

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2019

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/D/19/3225720

Highfield House, The Street, Long Sutton, Hook RG29 1SS

- 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 Graham Roberts against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application, Ref. 18/02668/HOU, dated 18 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a 1.8m close boarded fence (retrospective application).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the construction of a 1.8m close boarded fence at Highfield House, The Street, Long Sutton, Hook in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 18/02668/HOU, dated 18 November 2018.
2. This permission is subject to the condition that the planting on the outside of the fence shall be retained in accordance with the details shown on the approved Drawing 'Highfield House – New Boundary Fence & Hedges for Planning: Sketch 02' at scale 1:200. Other than cutting necessary to manage and encourage its establishment, the hedgerow shall be allowed to grow to a height not less than 1.8m from the level of the existing bank and thereafter retained at not less than that height. In the event that any of the existing hedge plants die or become diseased within five years from the date of this Decision they shall be replaced with (a) plant(s) of the same species during the next planting season.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the fence as erected on the character or appearance of the Long Sutton Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The close boarded fence erected at Highfield House is of a stark appearance and currently has a harmful effect on the character and appearance of Copse Lane and the Long Sutton Conservation Area. The presence of other such fences in the conservation area does not negate or justify this harmful effect. However, I accept the appellant's argument that a fence of this form and height is needed for the security of the property, whilst I also note that the accompanying planting shown on the submitted plan is an integral part of the 'proposal'.
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5. The officer's report emphasises the importance of hedgerows to the character and appearance of the conservation area, but a hedge of an appropriate species could not be planted at a height of 1.8m with a reasonable expectation that it would consolidate and survive.
6. However, if the fence and hedge are taken together as the retrospective 'proposal' there would be no harm caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area, albeit this assessment has to acknowledge there will be an interim period to allow the growth of the hedge to the same height as the fence.
7. The officer's report follows the established procedural format of assessing the impact on the conservation area; concluding that harm has been caused; assessing whether the harm would be substantial or less than substantial, and referring to any public benefit that would outweigh the harm.
8. However, in this particular case a more pragmatic approach is required, and I consider that subject to the condition specified above, the 'proposal' when taken in the round would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. Accordingly, there would be no conflict with Policy CON13 of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 as amended and Section 16: 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
9. I shall therefore allow the appeal and grant retrospective permission for the fence subject to the condition in paragraph 2 above.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR