

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2017

by L Gibbons BA (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/16/3154809

377 Gosbrook Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 8ED

- 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 Craig Clarke against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 160893, dated 13 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as add an additional 2ft (x18ft7) high timber fence to existing 6ft x 18ftx7 wall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for add an additional 2ft (x18ft7) high timber fence to existing 6ft x 18ftx7 wall at 377 Gosbrook Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 8ED in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 160893, dated 13 May 2016 subject to the conditions set out below:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan: 16.001-001.

Procedural Matters

2. For the sake of clarity I have used the description of development as set out on the planning application form but I have excluded information which does not relate to the act of development.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and on users of the adjacent footpath.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is an older style house set back from the road frontage. The front boundary is a tall brick wall. The house has no rear garden and no rear outlook. The only outdoor space is the small garden at the front of the house. The land slopes up towards the house and the height of the brick wall when seen from in the garden appears much lower. This results in a slightly exposed character when stood within the garden and in the views from the habitable rooms. There is a row of terraced houses on the opposite side of the road with a number of the first floor bedroom windows enabling views towards the
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garden and habitable rooms of the appeal site. Gosbrook Road is a very busy road and the noise from traffic when stood within the garden is very loud.

5. The proposal is for a close boarded fence above the brick wall. I have been referred to the Council's Design Guide to Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003 (SPG). This sets out that the Council will normally resist proposals for fences and walls which would close off views or change the character unless a positive improvement in character can be demonstrated. I acknowledge that the fence would be taller than most of the front boundaries found in the immediate area. However, the pavement on this side of Gosbrook Road adjacent to the appeal site is wide and the road is not narrow. There is a sense of spaciousness within the street scene. As a result, I consider that the fence would not result in an enclosed feeling for pedestrians when walking along the street.
6. In addition, due to the short length of the fence, it would not be overly prominent in the street scene. The fence would be in a position set back from the road where it would not close off views within the street. There is a variety of boundary treatments along the road and in neighbouring streets, including the use of close boarded fences. I accept that planting may result in a softer appearance within the streetscene. However, this would largely depend on the type of vegetation.
7. Whilst overlooking is not uncommon within urban areas, the lack of any other aspect and amenity space would result in a very strong perception of overlooking and a lack of privacy for the occupiers of No 377. The proposed fence would significantly reduce this perception and would provide some privacy from the properties opposite. Furthermore, the fence would provide some screening from road noise for the occupants when within their garden.
8. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the area or the users of the adjacent footpath. It would not be in conflict with Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough Core Strategy (altered 2015). This amongst other things seeks high quality design that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of Reading. It would not be contrary to the general aims of the SPG.

Conclusion and conditions

9. I have considered the conditions in the light of the tests set out in paragraph 206 of the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant drawings as this provides certainty. The Council suggested a condition relating to the materials to be used in the development matching the existing house. However, the materials for the fence are shown on the drawings and the condition would not be necessary.
10. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that subject to the conditions set out above, the appeal should be allowed.

L Gibbons

INSPECTOR