
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 May 2020

by David Carter BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C3240/W/20/3244961

Homestead, Dale End, Ironbridge, Telford TF8 7DS

- 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 Parnell against the decision of Telford and Wrekin Council.
 - The application Ref TWC/2019/0286, dated 4 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a boundary wall incorporating galvanised steel railings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Following discussion with the Council the appellants submitted an amended plan showing a different design and colour (changing from black to white) for the proposed railings. The amended plan led to a change in the description of the proposal and it was on the basis of this plan that the planning application was determined. I have included the revised description above and determined the appeal on the basis of the revised plan.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Severn Gorge Conservation Area and Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site.

Reasons

4. The appeal proposal is for the enclosure of a small, currently unbounded planted parcel of land adjacent to a sloping shared driveway. Although the land in question falls within the curtilage of Homestead, it appears more closely related to the adjacent former late C19 workshop, formerly part of a forge/foundry, now in-use as a hairdressing salon. The appeal proposal would occupy a visually prominent position adjacent to the public highway framed by the workshop and sloping driveway. The only matter in dispute is the design of the railings.
5. The appeal site lies within the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and the Severn Gorge Conservation Area both of which are recognised as designated heritage assets. Their significance as heritage assets is derived from both the historic industrial remains with supporting settlements and infrastructure,

- including the famous Iron Bridge. Dale End forms an integral part of the heritage asset containing a diverse range of buildings and uses reflecting the continuing evolution and growth of Ironbridge over several centuries.
6. The design of the amended scheme would be modern comprising handcrafted "hammered steel to create, flat leaf like sections which will have a random profile and contortions that resemble organic plant forms." I note from the drawing that the design of individual steel bars would extend and protrude beyond the side and below the top of the dwarf wall. This unusual characteristic of the design means that the railings would extend into a publicly accessible area. The proposal for the steel railings to be made from white galvanised steel contrasts with painted railings nearby.
 7. The appellants evidence includes examples from the Arts and Craft Movement in support of the proposal. A feature of those designs is their organic nature. Notwithstanding this, the industrial designs also include repetitive/reflective elements, as shown, for example, in the picture of the William Morris Gallery gates. In contrast, the design of the proposed railings would be more free form, meaning that the final product might not be manufactured to the design as shown in the plan or, indeed, to fixed dimensions. The latter point would be the case since the key dimensions of the proposal, which were set out on the original, superseded plan have not been stated on the amended plan. I acknowledge the freer design of some of the other examples included in the evidence but, these are not directly comparable since they neither sit over a dwarf wall nor appear to be located directly adjacent to the public highway.
 8. Taking these points together, I find that the design of the proposed railings, as amended, would not appear sympathetic to the adjacent to the C19 workshop. This would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets. The enclosure of the land by the appeal proposal would lead to some modest public benefits by tidying up the sloping parcel of land and preventing soil draining onto the footway. However, these benefits would not, outweigh the great weight given to conservation of the heritage assets.
 9. Accordingly, I conclude the proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the the Severn Gorge Conservation Area and would cause less than substantial harm to its significance as a designated asset. The limited public benefits would not outweigh the harm. Additionally, the proposal would also fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site which, under the provisions of para 194 of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is regarded as a heritage asset of the highest significance. As such, the proposal conflicts with Policies BE1, BE2, BE3 and BE5 of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031 and national policy contained within the Framework. Taken together the local plan policies encourage high quality design and in particular seek to protect the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and support development in the Conservation Area where it will preserve or enhance its character or appearance.

Other Matters

10. I acknowledge that the appellants have satisfactorily addressed the Council's concerns regarding highway safety and flooding matters raised in relation to an earlier proposal that was refused planning permission (Ref TWC/2019/0043).

However, having considered the resubmission through this appeal, outstanding issues remain over the design of the railings.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

David Carter

INSPECTOR