



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2020

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/U1105/W/20/3248907

13-15 High Street, Honiton EX14 1PR

- 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 & Mrs B White against the decision of East Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/2348/FUL, dated 25 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is to build 2no. new mews style dwellings for private sale within an area of land identified to the rear of no.15 High Street Honiton.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The date of the application on the application form differs from that on the appeal form and Council's decision notice. I have used the date from the application form in my above heading.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect on the character and appearance of the area and the setting of the Grade II listed 13-15 High Street.

Reasons

4. The appellant's Heritage Statement¹ (HS) indicates that 13-15 High Street, now a single dwelling, dates from the 18th century, possibly as part of a major rebuilding episode following two catastrophic fires in Honiton. From the HS and my own observations, I find that the setting of the listed building is primarily the largely 18th and 19th century streetscape, in which the site is a clear part of Honiton's early linear development.
5. However, there is also evidence of an historic burgage plot that the HS indicates could have related to an earlier building or been formed to serve the 18th century building. This land, which includes the appeal site, has an historic association with the listed building and remains visually connected to it. It is, therefore, also part of its setting, despite limited public views of it.

¹ AH Heritage Planning (November 2019): Land to the rear of 15 High Street, Honiton, Devon. Proposed Development of Two New Dwellings. Revised Heritage Statement. AH Project Ref: AH884.

6. There has been considerable development around the site to the rear of the High Street frontages. This has weakened the historic townscape, which lies outside the designated conservation area, reducing the legibility of the surrounding burgage plots. In this context, the proposal would not be untypical of the surroundings and would have little effect on the character and appearance of the area generally. Therefore, there would be no conflict with Policy D1 of the East Devon Local Plan 2013 to 2031 (LP) which seeks to protect these interests.
7. However, whilst the significance of the listed building is primarily from its historical value as part of the built heritage of the High Street in its urban setting, an understanding of the land to the rear and its association with the building also contributes to its significance. The proposals would be set back some distance from the rear of the listed building, which would retain a large garden. Improvements to the boundary walling would allow the historic plot to remain legible. The dwellings would also be sympathetically designed and subservient in height and scale. Nevertheless, the creation of a formal boundary, whether formed by a stone wall or softer landscaping, and individual curtilages would sever part of the burgage plot from the listed building, reducing the understanding of the historic development and evolution of the listed building.
8. I understand that the plot may have previously been subdivided when the listed building was two dwellings. However, the historic mapping to support this claim is inconclusive as to the line of the subdivision and its form. As such, I cannot conclude that there is historic precedence for splitting the plot in the way now proposed.
9. There may well have been numerous other developments in Honiton to the rear of listed buildings, including on other burgage plots and I appreciate that the appellant feels that the Council's decision making has been inconsistent. However, whether or not the site is one of the last remaining undeveloped burgage plots in the town, its subdivision would harm the setting of this listed building and its significance.
10. The harm caused would be less than substantial and, due to the manner in which the townscape and wider setting of the land to the rear has been developed, would be at the lower end of this category. Nevertheless, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) at paragraph 193 indicates that great weight should be given to the heritage asset's conservation irrespective of the level of harm to its significance. Paragraph 196 indicates that the less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
11. This proposal would result in benefits associated with the provision of housing, which may well be affordable to first time buyers, in a location with very good accessibility to services and facilities. I understand that Strategy 23 of the East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 (LP) favours development in such locations. However, given the scale of the development, these benefits would be small and so only of moderate weight.
12. The proposal would allow the repair and rebuilding of the historic stone walls around the plot. In some ways this would better reveal the historic context and significance of the heritage asset as a whole. However, although the existing boundaries may be somewhat unsympathetic, the wider plot is

currently legible so these works would not greatly assist the asset's overall conservation. Therefore, I give these heritage benefits only moderate weight.

13. The development would give the site a clear future use and this may help to discourage the anti-social behaviour that the appellants have experienced. However, this is a largely private benefit and, therefore I give it little weight. I understand that the proposal has the support of Honiton Town Council and I am told by the appellant that the application was almost approved at the Council's Development Management Meeting. However, this, whether or not the Council's conservation officer visited the site, or any pre-application advice given to the appellants, has little to do with the planning merits of the case, which I have assessed on the basis of the evidence before me.
14. With regard to the above, I find that the public benefits associated with the proposal do not outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage asset that I have identified. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with LP Policy EN9 which, like the Framework, requires this balance to be undertaken.
15. Despite the lack of conflict with LP Policy D1 and any support in terms of the location of development, the great weight that I must give to the asset's conservation leads me to conclude that there would be a conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Material considerations do not otherwise indicate that permission should be granted.
16. I, therefore, conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR