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Mr P Isbell
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5th October 2018

Dear Philip,

Proposed Development at 1-6 The Street, Kersey: B/15/01196

My name is Patrick Taylor and I studied Architecture at the Architectural Association in London, obtaining their Diploma in 1978. I passed my professional practice in 1982 and then joined the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). I later studied at the University of York, obtaining an MA in Conservation Studies in 1996 before joining the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) in 1999.

From 1994 I worked at both Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils as a Conservation Architect, working on grant schemes, enhancement works, shopfront studies and historic building repair advice. I also wrote their Conservation Area appraisals, completing all 31 of Mid Suffolk's and some 23 of Babergh's 29 before my retirement in 2015. I am currently working on finishing the last six of these last to complete the set.

During the last two years of my employment I was a Heritage Officer in a more focussed role responding to consultations on the constant flow of Listed Building Consent applications, more specifically in the eastern half of Babergh District. In this context I came to give pre-application advice on the site behind Nos. 1-6 The Street, Kersey. I had appraised the Conservation Area for this village in 2010 and found the village, not unlike many others in the district, to be an important cluster of historic buildings in a setting that should continue to benefit from such protection.

In my view village Conservation Areas are generally concentrated around a public domain from which they are viewed and appreciated. Sometimes this focus is a village green (Naughton, Polstead, Hartest, Cockfield) or more often simply a village street (Chelsworth, Brettenham, Boxford, Bildeston). Kersey is one of the latter but with the unusual bonus of rising topography on either side of an interest adding water feature, the Splash.

In Kersey, The Street is the central feature around which the historic buildings are clustered and the boundary of the Conservation Area is essentially formed by the rear boundaries of the historic buildings' curtilages on either side. Because of the sheer depth of the plots, there are numerous instances of infill development, both modern and historic, so that in my view the proposed development behind Nos. 1-6 The Street would not affect the underlying grain of the settlement, nor would it adversely affect the Conservation Area. This last is generally viewed and appreciated from within The Street itself, rather than from a footpath along the rear boundary of these properties screened by a thick hedge.

The property immediately to the north of the site is a large modern dwelling, which harms the Conservation Area. This is the lower and nearer of two existing large buildings which cause harm to the Conservation Area, most apparent when viewed from the church steps. It is back to front in terms of being a single large modern mass in the centre of its plot, with nothing remaining as a screen fronting The Street itself.

The frontages below this are those of Nos. 1-6 The Street and these have been given quite rightly the higher than usual grade II* listed status on account of their contribution to the street scene. The entire fabric of these buildings is therefore protected beyond the level it might otherwise deserve. Similarly the rear elevation of these properties, which faces onto the proposed development site, is unremarkable with the usual historic accretions of small extensions and a single large Victorian red brick block obscuring much of the rear when viewed from the proposed development site.

In my view this setting at the rear is of considerably less value than that of the frontage and does not deserve the same high level of protection. If anything the proposed development will bring this rear elevation greater public exposure than it now enjoys, which might well lead to a little judicious tidying up to upgrade its current poor appearance.

My overall view thus remains as given pre-application, that the proposed development behind Nos. 1-6 The Street, Kersey, at the scale currently proposed, will not adversely affect either the Conservation Area or the setting of the grade II* listed buildings fronting the site. Any harm the development might cause to either of these will be minor and can be regarded as 'less than substantial'.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Taylor