
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 October 2019

by J Gibson BUEP MPIA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/19/3236787

Brackenveldt, Hampstead Norreys Road, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9SA

- 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 & Mrs Paul Burns against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00765/HOUSE, dated 19 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 June 2019.
 - The development described as "replace existing fence 1.4m with 1.9m fence and remove 2.13m wall RETROSPECTIVE".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the above heading has been taken from the appeal form and decision notice. This description is considered to more accurately represent the development proposed.
3. The fence has been erected and therefore I am considering this appeal retrospectively.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located within the settlement boundary of Hermitage, along the main road that runs through the village. The site has a wider frontage than most other properties in the surrounding area, and consequently appears more prominently within the street scene. Most properties in this area are characterised by open front gardens and a combination of hedgerows, walls and low set timber fencing to their front boundaries.
6. The replacement fence appears to attempt to replicate the composition of the previous front boundary treatment (brick wall and fence). However, as it progresses towards the side boundary shared with the neighbouring dwelling to the south, the fence element increases substantially in height. Given the aforementioned width of the plot, it subsequently appears highly prominent in the street scene. This jars with and appears unbalanced against the more

modest height of surrounding boundaries. The increased prominence resulting from the combined height and length of the fencing element is consequently harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

7. The appellants refer to examples of similar timber panelled fences along the main road in Hermitage. However, I am not aware of whether these have the benefit of planning permission and in any event they do not reduce the harm that arises from the appeal scheme as I have described. I also note the reasons for the appellants erecting the fence to secure privacy within their rear garden. Be this as it may, this does not strike me as sufficient to justify the appeal scheme as it seems an appropriately balanced combination of wall, timber fence and hedgerow planting could be achieved.
8. Accordingly, the fence would conflict with Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (adopted July 2012) and the Hermitage Village Design Statement 2004 (DS). Collectively these policies and the DS seek, amongst other things, to ensure that new development respects the predominant character and appearance throughout Hermitage by incorporating unifying features such as combined hedges, walls and limited timber panel fencing as a means of enclosure in prominent locations.

Other Matters

9. The appeal property is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that I have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB. Acknowledging the scale of the development and the residential setting of the appeal property and immediate surrounds, I am satisfied that the proposal would not result in any material harm to the AONB.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Gibson

INSPECTOR