

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 December 2016

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 17 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R650/D/16/3159919

Hambledon House, 3 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 & Mrs S Marshall against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. WA/2016/1249, dated 8 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of a frontage fence; alterations to the height of existing piers and erection of gates to the frontage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the replacement of a frontage fence; alterations to the height of existing piers and erection of gates to the frontage at Hambledon House, 3 Longdown Road, Lower Bourne, Farnham in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. WA/2016/1249, dated 8 June 2016.

Preliminary Matter

2. The boundary treatment outlined above has been completed together with associated planting and the application therefore seeks retrospective permission.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the boundary treatment on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The Council acknowledges that high quality materials have been used but considers that the fencing, gates and piers together are too high, bulky and enclosing in nature and thereby out of character with the semi-rural and verdant backdrop character of Longdown Road. As a result there is a conflict with Policies D4 and BE3 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 ('the Local Plan'); the former seeking to ensure development integrates well with the site and complement its surroundings and the latter aiming to protect the semi-rural character of the area which falls within a designated Area of Special Environmental Quality (ASEQ).
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5. I have read the descriptions of Longdown Road in both the officer's report and the grounds of appeal, but whilst the Council refers to the majority of fence types being open in character to allow vegetation to be viewed from the road the appellant's reference to a number of more enclosing treatments is also fair comment. However, it seems to me that the more important issue in this case is whether or not this particular boundary structure draws the eye with a negative connotation of an unduly urban and obtrusive appearance clearly out of place in the ASEQ. My conclusion on the point is informed by a number of factors.
6. Firstly, Hambledon House is a very substantial property set well back from the road in extensive grounds and approached by a long driveway. A formal gated entrance is entirely consistent with the character and appearance of the property. Secondly, the Council supports open frontages so that vegetation can be viewed from the road, but in this case the vegetation is in the form of a copse of tall semi mature trees that extends to the part of the curtilage that forms the roadside verge in front of the boundary. The fence, gate and piers do not obscure or in any other way adversely affect the visual amenity conferred by these trees; indeed the opposite is the case as the height of the trees provides a sense of perspective that makes the 2m – 2.2m height of the boundary wholly in keeping with its setting and relationship with the house.
7. A third factor is the high quality of materials and installation, with the wood of the gate and fence and mainly older brickwork of the piers sympathetic to the semi-rural setting. The simple traditional design of the boundary and entrance are supported by the modest accoutrements of the sign, security pad and post box to make a discreet contribution to the site's entrance. There is no suggestion of ostentation. Finally, the boundary treatment has had the advantage of over four years since its installation and this has allowed the wood to weather and the laurel bushes and beech planting to become established. In my opinion these complement the fence and gates and 'soften' any starkness that may have been evident at the time of its construction. I acknowledge that laurel is not a native species, but although 'semi-rural' Longdown Road is a residential area. It is not uncommon for laurel hedges to form boundaries to houses in low-density residential areas, both in towns and the countryside.
8. Taking all these points together I consider the front boundary treatment to Hambledon House is appropriate in the ASEQ and together with the landscaping enhances rather than harms its character and appearance. There is therefore no conflict with Policies D1, D4 and BE3 of the Local Plan and Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012. I have taken into account the objections by the Bourne Residents Association but they do not harm my overall conclusion that retrospective permission should be granted.
9. I shall therefore allow the appeal. No conditions are necessary.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR