

Alex Oliver,  
Mill House,  
Honeystreet,  
Pewsey,  
Wilts.

DATE  
07/01/2020

OUR REF  
19.998

PLANNING REF:  
19/09834/FUL

## Visual Impact of the proposed dwellings opposite Mill House, Honeystreet, planning application number 19/09834/FUL

Our client Mr Alex Oliver has commissioned us to make a visual assessment of the residential scheme that forms planning application number: 19/09834/FUL.

Please find below my observations on the proposed residential scheme at Honeystreet Wharf, application reference: 19/09834/FUL.

1. Mill House is a grade II listed dwelling located on the northern side of the access road to Honeystreet Wharf.

In his Heritage Assessment of the house and its setting Ian Lund Heritage Professional commented:

- ***Mill House is the pre-eminent building at Honeystreet and it dominates the northern approach to Honeystreet. It has two main fronts; east towards the Alton-Woodborough lane, and south towards Honeystreet Lane.***
- ***The relationship of the property with the wharf and the generally open countryside to the north were found to be factors of particular importance. Its setting is at least of equal importance to its physical fabric.***
- ***The property has a setting formed by the wharf, and the Alton-Woodborough lane between the agricultural field to the north and the canal bridge in the south. The Kennet and Avon canal, Honeystreet wharf, and the small settlement that grew up alongside, including Mill House, is of industrial archaeological interest, and arguably a heritage asset in its own right. Mill House also has a more extensive informal setting encompassing countryside to the north and east, and the canal on its east-west alignment.***

2. Visually, the entrance to Honeystreet Wharf is dominated on the northern side by Mill House and the mature yew tree in the garden. On the southern side there is an area of open space, a single storey barn

type structure behind, a backdrop of a mature, protected walnut tree. The former boiler house chimney forms a focal point at the western end of the road. Although, the barn structure is in a dilapidated state, it retains a visual presence but is subservient to the Mill House. The existing planning permission for five dwellings on the site ensures that the current relationship between the built form and the walnut tree to the rear, retaining the unique visual character of Honeystreet Wharf as popular visitor site in the North Wessex Downs AONB.

3. Over the past few years the character and visual amenity of the area, which being located within the AONB has the highest status of protection, has been significantly eroded by the construction of a barn, and seemingly uncontrolled external storage and overflow car parking in the field to the north. The existing historic (unlisted) buildings have not been maintained leading to a degradation of the built form and the unrestrained growth of boundary hedges and self-sown trees, of which the conifers adjacent to the walnut tree and opposite Mill House are of particular note.
4. The principle of residential development at Honeystreet Wharf is established. The previously approved residential proposals (application reference: 17/02632/FUL were designed on the premise that the overall character and building/landscape hierarchy was to be maintained, with a close-knit development respecting the scale of built form and addressing the canal frontage as well as the relationship with Mill House and views into the site.
5. The latest proposals application reference: 19/09834/FUL envisage the construction of six timber clad dwellings in place of the permitted five dwellings, and an increase in ridge height to enable them to be two storeys. The proposed dwellings do not follow a development form which relates to the varied built form of the Wharf. The increase in dwelling numbers will result in the loss of the majority of the trees on the site. The moving of the built form forward of the walnut tree introduces the issue of the dominance of Plot 1 at the entrance to the site.
6. Falling within the North Wessex Downs AONB the site and its surroundings are of High Value in respect of the meaning of NPPF paragraph 170 a). The site is susceptible to changes which detract from the historic landscape character and landscape settings of the Wharf and the historic structures, whether listed or not. Therefore, the site and surroundings are deemed to have a Medium to High landscape sensitivity. The effect of the application proposals on landscape character, as a variation from the current planning permission, will be adverse.

7. Visually, key receptors (people) are the residents of Honeystreet and their visitors, those visiting the café at Honeystreet Wharf, users of the White Horse Trail, which follows the road passing east of the site, and visitors to the Kennet & Avon Canal and surrounding hills. All viewpoints of the site and its immediate environs are local and in all cases they are of high value and are susceptible to inappropriate change, giving a high visual sensitivity.
8. Whilst it is possible to justify the site layout for Plots 2 to 5 in landscape and visual terms, Plot 1 presents considerable issues and potential conflicts with the prevailing character and visual amenity of the Wharf from public and residential areas. The proposed development will enclose the open frontage with a close boarded fence and hedge, creating a suburban appearance entirely at odds with the rural nature of the area and providing an uncharacteristic road frontage, which would likely be considered unacceptable in an urban environment, let alone in the countryside. This would lead to a significant adverse visual impact.
9. Beyond the fence the two side-by-side gable ends of the proposed dwellings would be very prominent. Their height would rival that of the Mill House, and by virtue of their location well in front of the Mill House, they would be the most prominent buildings in the street view, which they will dominate. The effect would be to obscure views of the walnut tree and the relegation of the view of Mill House to that of a subservient dwelling.
10. Inter-visibility between the road-side Mill House and northern residential windows on Plot 1, as well as the cars parked on the roadside parking spaces, will compound the suburban appearance and perception of the area by users of the road and residents of Mill House. There will be inter-visibility between the upper storey windows of Mill House and those in Plot 1, which is likely to be detrimental to residential receptor amenity. The mitigation of this through landscape planting will not be feasible.
11. For the visual receptor passing from east to west along the Wharf access road their initial views will be dominated by close boarded fencing, domestic scale planting, parked cars and the side elevation of a substantial dwelling. The proposed native hedging in front of the close boarded fence will take a number of years to mature, and being deciduous, even when mature will allow views of the fence to predominate during the winter months.
12. Issues relating to the heritage impacts of the proposals on the listed Mill House and unlisted heritage assets of the Wharf have been dealt with by others. However, residents of the local area and those using the Wharf area for recreational purposes will be adversely affected by the nature and scale of the proposals, as described above. The character of the area will change and become distinctly suburban, with the building

and landscape design not responding to the existing character and protected status of the site and its surroundings.

13. The design, scale and location of Plot 1 provides the greatest level of concern and provides the greatest level of harm in both landscape and visual terms. It is considered that the removal of this dwelling from the scheme would enable the full visual amenity of the walnut tree to be appreciated and would enable open space to be retained at the entrance and along the access to the Wharf. The dominant building would remain Mill House, with the road being flanked by it on the northern side and the walnut to the south, allowing the retention of views through to the boiler house chimney beyond.
14. Although the remaining dwellings will have a somewhat urbanising effect on the surrounding area, it is considered that the scheme with Plot 1 removed would be broadly more acceptable, as important views at the entrance to Honeystreet would be retained and the visual impact of the development on the listed building would be lessened. It is also recommended that all close boarded fencing bordering publicly accessible areas is removed and replaced with less intrusive boundary treatments and dense hedging.

#### KEY VIEWPOINTS

##### VIEWPOINT 1



View west from the access to Honeystreet Wharf on the route of the White Horse Trail. The established view towards the boiler house chimney is framed by the yew and walnut trees, Mill House and the single storey shed. The residential curtilage of Mill House is a distinct feature, as is the open space in front of the shed. The components provide the historic landscape setting of the Grade II listed Mill House. The proposed development of Plot 1 will provide a dominant two storey building, well in front of Mill House, close boarded fencing and a suburban appearance which will have a significant adverse landscape and visual effect.

## VIEWPOINT 2



Close distance view south-west taken from the White Horse Trail in front of Mill House. In this view the garden of Mill House, and the house itself dominate, with a backdrop of trees and subservient buildings. There are currently no other residential properties or domestic curtilage boundaries in this view, which is of high significance to users of the White Horse Trail. The proposed development of Plot 1 will provide a dominant two storey building, well in front of Mill House, close boarded fencing and a suburban appearance which will have a significant adverse landscape and visual effect.

## VIEWPOINT 3



Close distance view south-east taken from the White Horse Trail just south of the Honeystreet Wharf access. In this view the garden of Mill House is dominant with the single storey shed being a subservient feature. The open aspect in front of the shed allows for uninterrupted views of the house. This view will be lost with the introduction of the house on Plot 1 and close boarded fencing close to the roadside. This will have an adverse effect on the established view in which there are currently no other residential properties or domestic curtilage boundaries, and which is of high significance to users of the White Horse Trail.



## VIEWPOINT 4



Close distance view east from the western edge of the Grade II listed Mill House. The removal of the conifers to open up views of the walnut tree is welcomed but this also means that there will be an open view of the dwelling on Plot 1, which will be a dominant feature, exacerbated by Plot 2 immediately abutting it and creating a prominent double gable end. There will be intervisibility between residential windows and the current rural access route will assume a suburban character with car parking, close boarded fencing and domestic scale planting, to the detriment of the existing character and visual amenity of the site and its surroundings.

Report prepared by

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