The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 May 2020

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MIEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M4320/D/20/3246270
14 Argarmeols Road, Formby L37 7BU

- 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 S Conning against the decision of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.
- The application Ref DC/2019/01977, dated 18 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 January 2020.
- The development proposed is erection of a wall and gates to the front boundary.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appeal scheme is a resubmission of a withdrawn application (ref DC/2019/00676). The scheme has not been amended and the development has already been carried out. Therefore, I have determined the appeal on the basis that retrospective permission is sought for the development that has been implemented.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. No 14 is a substantial detached dwellinghouse on a large corner plot. It is part way along Argarmeols Road, a long straight residential street flanked by large properties of various styles, sizes and ages. Properties are set back from the road in mature plots with front boundary treatments predominantly formed from low brick walls with railings or hedgerows. Notwithstanding the variation in property styles, the vegetated frontages, grass verges, street trees and unobtrusive low walls result in a traditional leafy character and appearance.

5. The appeal scheme is an approximately 23m length of boundary treatment comprising 2 sections of wall with piers to either side of tall metalled gates. The walls are described as being around 2m in height and they have a smooth rendered finish and are a pale off-white colour.

6. I appreciate that the walls match the appeal property, the extensions and alterations to which were approved in 2018 (ref DC/2018/01347). However, by virtue of its design, scale and appearance, the wall is not in keeping with the

prevailing character and muted tones of the area. It is a conspicuously solid feature and its stark appearance is not softened or screened by vegetation. It is not assimilated or integrated into its surroundings. It is visually obtrusive when viewed from both distant and close range along the road and it disrupts the visual harmony of the street scene.

7. The appeal scheme does not respond positively, and it is not sympathetic, to its surroundings. It does not enhance local distinctiveness or make a positive contribution to sense of place. While there are tall walls elsewhere in the area, some of these are in areas characterised by tall boundary treatments while others do not benefit from planning permission. None of these provide a justification for an incongruous and discordant scheme that would be visually detrimental in this location.

8. Therefore, the development results in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It conflicts with the visual amenity and design aims of Policies EQ2 and HC4 of A Local Plan for Sefton Adopted April 2017. It conflicts with the guidance in the Sefton Council House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document Adopted June 2018 in relation to boundary features. It conflicts with policies in the National Planning Policy Framework that require development to add to the overall quality of the area, to be sympathetic to local character and the surrounding built environment, and to maintain a strong sense of place.

Other Matters

9. There have been incidences of crime in Formby. The appellant's desire to secure the family garden both for privacy and to reduce the risk, and the fear, of crime is therefore understandable. However, there is no substantive evidence before me that vehicle theft or burglary is a significant problem in this particular area. Moreover, while I appreciate the appellant's concerns, he has not demonstrated that there are no alternatives that could deliver similar benefits without the harm that I have found.

10. Although concerns were raised in relation to highway safety, this issue did not form a reason for refusal and I am satisfied that the scheme would not result in harm to highway users. The scheme does not obstruct views of the appeal property. However, these are not matters that weigh in favour of the scheme.

Conclusion

11. I have found that the development is in conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict. For this reason, the appeal scheme is dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR