



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2020

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/D/20/3247077

Orchard House, Church Lane, Goodworth Clatford SP11 7HL

- 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 Dunwoody against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02649/FULLN, dated 5 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 January 2020.
 - The development is described on the decision notice as "retention of 1.8 metre high fence and erection of 1.8 metre high fence".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application form does not provide a description of the proposed works and therefore the wording above is taken from the decision notice. The Design and Access Statement confirms that planning permission is being sought for the erection of a fence, part of which is already in situ¹. The existing and proposed fencing sections are each approximately 30 m in length.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The attractive rural character of Goodworth Clatford is derived to a large extent from the predominance of greenery within the settlement. Church Lane is particularly verdant, with trees and hedging framing the entrance to the Goodworth Clatford and Upper Clatford Conservation Area. The appeal property lies just outside of the conservation area but the dense hedging along its boundaries contributes positively to the setting of the heritage asset.
5. The southern boundary of Orchard House adjoins a narrow track. This track provides access to a small number of residential properties and is not heavily trafficked, but it is publicly accessible. The Council considers the track to be highway, and I have no reason to conclude otherwise.

¹ albeit I note that the posts are yet to be reduced to 1.8 m in height.

6. The fencing which has been erected is of the same type as that being proposed for the remainder of the boundary, namely wire mesh on metal posts. The utilitarian design gives the fencing an industrial appearance which is wholly alien to this pleasant rural setting. The proposed fencing would be especially harmful as it would be erected along a section of boundary which is visible from Church Lane and vantage points within the conservation area.
7. The appellants contend that any adverse impact is temporary; it is argued that existing hedging within the garden will grow through the mesh to create a 'living wall of green'. Although the appearance of the fence may soften over time, I cannot be confident that vegetation would disguise the fence sufficiently to mitigate the harm arising from this visually intrusive boundary feature.
8. I acknowledge that the retention of a hedge along the boundary would bring biodiversity and other environmental benefits, including reduction of flood risk. However, such benefits do not rely on the erection of an unsympathetic form of boundary treatment. With the exception of a short stretch of newly planted laurel, the existing hedging (which the appellants describe as being between 1 and 3 m thickness) provides an effective deterrent to intruders and the escape of children and pets. To my mind, the limited additional safety and security provided by 1.8 m high metal mesh fencing does not justify the harm.
9. Accordingly, I conclude that the existing unauthorised fencing causes material harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed fencing would exacerbate those adverse impacts, which are not capable of being adequately mitigated. I therefore find conflict with Policy E1 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (2016) insofar that it promotes high quality development which integrates, respects and complements the character of the area.

Other Matters

10. I have taken into consideration the arguments regarding the need for hedge maintenance, but this would become an issue regardless of which side of the hedge the fence was erected. As such, it is not a factor of significant weight in favour of allowing the appeal.
11. I note that the appellants raise concerns regarding the Council's handling of the application, particularly in relation to timescales for submitting amended plans. Although clearly a frustration for the appellants, such matters are not material to my consideration of this appeal which has been determined on its planning merits based on the plans submitted.

Conclusion

12. The application conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations to justify a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised including the durability of metal fencing over timber alternatives, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR