
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2019

by L Crouch BA (Hons) MSc IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/D/19/3227207

134 Three Bridges Road, Three Bridges, Crawley RH10 1JP

- 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 and Mrs Frankham against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2018/0921/FUL, dated 21 June 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is a front wall and gate.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I saw on my site visit that there is already a front wall with railings very similar to the appeal plans already erected. However, I am aware from the appeal documents that there is an extant permission for a similarly proportioned wall and railings, although I do not have all the details of this. I have therefore assessed the proposal based on the plans submitted with the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a detached two storey dwelling set within a spacious plot, with an expanse of hard standing to the front. The existing frontage is set back from the road behind a low brick wall and grass verge. The appeal site lies on a section of Three Bridges Road which is largely characterised by grass verges, large spacious plots, with a variety of frontage boundary treatments, some of which include hedgerows, brick walls, railings and fences. Many of these boundary treatments are low in scale and contain open features, which generally allow views through to the frontages of the dwellings. The grass verges, low scale features and perforated structures all contribute to the largely open frontages and gives a defined but spacious character to the road, with numerous natural features present. There are some examples of gates into properties along the road, which include complementary open design features, which also contributes to this character.

5. The proposal includes a front wall with railings above, which also forms part of an extant consent. The appeal differs from the extant scheme mainly through the inclusion of a larger vehicular gate and taller brick walls on the return. The Council has no objection to the front wall and railings and, given the extant permission, I concur with this position. However, the Council identifies that the concern, and reason for refusal, relates to the proposed larger gate and adjacent brick wall pier returns.
6. The gate would measure approximately 1.9 metres in height and due to its imperforate design and materials, despite it being stepped back from the road, with matching bricks to the house and the proposed hedge to be planted behind, would result in a significant feature dominating the frontage of the existing dwelling with an excessive height. As such it would provide a sense of enclosure in an otherwise visibly open frontage and would subsequently be harmfully out of character with the appearance of the existing dwelling. The timber gate would have a solid appearance as opposed to the proposed railings and hedgerow to be planted behind, which would allow for gaps and visibility through. This harm would be exacerbated by the adjacent brick wall pier returns of a similar height, which would give this entrance increased prominence and bulk and would not be aesthetically pleasing as a result.
7. Given the wider open and spacious character of the street, with low scale perforated front enclosures, the gates and return piers would be harmful to this character given their dominating height, bulky scale, imperforate, hard materials and design. They would also be imposing and prominent given the visible location on a bend of the road, and would subsequently fail to respond to, and support, the locally distinctive patterns of development and landscape character.
8. Therefore, the proposal, although creating a continuous frontage, would be harmful to the character and appearance of the appeal site and that of the surrounding area for the reasons given above. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CH2 and CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030 adopted 2015 (LP), and Crawley Borough Council's Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document 2016 (SPD). These policies and guidance seek amongst other things, to ensure that development responds to and reinforces locally distinctive patterns of development and landscape character through good quality design and is appropriate in its scale, height, massing, details and materials. The proposal is also contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework), which has a clear emphasis on good design.

Other Matters

9. The appellant has brought to my attention other examples of boundary walls of a similar frontage at other properties along the road, which I was able to see on my site visit. However, whilst the frontage low boundary wall and railings might be similar, the gate and the side pier returns proposed are of a different scale, design, material and context to those in the road, and subsequently I find these elements of the proposal to be harmful to the area.
10. The appellant contends that there is an approximately 6ft high fence panel boundary at No 138 Three Bridges Road, which is also timber and the proposed scheme would be more aesthetically pleasing than this boundary. The appellant has also brought to my attention the development at No 83-87 Three Bridges

Road. The appellant contends that the development is visually dominant in the street scene, out of character with the area and contrary to Policy CH1, CH2 and CH3 and therefore seen in this context the proposal would not be out of character itself. However, I do not have all the information and the reasons as to why the fence was erected or the development permitted. In any event the fact that such a fence has been erected and the development has been permitted does not in itself justify development which I consider to be harmful.

11. It is noted that the appellant states there is a sufficient turning circle on site and a sufficient view of the street when leaving the property. It is also noted that there are no objections to the proposal from the Highways Authority. However, the absence of harm on these matters is of neutral benefit to the overall acceptability of the scheme.
12. It is acknowledged that the proposal would create an enclosure which the appellant states would ensure that their child would not run out into the fast moving road. However, a form of enclosure may be achieved through alternative, less harmful means and does not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

L Crouch

INSPECTOR