
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2017

by Jonathan Manning BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 09 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W1850/D/16/3164557

37 Scotch Firs, Fownhope, Hereford, HR1 4NP

- 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 Mrs Cathy Thomas against the decision of Herefordshire Council.
 - The application Ref 162426, dated 1 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is removal of 24m hedge and replacement with a block rendered wall incorporating fence panels between brick piers. The wall/fencing would be 2.5m at its highest point (height of current hedge).
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within Scotch Firs, which is a largely residential area. The site accommodates a two storey detached dwelling and lies in a prominent corner position. I observed that the immediate area is mainly characterised by reasonably sized detached properties set within relatively uniform plots facing the road. The immediate area has a spacious and leafy feel and I consider that this is as a result of there being little in the way of any significant boundary treatments. It was clear that whilst the existing boundary treatments in the area are varied, they are generally modest and other than existing boundary hedges, are low in height, allowing open views of the properties behind, which contributes to the spacious environment. The site falls within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB).
 4. The proposal seeks to remove the existing Leylandii hedge, which is a non-native species and is not in good condition. The hedge would be replaced with a block and cream rendered wall, which would be 2.5 metres high at its tallest point and would include fence panels. The appellant has provided some examples of what it would look like within their appeal evidence and I have had regard to them in coming to my decision.
 5. The proposed boundary wall at a length of some 24 metres and up to 2.5 metres in height would be a significant and noticeable structure. Given the
-

prominent corner position of the appeal site and the existing boundary treatments in the immediate area, I consider that the boundary wall would appear as an overly dominant and incongruous feature within the street scene, to its detriment. I agree with the Council that it would have an inappropriate suburbanising effect. Whilst there is an existing hedge of similar height, this sits more comfortably within its local context given there are other examples of similar hedges nearby and although in poor condition it contributes to the spacious and leafy environment that I observed. In contrast the proposed boundary wall would have a much harsher, engineered appearance, due to the proposed materials and would be out of keeping with the existing boundary treatments in the area.

6. The appellant has referred to several other similar examples within the wider area. The only example in close proximity to the appeal site is a red brick wall running along the B4224. In my view, this is viewed as part of a different street scene and does not fall within the more intimate residential area of Scotch Firs. In addition, it is not located on a prominent corner position. Consequently, I am not of the view that it sets a precedent for this proposal. In all other cases, the examples provided are located some distance from the appeal site and are set within different areas with differing local characteristics. None of these therefore affect my findings with regard to this scheme and I afford them little weight.
7. The appellant maintains that replacing the existing non-native *Leylandii* hedge with the proposal would only have a neutral effect on the area. I accept that non-native boundary hedges are not encouraged by Policy FW16 of the Fownhope Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan). Further, as set out above, it is not in good condition. However, I am not of the view that this provides suitable justification for a proposal that would cause noticeable harm in its own right.
8. In conclusion, the proposal by virtue of its siting, scale and materials would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The scheme therefore runs contrary to the development plan, namely Policy SD1 'Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency' of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy (2015) and Policy FW16 'Design Criteria' of the Neighbourhood Plan. These policies seek to ensure that: proposals take into account local context and site characteristics; and hard and soft landscape proposals do not result in a suburbanised appearance.

Other matters

9. I acknowledge that there is support for the scheme from neighbouring properties and that the Parish Council did not object to the proposal on the basis that the existing hedge is in a poor condition. However, the Parish Council has stated a preference for low growing natural shrubbery to be planted. In any event, such matters do not affect my above findings or outweigh the identified harm.
10. I acknowledge the appellant's view that the proposed boundary wall is for the protection of residential amenity. Nonetheless, I consider that this could be achieved by other less harmful options.
11. The appellant has questioned whether the works could be implemented under permitted development rights. However, whilst this may or may not be the

case, I have an appeal against the refusal to grant planning permission before me, which I must consider on its own merits.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, there are no material considerations either individually or in combination that outweigh the identified harm and the associated development plan conflict, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR