



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2019

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H2835/D/19/3229188

68 Doddington Road, Wellingborough NN8 2LJ

- 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 Rob Aitken against the decision of the Borough Council of Wellingborough.
 - The application Ref WP/19/00018/FUL, dated 14 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is described on the appeal form as 'retrospective application for replacement 1.4m high front fence'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal form states that the description of the development has not changed from that given on the application form. However, the application form includes details such as a description of the former fence, the reasons for the choice of replacement, damage that was caused to it by a car, and the applicant's understanding that planning permission was not required.
3. Whilst I have taken those matters into account, in the interests of concision, and as the application form includes details that are not an act of development, I have taken the description above from the appeal form. The fence is already in place and I have treated the scheme on that basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - The character and appearance of the area; and
 - The safety of pedestrians using the adjacent footway.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The height and appearance of boundary treatment facing this section of Doddington Road is varied. It includes brick walls, wooden timber and picket fences, hedgerows and open black metal railings. However, all those are fairly

typical features in a predominantly residential area such as this. Given their style, colour, height and materials they do not appear out of place.

6. The fence at 68 Doddington Road is of a solid metal construction, with ridged panels, a sliding gate, and a blue finish. That gives it a particularly functional and almost industrial appearance compared to the wooden fence of a broadly similar, or lower, height it replaced. It is prominently located at the back edge of the footway along this site's long highway frontage. Consequently, although its height is compatible with nearby boundary treatment, it stands out as an alien feature in the streetscene.
7. The appellant understands the Council's conclusion that the fence is an 'incongruous and obtrusive addition', but states that he would be happy to clad it in close-boarded wood. However, I have no such details before me to indicate how that would be carried out. Consequently, although he states that it would look the same as the previous fence, I cannot be certain that that would be the case, and I have not considered that proposal any further.
8. In broad terms, Policy 8 d) parts i) and ii) of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy 2011 – 2031 (2016) ('NNJCS') requires development to respond to the site's immediate context and to the overall form, character and landscape setting of the settlement. For the above reasons this development conflicts with that approach, and with the requirement for visually attractive development which is sympathetic to local character at paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework').

Pedestrian safety

9. Doddington Road is a busy highway leading towards Wellingborough town centre. The footpath along the site's frontage appears to be well-used, including by school children. However, the appellant states that the metal fence replaced a timber fence which was in the same position along the site's frontage, and was of a similar or slightly greater height.
10. His 'Google streetview' photograph of the former fence supports that stance, and on my visit, I observed that the retained timber fences along either side boundary are indeed slightly taller than the metal fence along the frontage. In its 'open' position, the sliding gate would be only slightly taller than the fence.
11. In that context, although pedestrian visibility from the site's driveway, and from the adjacent driveway at 70 Doddington Road, is restricted by this fence's height and proximity, I am not persuaded that the scheme has resulted in a deterioration in pedestrian safety compared to the previous situation.
12. Despite there being nearby properties with driveways onto Doddington Road where pedestrian visibility is similarly restricted compared to here, I have no cogent evidence that this has resulted in significant safety issues. It is not unreasonable to assume that the driveways at Nos 68 and 70 are used mainly by those houses' occupants, that vehicular movements are modest, and that drivers familiar with the conditions, proceed slowly and with reasonable care.
13. Consequently, on this issue, the scheme does not conflict with NNJCS Policy 8 b) parts i) and ii) which requires that development prioritises the needs of pedestrians, ensures a satisfactory means of access, and does not prejudice highway safety. It would not conflict with the broadly similar approach at paragraph 108 of the Framework.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. No objections were raised to the scheme by local residents. I understand that the former fence was rotting, and that the appellant believed that planning permission was not required for its replacement. He is also concerned about the wasted expenditure in replacing a high quality, strong and durable metal fence, which may have prevented a car crashing into the house, all for the sake of a slight infringement of permitted development rights.
15. However, having considered the scheme on its merits, it causes significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. The limited safety benefits do not outweigh the harm. The scheme is contrary to the development plan and, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR