
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 October 2016

by David Troy BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 19th October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/Z2830/D/16/3155869

Steane Grounds Barn, Steane Grounds Farm, Hinton Road, Steane NN13 5NP

- 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 G Walker-Savings against the decision of South Northants District Council.
 - The application Ref S/2016/0819/FUL, dated 30 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2016.
 - The development is retrospective application for the erection of 1.8m height close boarded timber fence adjacent to the highway. Retrospective application for the erection of 2 sets of electronically operated solid timber entrance gates. Proposed increase in the height of the flanking walls each side of the gates.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The 1.8m height close boarded timber fence and the timber entrance gates have already been erected. I considered on the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a two storey converted residential barn located and accessed off a single tracked road in an isolated rural location between the villages of Farthinghoe and Hinton in the Hedges. The appeal site is set in attractive countryside, defined by gently undulating fields punctuated by hedgerows and tree boundaries along with sections of low stock fencing and metal field gates. Along the southern boundary of the appeal site facing the road is a section of low dry stone walling close to the dwelling which lead to a low timber post and timber fence extending to the west that possess a distinctively appealing rural appearance. Where boundary walls, fencing and gates exist in the area, these are generally low, clearly subsidiary, and have little impact upon the sense of openness.
 5. Saved policy G3 (A) of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan 1997 (LP) seeks to ensure that development is compatible in terms of type, scale, siting, design and materials with the existing character of the locality. Saved policy EV1 of
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the LP states that, amongst other things, development will be expected to pay particular attention to existing site characteristics including landscape features and levels and the scale, density, layout, height, massing, landscape and materials in relation to the site and surroundings. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document on the Re-use of Rural Buildings for Residential Use 2011 (SPD) states that in accordance with the saved LP policies, proposals must not cause harm to the local area in terms of appearance, character and setting, including fences and walls. The SPD outlines that the use of fencing will not be permitted where it will introduce an incongruous element into the landscape. These policies are broadly consistent with the design aims in Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

6. The development entails the retention of 1.8m height close boarded timber fence to the western end of the site and the retention of 2 sets of electronically operated solid 2.1m height timber entrance gates mounted on metal gate posts fronting Hinton Road to either side of the dwelling. The appeal also seeks permission to increase the height of the flanking walls either side of the gates to a similar height to the gates.
7. The stark urban form and appearance of the close boarded fence and gates are entirely different in scale, form and materials to the existing low boundary treatment and gates in the area. The fencing and gates, by virtue of their height and siting immediately adjacent to the road compromises the sense of space and openness created by the modest boundary treatment and the open landscape. These shortcomings would be exacerbated by the proposal to increase the height of the flanking walls which would increase the sense of enclosure and the visual impact of the boundary treatment as a whole.
8. As such I consider that the development, by virtue of the scale, siting, design and materials used, introduces an excessively urban and incongruous form of development that is out-of-keeping with the more traditional character and appearance of the low boundary walls, fencing and gates in the area and the open rural character of the locality.
9. I have taken into account the appellants wishes to increase the security to the property and the benefits provided. I also note the appellants' willingness to carry out further landscaping to improve the appearance of the development. However, in the absence of any detailed information to inform what this further work and measures might be, I can only judge this case based on the evidence provided and my observations from my site visit. I consider that the adverse impacts arising from this development to the character and appearance of the area would significantly outweigh these benefits. As such, the appeal scheme would conflict with policy SA of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2014, as it does not represent a suitable sustainable form of development for which the Framework carries a presumption in favour.
10. Consequently, I conclude that the development causes harm to the character and appearance of the area. It conflicts with saved policies G3 (A) and EV1 (I and III) of the LP and the Council's SPD. These policies and guidelines, amongst other things, seek to ensure that development respects the existing site characteristics and the local character and appearance of the area. It would not accord with Section 7 of the Framework that seeks a high standard of design which respects the character and distinctiveness of the locality.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Troy

INSPECTOR