds with other dwellings in the area.

6. Whilst lower in height than those closest dwellings, the proposed dwelling, therefore, would take an alternative form whilst taking influence for its materials and fenestration from the more traditional dwellings and outbuildings around it. The result would be an incongruous addition that neither respected the traditional forms of the area nor made a convincing bold statement to set itself apart. Thus it would not allow the significance of the heritage asset to be better understood.
7. I understand that the proposed design would respect neighbouring living conditions, give natural light to living spaces and incorporate solar panels. Whilst these reasons for the design may be laudable, there is little analysis of why that has resulted in the form proposed. Nor do they lead to a better integration with the wider conservation area.
8. I appreciate that a final palette of materials could be agreed through the use of planning conditions. However, to follow such a route, greater assurance would be required at this stage that the form proposed could, if appropriately finished, produce a coherent result. With regard to the foregoing, I do not have that assurance.
9. The site has no current clearly defined use and a range of fairly ad hoc structures such that, currently, it may well not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Nevertheless, even if I were to find that the current condition of the site is harmful, there is no substantive evidence that its redevelopment in the manner proposed is necessary to remedy that situation.
10. The appellant has suggested that the proposal would relate well to a new development off Clapper Lane¹, but I have not been provided with any detailed explanation of that development or the proposal's relationship to it. In any case, I must determine this appeal on the basis of the immediate context of the site and its particular effect on the heritage asset.
11. Although the site is not highly visible within the public realm, for the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and cause less than substantial harm to its significance. In accordance with Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), such must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. The proposal would result in a new house, with vehicular access and off-street parking, served by all necessary utilities in an accessible, town centre location. It would increase the choice of homes and offer employment opportunities during construction. However, the proposal would be for just one single dwelling and so the benefits would be small. I, therefore, attach them only limited weight.
13. Conversely, Framework Paragraph 193 indicates that great weight should be given the conservation of the heritage asset so the benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policy EN10 of the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 which states that development within a conservation area will only be permitted where it would preserve or enhance the appearance and character of the area.

¹ LPA Ref. 17/1481

14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR