

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 October 2020

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/D/20/3251191

Forest Dene, Hadley Green West, Barnet EN5 4PP

- 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 Michael O'Sullivan against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 20/0899/RCU, dated 19 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 15 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is railings to the front boundary.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for railings to the front boundary in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 20/0899/RCU, dated 19 February 2020, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted relates to the following approved plan: 476418 Rev B.

Procedural matters

2. The appeal application was retrospective in that the railings had already been installed. The proposed development is described on the application form as "*retention of railings to the front boundary*". 'Retention' is not, however, an act of development so I have omitted that word from the description of the proposed development.
3. The Council appears to be under the impression that the application proposes to lower the existing 1.62m high railings to 1.35m in height. The application form and plans are clear, however, that the intention is to retain the railings at their existing height. I have considered the appeal on that basis.

Main issues

4. The main issue is whether the existing railings preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Monken Hadley Conservation Area and Hadley Green West.

Reasons

5. Forest Dene is a large, individually designed detached house sitting in a row of similar properties to the west side of a private road, Hadley Green West,

- opposite an area of public open space. The properties on the street have wide frontages enclosed by low walls, railings, gates and hedges. The site lies within the conservation area and to the north of a grade II listed building, Pymlicoe House.
6. The Monken Hadley Conservation Area Character Appraisal Statement (CAS) describes the houses at Hadley Green West as quite large and possibly from around 1930 onwards – varying in style and quality of design but attractive and largely unaltered, in a pleasant setting which is more suburban than urban. Boundaries in this part of the conservation area are noted as being railings, low walls and hedging, giving an open transparent quality to the area. The frontage of Forest Dene sits within this context. It can be seen from the end section of the private road and in filtered views from the open space. Its significance is in its contribution to the lower density, greener, more suburban character of the area.
 7. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) *Residential Design Guidance* advises that boundary enclosures help to distinguish public and private space, helping to convey use entitlement, ownership and maintenance responsibility, privacy and home security. It further advises that in most cases, the fronts of houses should generally remain open to view in order to increase natural surveillance to the street, so that walls, fences and hedges defining the fronts of properties should be kept low.
 8. The existing railings are a high quality feature, sitting on top of a dwarf brick wall next to lower timber gates. They are not so tall that they appear overly defensive, allowing views over their tops for many. They also allow views through so that they do not conflict with the SPD as referenced above. Metal railings like this are a feature of the area, including at the nearby listed building, Pymlicoe House. These railings are therefore an unexceptional, minor part of the street scene which generally accord with the advice of the SPD.
 9. A previous appeal decision (APP/N5090/D/19/3226837) grants planning permission for the railings subject to a reduction in height. It should be noted that the previous Inspector was only called on to decide a proposal for lower railings, not to determine the maximum height of acceptable railings here.
 10. I conclude that the existing railings preserve the character and the appearance of the conservation area and Hadley Green West. They are set well away from Pymlicoe House, so have no significant effect on the setting of that listed building. The proposal therefore accords with the shared aims of Barnet's Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document Policies CS1 and CS5, Barnet's Local Plan Development Management Policies Development Plan Document Policies DM01 and DM06, the SPD and the CAS, to secure high quality design based on an understanding of local characteristics, respecting local distinctiveness and protecting or enhancing heritage assets.
 11. As the development has been carried out acceptably, I impose just one condition specifying the relevant plan to provide certainty. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR