

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 November 2016

by Jim Metcalf BSc DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/16/3156234

12 Longdown Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham, GU10 3JS

- 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 Stuart Mitchell against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/0948, dated 28 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 29 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is gate posts, gates and timber fencing.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for gate posts, gates and timber fencing at 12 Longdown Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham, GU10 3JS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref WA/2016/0948, dated 28 April 2016 and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1234/PL01 (as amended by 9284/01); 1234/E02; 9284/01; Block Plan (1:500) and Location Plan (1:1250).
 - 2) Unless within the first planting season following the date of this decision the landscaping scheme shown on Plan No 9284/1 is implemented, the fence, gates and gateposts shall be removed. Upon implementation of the approved scheme as specified by this condition, that scheme shall thereafter be retained. If, within a period of 5 years, from the date of planting, any tree or plant is removed, uprooted, destroyed or dies, another of the same species and size shall be planted at the same place.
 - 3) Unless within a period of 2 months of the date of this decision a revised plan of the fence and gates, is submitted to the local planning authority for approval, and unless the approved scheme is implemented within 3 months of the local planning authority's approval the fence, gates and gateposts shall be removed. Upon implementation of the approved plan as specified by this condition, the alterations to the fence and gates shall thereafter be retained.

Procedural Matters

2. The gates and fence have already been erected. I have considered the appeal on that basis. The appellant has submitted a plan (9284/01) showing revised details of the landscaping of the verge at the front of the site. I am satisfied
-

that no interested parties would be prejudiced by my consideration of this revision and so I have treated plan 9284/01 as part of the appeal proposals. In addition the appellant has suggested ways he would alter the fence and gates but these plans have not been accepted for formal consideration. Nevertheless the basis of the alterations is set down in the grounds of appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the fence and gates on the character and appearance of the street scene along Longdown Road.

Reasons

4. No 12 Longdown Road is a new house, built following the grant of planning permission in 2014 to replace the previous bungalow on the site. Longdown Road serves an attractive, low density residential area, known as the Bourne, with generally large, individual style houses set well back from the road in large gardens. Views of the houses are framed through the trees and landscaping in the grounds and along the road. The semi-rural character of the area is enhanced by the green verges, and lack of pavements, along the road. The front boundaries of property are typically open, whilst in some cases walls and fences, of varying type and design, have been erected.
5. The fence, about 2m high and formed of close boarded timber, runs for about 20m along the front on the house and is set back about 2m from the highway edge. Two white rendered gateposts support solid timber gates. The application to authorise the erection of the fence and gates proposed a laurel hedge in front of the fence. A similar fence, albeit closer to the verge, has been erected next door at No 14 Longdown Road, and opposite at No 3 Longdown Road. Planning permission has been refused for both these fences.
6. Taken together Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (LP) explain that development will not be permitted where, amongst other things, it would result in harm to the visual character and distinctiveness of a locality. In this context, although not referenced in the decision notice, LP Policy BE3 identifies the South Farnham Area of Special Environmental Quality (ASEQ), including the Bourne, where new housing development will not be allowed unless certain criteria are satisfied. These criteria seek, amongst other things, to protect the semi-rural character of the ASEQ including the well wooded appearance of the area and the hedges or walls.
7. In addition the Farnham Design Statement (FDS), adopted to supplement LP policies, found that the greenery around the houses in the Bourne was a special feature of the area, with a consequent need to maintain the number and variety of trees and hedges along the roads. There are other fences and some walls along the road. Some of these have been in place for some time and in some instances they fit more comfortably into the environment along the road than the fence at No 12 Longdown Road. The FDS explains that fences are positively discouraged in the Bourne and that residents are encouraged to replace them with green boundaries.
8. As erected the fence and gates are a high and solid element in the street scene along Longdown Road, at odds with the attractive generally open, vegetated

character of the area. The incongruous, dominant appearance of the fence would be mitigated, to an extent, by a laurel hedge. However, such a hedge would have a relatively formal appearance in conflict with the generally more varied semi-rural ambience.

9. The appellant has suggested, in his grounds of appeal, that the height of the solid part of the fence could be reduced by replacing the top 0.5m section of close boarded panels with an open trellis. The gates could be altered with the insertion of 0.3m high open slots across their width. The fence is set back sufficiently to allow for a more sympathetic landscape scheme to be implemented. The revised scheme, drawing 9284/01, would involve a hedge, formed of native species with holly, yew, hawthorn and beech, with shrubs between the hedge and the road. Such a mixed hedge would act to suitably screen the fence behind a verge of ground cover shrubs and relate well to other vegetation along the road.
10. I have considered all other matters, including the views of the Bourne Residents Association and a number of local residents, who object to the fence as it is, in the context of the unique identity of the area and its semi-rural feel.
11. Subject to the proposed alterations being implemented, I conclude that a lower fence, behind an attractive hedge and verge would sit comfortably in the street scene along Longdown Road, and would comply with LP Policies D1, D4 and BE3 and the FDS.
12. In granting permission I have imposed conditions to ensure that the fence and gates are altered and the landscaping scheme carried out to ensure that the development sits comfortably in the street scene along Longdown Road. Conditions nos 2 and 3 require the appellant to comply with a strict timetable for carrying out his enhanced landscaping scheme, and to seek approval for, and then implement, the alterations to the fence and gates. This is essential to make the development acceptable. The conditions are drafted in this form because, unlike an application for planning permission for development yet to commence, it is not possible to use a negatively worded condition precedent to secure the implementation of the outstanding amended detail because the development has already been carried out.

Jim Metcalf

INSPECTOR