
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 December 2019

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10th January 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W /19/3228876

16 Broomfield Road, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 6AL

- 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 B Lacey against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 181868, dated 28 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 28 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of fence (part-retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have referred to the description used by the Council in its refusal notice, in the banner heading above. This is more succinct than the description on the application form, and I do not consider that either party has been prejudiced in my doing so.
3. A boundary fence is already in place; however, the proposal seeks to step a length of it back from the edge of the pavement by 1.2m. Part of the fence would remain therefore the Appellant also seeks retention of those sections of the fence. I have determined the appeal on this basis.
4. Following the submission of the Appeal, the Council has adopted the Reading Borough Local Plan, Adopted November 2019 (LP). The Council has confirmed that this is the adopted plan for the area and different policies should now be considered. Consequently, the status of the plan and policy in the refusal notice have now been superseded by the LP. The Appellant has been given the opportunity to comment on this change and the policies now considered relevant.

Main Issue

5. The effect of the fence on the character and appearance of the surrounding residential area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site comprises a dwelling adjoined to its neighbour by an attached garage and located within a modern residential estate. A striking feature of the estate is the landscaping of intervening space between the dwellings and the public highway, which include grassed areas and mature trees and shrubs. The

cumulative effect of the landscaping gives the estate a spacious and verdant character that contributes positively to the area.

7. Some properties in the street have replaced their grassed front lawns with hardstanding, nevertheless I observed from my site visit that in these instances, hardstanding's were open and largely devoid of front boundary enclosures. Consequently, these contribute to the spacious character of the estate. Hard boundary features, such as fences facing the road are generally in the minority, but where they do exist, these are primarily set back from the highway with the intervening space softened by grass.
8. The appeal property's location adjacent to a sweeping bend in the road means it has a prominent dual aspect onto Broomfield Road, with both the primary façade of the dwelling and its side/rear garden facing the street. The proposed fence would be constructed to 1.8m in height and have a length in excess of 20m. It would conceal a thick hedge that comprises a variety of shrubs. The hedge formerly represented the appeal property's side boundary, along with a fence, set within the vegetation. Having seen photographic details of the hedge prior to the erection of the current roadside fence, I consider that combined with the grass verge it provided a soft verdant edge close to the highway that would have contributed to the character and appearance of the street.
9. With the interface between public and private land in the area predominantly having an open and verdant appearance, the appeal fence, even in its set back position, would have an abrupt presence in close proximity to the pavement. Combined with its length and solid appearance, it would appear as an unacceptably blunt and incongruous feature in the street that would be out of kilter with the prevailing pattern of landscaping and boundary treatment in the area.
10. It is stated that by enclosing the existing hedge from the road, the proposed fence would allow for it to be better maintained and free from litter. However, the presence of the hedge had allowed for the assemblage of shrubs at a prominent corner position. By capturing the hedge, the proposal would conceal it and reduce its value in the street in the context of the estate's verdant character. Moreover, the hedge could still be pruned and maintained free from litter without the requirement of having to erect a fence.
11. The Appellant refers to a previous fence along the side boundary and that the proposal would be set further back from the highway than this. However, I have not seen any details of the scale and length of this boundary, therefore I am unable to make a comparison with the proposal.
12. Consequently, the fence would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding residential area and is therefore contrary to Policy CC7 of the LP. This, amongst other matters, requires development to respond positively to local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness.

Other Matters

13. I acknowledge that third parties have not objected to the scheme, whilst the Council has raised no highway safety concerns. However, even though this would seem a positive aspect, it does not make the scheme acceptable or overcome the harm I have identified. The security and privacy benefits of the

fence outlined by the appellant are also noted, but there is no evidence that these benefits could only be addressed by way of the fence at the proposed location.

14. With regard to the Council covering the cost of repositioning the fence, this would be a matter between the two parties, and I have not considered this to be relevant to my assessment. Similarly, the concerns in the way in which the Council assessed the application, are also not relevant to my determination.
15. I have not been presented with full details of the Council's preferred location for the propose fence, but in any event, I have considered the proposal as submitted in determining this appeal. These other matters do not, therefore lead me to a different decision.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given, and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R. E. Jones

INSPECTOR