

Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 27 April 2021

by S Edwards MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 June 2021

Appeal A Ref: APP/N1730/W/20/3265468

The Holt, Holt Lane, Hook RG27 9EP

- 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 Mark Hazell against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00646/FUL, dated 13 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of a detached, two bedroomed house and storage building, associated landscaping works and new access from Holt Lane. Removal and reconstruction of a section of boundary wall.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/N1730/Y/20/3265470

The Holt, Holt Lane, Hook RG27 9EP

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mark Hazell against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00647/LBC, dated 13 March 2020, was refused by notice dated [21 October 2020.
 - The works proposed are erection of a detached, two bedroomed house and storage building, associated landscaping works and new access from Holt Lane. Removal and reconstruction of a section of boundary wall.
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Decisions

1. Appeal A is dismissed.
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appeals relate to a listed building, and I have therefore had special regard to sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act). Both appeals relate to the same site and raise similar issues, and I shall therefore consider them in a single document, in the interests of brevity.
4. Revised cross sections and street scene drawings were submitted in support of the appeals, which did not form part of the applications determined by the Council. These indicate that the proposed dwelling would be built on higher grounds than shown on the plans originally submitted to the Council. As the proposed change would be minimal, it would not fundamentally alter the nature of the development previously consulted upon and determined by the Council. As such, I am satisfied that my consideration of these amended plans would

not deprive those who should have been consulted on the change, the opportunity of such consultation. I shall therefore determine the appeals on the basis of the submitted drawings, together with the amended plans.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is whether the proposed development and works would preserve the significance of the curtilage listed wall and the Grade II listed building known as The Holt, as derived from its setting.

Reasons

6. The appellant's property is a handsome farmhouse dating from the 18th century, which was formally listed at Grade II in 1987. Whilst it has been subject to a number of alterations and extensions, the building retains much of its original character and attractive detailing, including a symmetrical front elevation with a central entrance flanked by ground and first floor casement windows, and a striking chimney abutting the highway. The significance of this designated heritage asset does not solely reside in its architectural and historic interest, but also its evidential value as a farmhouse which was historically surrounded by agricultural land.
7. The largely uninterrupted red brick boundary wall, which is supported by large buttresses and encloses a major part of the site, adds to the special interest of The Holt, in delineating the historic plot. Despite some minor alterations, there is no doubt that the wall, by reason of its size and design, makes an important contribution to the ability to understand and appreciate the significance of this Grade II listed building.
8. Whilst it is not listed in its own right, the boundary wall is nevertheless listed by virtue of being within the setting of The Holt. Listing descriptions are primarily for identification purposes and do not provide an exhaustive or complete description of the heritage asset's special interest. As such, the preservation of this curtilage listed building carries the same considerable importance and weight as the listed farmhouse.
9. The setting of the listed building has to some extent been compromised by residential development in the last few decades. Nevertheless, the dwelling remains as one of the largest and most prominent buildings in the area. The property, which is set within generous and landscaped grounds, together with the boundary wall characterised by its imposing and significant scale, constitute notable features within the Holt Lane street scene, and thus make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the locality.
10. The effects of introducing additional residential development on the site were considered as part of previous appeals¹, where the Inspector considered that *'the proposal would harm the setting of the listed house and would harm the fabric of the wall through removal of a section, and that each of these shortcomings would be visually prominent, causing harm to the character and appearance of the street scene'*.
11. The proposed dwelling would be constructed within the northern section of the site, which presently forms part of the listed building's garden. By reason of the sense of enclosure provided by the boundary wall, this is a part of the site

¹ APP/N1730/W/19/3231219 and APP/N1730/Y/19/3231217.

which retains a clear visual, functional and historic relationship with the host property. The appellant has sought to address the concerns raised by the previous Inspector, notably by reducing the scale of the proposal and its associated curtilage. This, together with the degree of separation with the Holt, would ensure that the new dwelling does not harmfully compete with the Grade II listed property. Additionally, the design approach has made some attempt at picking up on some of the features which characterise the main listed building and the adjacent cottage.

12. Despite the lack of detail which one would expect for a proposal in such a sensitive context, it is clear that the appeal scheme would, by reason of its design approach, fail to pay sufficient regard to the historic function of the site as a walled garden associated with the listed farmhouse. The overtly domestic and suburban appearance of the proposal, compounded by the modern proportions of the building and the ensuing change in character from ancillary garden to separate residential use, would erode the integrity and historic interest of the site, and the contribution it makes to the setting of The Holt in particular.
13. This would also be exemplified by the footprint of the house and outbuilding which, together with the driveway and parking area would harmfully diminish the sense of space which would have historically characterised the garden. Whilst it would be partially screened by the wall, the resulting development would appear widely visible within the street scene, as notably shown by the site cross sections and proposed street scene. It would consequently fail to preserve the significance of the Holt, as derived from its setting.
14. The harm caused by the appeal scheme would be exacerbated by the demolition of part of the curtilage listed boundary wall to enable the creation of a vehicular access for the new dwelling. By reason of its prominent location and excessive width, the punctuation of the wall as proposed would disrupt the continuity of the site's enclosure and erode the contribution it presently makes to the special interest of the host property and the wider character and appearance of the area.
15. The bricks are proposed to be salvaged to build a retaining wall and may thus largely prevent the loss of historic fabric, but this would do little to offset the harm resulting from the demolition of a large section of this curtilage listed structure. Furthermore, other than the additional information regarding the arrangement of levels across the site, insufficient evidence has been presented to demonstrate with certainty that the integrity of the wall would not be compromised by the proposed development. Given the significance of the wall and the likelihood that it acts as a retaining structure, this is in my view critical due to the important changes in level which would occur across the site to enable the construction of the development, but also the proposed outbuilding within proximity to the curtilage listed structure.
16. My attention has been drawn to a residential scheme which was approved elsewhere in the country, and has influenced the design of the appeal proposal. However, I do not have the full details of this development and cannot therefore be certain that the circumstances represent a direct parallel to the proposal before me, including in respect of scale, context and development plan policy. This limits the weight which can be afforded to this particular development.

17. The proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the curtilage listed wall and the setting of the Grade II listed building, to which I ascribe considerable importance and weight. In such circumstances, paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) stresses that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. In particular, it is of note that the proposal would enable the construction of an additional dwellinghouse. However, having regard to the available evidence, I have not been presented with any public benefits which would outweigh the identified harm.
18. Given the above, the proposed development and works would fail to preserve the significance of the curtilage listed wall and the Grade II listed building known at The Holt, as derived from its setting. The appeal scheme would therefore not accord with Policies NBE8 and NBE9 of the Hart Local Plan – (Strategy and Sites) 2032², Policy HK12 of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan, Saved Policy GEN1 of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 Saved Policies³, and Sections 12 and 16 of the Framework. Amongst other things, these seek to ensure that development proposals are of a high quality design, whilst conserving or enhancing heritage assets and their settings, taking account of their significance.

Other Matters

19. The appeal site lies within proximity to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA), which is recognised under the Habitats Regulations as being of international importance for supporting significant numbers of bird species, such as woodlark, nightjar and Dardford warbler. The appeal proposal would result in a net increase in residential units within 5 kilometres of the TBHSPA. The Council and Natural England therefore consider that the proposed development would have a likely significant effect on the integrity of this sensitive area (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) notably by reason of additional recreational pressures, unless suitable mitigation is provided.
20. The appellant's submissions include a letter from Hook Parish Council, confirming their decision to grant access to Bassett's Mead Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), but this does not appear to have been secured in the form of a planning obligation. Furthermore, there is also limited evidence before me to show how the required contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring would be secured. Notwithstanding the above, as the appeals are being dismissed on other substantive grounds, these are not matters which need to be considered further here.

Conclusion

21. The appeal scheme would to some extent support the local economy through construction works, and make a modest contribution towards housing supply and choice. However, these considerations would not outweigh the harm which I have identified. For the reasons detailed above, there are no considerations which indicate that the appeals should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

² Adopted April 2020.

³ 1 May 2020.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR