

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2016

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19th December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/16/3159460

55 Heronswood Road, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3ER

- 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 James McGreevy against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/0932/HOUSE was refused by notice dated 6 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a front fence along the boundary starting from the hedge line separating the neighbouring property and travelling along the boundary to the path and driveway servicing the property.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

3. 55 Heronswood Road is an end terrace house fronting onto this main road, in a predominantly residential area. The houses here are laid out in regular patterns, set back from the road behind clipped hedges which add to the relatively green and leafy character of the area and the town in general. The boarded timber fence at No.55, which is already in place and measures about 1.35m in height, contrasts markedly with the other frontages nearby. Though not tall enough to be dominant visually, it is still of significant height and does present a solid, blank face to the street. I note that a 1.0m high fence would be permitted development. I consider, however, that the extra height is a material difference in this situation.
 4. Though I saw a few houses with low picket fences nearby, I saw no other fences of this type and height in the immediate vicinity. The fence is only a minor feature in the overall street scene and would be innocuous in another situation, but it is incongruous here and detracts from an important aspect of local character.
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5. The appellant suggests that the fence could protect a hedge planted behind. This is true, but a solid fence of this height and type is not necessary for such a purpose. I have taken into account the examples given of other fences, railings and walls in the general area. None of these appear to be close by the appeal property and I have no significant information about their origins or planning history. I have considered this appeal on its own merits, bearing in mind local context and character.
6. I conclude that the fence unduly harms the character and appearance of the local area. It therefore conflicts with the aims of Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, to secure high quality design that respects and relates to the character and context of the area. It furthermore conflicts with the advice in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance, to use hedges rather than walls or fences as a means of enclosure.
7. I recognise that the previously existing hedge here was taller and of poor quality, and that the fence may help to stop people from littering in the front garden. I also take into account that people waiting at the bus stop opposite will naturally look across the road towards No 55. The fence provides a little (though not much) respite from this. None of these matters, however, is of sufficient importance to override my objection in regard to the main issue.
8. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR