



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 May 2021

by Matthew Jones BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/U1105/D/21/3267759

Highfield, Higher Way, Harpford EX10 0NJ

- 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 and Mrs Kerr against the decision of East Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/1510/FUL, dated 15 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as '*resubmission of previously refused application ref 20/0784/FUL for Construction of dormer windows, raising of roof to provide additional 1st floor accommodation*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular reference to the settings of the Grade II listed Court Place Cottage, Pump Cottage and Little Thatch (the Cottages) and the Grade II* listed Church of St Gregory (the Church).

Reasons

3. Highfield is set on land elevated above much of the rest of the hamlet of Harpford. In long range views the settlement nestles politely into its attractive landscape setting. This is particularly appreciable from an orchard along the East Devon Way some distance to the west, which offers a 'cherished view' as identified by the emerging Newton Poppleford and Harpford Parish Neighbourhood Plan (approved at referendum 2021) (the PNP).
4. However, as I myself observed, from the orchard Highfield reads as a very small element of the hamlet and is directly above and behind large scale modern houses. The proposed enlargement of Highfield seen within this context, and at the fair distance involved, would have an inconsequential effect on this cherished view.
5. The same cannot be said for the way that the proposal would interact with its more intimate surroundings. Occupying the valley floor directly to the north of Highfield are the Cottages and beyond these buildings is the Church and I have a duty to consider the impact of the proposal on the special architectural and historic interest of these listed buildings.
6. Principally of C16 origin, the significance of the Cottages derives partly from the aesthetic quality of their historic fabric, notably their thatched roofs. The

Cottages also draw on their largely unblemished verdant settings, which evoke their historic rurality. The Church is set on elevated land which, together with its tower, allows it to maintain a higher status and importance than the Cottages as a focal point and principal community building within the area.

7. At present, as one travels from the Church down to the Cottages, Highfield appears uncomfortably set right above their thatched roofs, therefore posing a distraction from the attractive Cottages and detracting from their verdant setting. However, the low profile and hipped and quite simple slate roof of Highfield ensures that it has a somewhat muted presence, which minimises the incongruity of the relationship it shares with its illustrious neighbours.
8. Whilst in numerical terms the proposed increase in ridge height would be modest, in practice the enlargement of the building would lead it to have a far greater and more assertive visual presence. Combined with the use of render, the appearance of which would compete with the historic walls of the Cottages, the already harmful relationship between Highfield and the Cottages would be significantly amplified. Moreover, given its increased height and relatively strident gable and dormer design, the redevelopment of Highfield would have a greater vertical emphasis, in challenge to the primacy of the Church tower.
9. Harm to the Church and the Cottages would be less than substantial in each case. Even so, such harm merits great weight in accordance with Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and falls to be weighed in the balance with the public benefits of the development. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm requires clear and convincing justification.
10. Whilst a larger family sized house would be created, the small scale public benefits of the redevelopment of Highfield attract limited weight. They do not provide a clear and convincing justification for the harm I have identified.
11. Accordingly, the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area, with particular reference to the settings of the Cottages and the Church. It would conflict with the heritage aims of Policies D1, EN9 and Strategy 46 of the East Devon Local Plan 2013 to 2031 (adopted 2016), Policy EP1 of the PNP and the Framework. As the PNP is post examination, the conflict with it attracts significant weight.

Planning Balance

12. The identified harm to the settings of the Church and the Cottages draws the scheme into conflict with the development plan read as a whole. There are no other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons outlined above, and taking all other matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Matthew Jones

INSPECTOR