



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 23 February 2021

by T Gethin BA (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W3330/D/20/3262948

The Croft, Yallands Hill, Monkton Heathfield, Taunton, TA2 8NA

- 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 Mrs Sarah Webber against the decision of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
 - The application Ref 48/20/0026, dated 9 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as Erect a fence.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The fence the subject of the appeal has been erected and I observed it in situ on my site visit. I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. Fronting on to the highway, the appeal site is visible in public views for some distance in either direction along Yallands Hill and the fencing that has been erected is a prominent feature in the locality. The surrounding area contains numerous properties with boundary treatment facing the highway including, amongst other aspects, walls and fences, some with soft landscaping above, and hedges and vegetated banks. Although this provides the locality with a varied appearance, the generally low walls and fences present, the open driveways and the presence of soft landscaping on many plots means that it has a relatively open and verdant character.
5. The proposed fence is set-back from the highway behind a narrow stretch of grass. However, due to its relatively significant height and its stark and solid appearance, it is an imposing feature that dominates and encloses its surroundings. It therefore reads as an incongruous, harmful addition. In coming to this view, I have taken into account that there are fences in the vicinity of the site that are over 1 metre high, that a 1.8 metre high fence on a nearby property to the east was previously granted planning permission despite numerous complaints from neighbours and that the new housing estates include 1.8 metre high fencing.

6. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. I therefore find that it conflicts with Policies DM1 of the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011 - 2028. Amongst other aspects, this requires development to not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the street scene.

Other matters

7. The appellant indicates that the fencing installed is taller than was intended due to stock levels during the Covid lockdown and that bushes and climbing plants would have been planted which could intertwine the fence to make it less visible. Be that as it may, and despite the appellant indicating that they have started to plant some shrubs, the appeal proposal involves the erection of the fence that is now in situ. I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis, based on the submitted evidence and plans. Although the planting of trees on the inside of the fence would benefit wildlife, I have also little substantive evidence that this activity is dependent on the appeal proposal being allowed.
8. It has been put to me that, prior to the erection of the fence, the over eight feet high beech hedge was becoming dangerous to cut back given its proximity to the highway and was limiting visibility down the hill. Positioned closer to the house, the fence is said to be safer for all and to have improved visibility. Be that as it may, these matters do not provide justification for development that conflicts with the development plan.
9. I recognise that the fence makes the appellant's wife, who has a fear of burglars, feel more secure. An intended new dog, which would also make her feel safer, would be less likely to get under the fence than a hedge, and the appellant also worries that young nieces and nephews visiting could run into the road. In addition, the fence is said to have improved the noise from the road. However, I observed on my site visit that the site's access/driveway from the highway is open and the fence does not prevent access to the front of the property and its front door. It therefore seems to me that the benefits of the appeal proposal in terms of security, safety and noise are likely to be relatively limited and therefore neither outweigh the harm identified nor justify a departure from the development plan.

Conclusion

10. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

T Gethin

INSPECTOR