
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 June 2020

by JP Longmuir BA (Hons) DipUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/20/3247245

197 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, RG40 4JD

- 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 Ranvir Garcha against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 192601, dated 30 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 28 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of new fencing along front boundary and side boundary adjacent to service road, incorporating double gates, all at height of 1.95m.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The fence was in place at the time of my visit and therefore the appeal is retrospective. The fence reflects the submitted application details and the appeal is considered on this basis.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The site lies on the B3430, Nine Mile Ride, which is a busy and straight road allowing long views. The area is predominately rural with houses set well back from the road in landscaped gardens. Various mature trees dominate the skyline.
5. The appeal site fronts the B3430 but also occupies a corner formed by a side road. The fencing which both parties agree is 1.95m high, has been erected around the periphery of the front and sides of the plot, with gates across the vehicular access. Just inside the fencing is a continuous row of well-established conifers that have grown above its height. Behind the trees, a gravel parking and turning area occupies the frontage. The fence is constructed in sections of close boarded timber panels above a base, whilst the gates across the entrance are also constructed of vertical boarded timber.

6. I noted on my site visit that the adjacent shops are set back from the road and have open frontages, whereas the fence is on the edge of the road, which gives a significant presence. Similarly, the fence's height curtails much of the view of the house and garden and consequently in my perception the house is overtly enclosed.
7. In the other direction from the shops, the site is very prominent in the foreground of a view along Nine Mile Ride. When seen against the verdant front hedges, trees and front gardens, the fence looks out of place.
8. The fence is a regimented uniform structure that differs from the varied and informal soft landscaping that is characteristic of the area. It appears utilitarian. Weathering or staining would not overcome the impact of the fence as its height, siting and uniformity would all still evident. Accordingly, it harms the character and appearance of the area.
9. My attention has been drawn to a similar fence at 183 Nine Mile Ride. However, this is not on a corner and therefore not so prominent. Furthermore, I have not been provided all the details and circumstances surrounding its erection, and every case has to be taken on its own merits.
10. I therefore conclude that the fence is harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy, January 2010, as well as Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, February 2014, which seek to protect the area, ensure appropriate design and landscaping. Similarly, it is contrary to the Wokingham Borough Council, Borough Design Guide which provides detailed criteria to maintain local character and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other matters

11. The third parties mention the highway safety implications. However, the Council did not consider that the fence would impair visibility and I concur with that assessment.

Conclusion

12. Notwithstanding this, in the light of my findings in relation to character and appearance I dismiss the appeal.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR