



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 April 2025

by **C Butcher BSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X1118/D/24/3356491

1 Blatchford Cottages, Muddiford, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4EU

- 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 Marcia Whitton against the decision of North Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref is 78981.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as demolish dilapidated outbuilding and build new two storey accommodation. Build modest single storey, mono-pitched utility room. Construct conservatory.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the setting of Blatchford Mill House, a Grade II listed building, as well its effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. No. 1 and No. 2 Blatchford Cottages form a pair of semi-detached homes which are currently of similar appearance. To the west of the two cottages is Blatchford Mill House, a Grade II listed building. Its significance and special interest as a designated heritage asset, in so far as it is relevant to this appeal, is drawn in-part from its historic use and therefore its relevance to the evolution of the immediate area. It has distinctive architectural features, including gable ends and rebuilt brick gable end chimney stacks. Mindful of the statutory duty set out in s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of the listed building.
4. Between the listed building and No. 1 Blatchford Cottages there is a single storey outbuilding with a flat roof. Its unremarkable appearance adds little to the setting of the listed building. However, from a visual perspective, it is a fairly insignificant structure, and the overall perception is that there is a feeling of space either side of the Mill House which does contribute strongly to its setting, and subsequently its significance. This feeling of space is particularly apparent when viewing the building from the extensive gardens on its southern side.
5. The proposed development would, in part, involve the demolition of the outbuilding and the construction of a substantial two storey extension to No. 1. Given the overall bulk of this extension, and its close proximity to the Mill House, it seems inevitable to me that the relative feeling of spaciousness around the listed building

would be eroded to a great extent. Indeed, the side extension would be far more imposing than the existing outbuilding and it is highly likely that the Mill House would appear more crowded and enclosed on its eastern side. As a result, the development would result in less than substantial harm to its setting.

6. In these circumstances, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that this harm must be weighed against public benefits. Great weight must be given to a designated heritage asset's conservation and any harm to its significance requires clear and convincing justification.
7. In this instance, the benefits would be largely private in that the proposal would provide the occupiers of No. 1 with a greater amount of internal space. The appellant has noted that the development would deliver improvements in terms of energy efficiency and sustainability. However, given the scale of the proposal these benefits are very limited in nature. As such, the public benefits do not outweigh the less than substantial harm that I have identified.
8. In addition to the harm to the setting of the listed building, the existing sense of relative balance and pleasing symmetry that exists between the pair of semi-detached houses would be lost almost entirely as a result of the proposed side extension, in combination with the other proposed extensions to the front and rear of No. 1. This in itself would result in more generalised harm to the character and appearance of the immediate surroundings.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would result in harm to the setting of a designated heritage asset, as well as the character and appearance of the surroundings. As such, it would conflict with Policies ST04, ST15, DM04 and DM07 of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan, October 2018. Taken together, the relevant aspects of these policies seek to ensure that new development is well designed and that the settings of designated heritage assets are conserved.

Other Matters

10. The appellant has sought to draw my attention to two planning applications within the vicinity of the appeal site. The first¹ relates to the internal configuration of Blatchford Mill House, along with replacement windows. It is not clear to me how this proposal is comparable to the appeal scheme before me, and in any event, I note that the application has not yet been determined by the Council.
11. The second application², which was approved by the Council in April 2025, enables the demolition of a tool shed to the east of No. 2 Blatchford Cottages and the erection of a triple garage with ancillary accommodation above. However, the appeal scheme would have a much closer relationship with the Mill House than the development of the triple garage and so the context is very different. This issue therefore has little bearing on my decision.

Conclusion

12. The proposed development would result in harm to a designated heritage asset and the character and appearance of the area more generally. It would therefore conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole.

¹ Council ref: 79984

² Council ref: 79607

13. There are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Butcher

INSPECTOR