



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 June 2021 by Max Webb BA (Hons)

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/21/3270307

Little Gables, Green Lane, Stanmore HA7 3AA

- 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 Harji Vekaria against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/2690/20, dated 4 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 15 December 2020.
 - The development is alteration of front driveway and erection of front gate and boundary wall.
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Decision

1. The part of the appeal that relates to the boundary wall and front gate is dismissed.
2. The part of the appeal that relates to the alteration of front driveway is allowed. Planning permission is granted for alteration of front driveway at Little Gables, Green Lane, Stanmore HA7 3AA, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P/2690/20, dated 4 August 2020.

Appeal Procedure

3. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

4. Since the determination of this application a new London Plan (2021) has been adopted. New policies have superseded the previous policies, and appeals must be assessed against the current development plan. The relevant emerging policies were taken into account by the Council during the application process, and the appellant has also had the opportunity to take these policies into consideration.
 5. The original planning application was made on a part-retrospective basis, with the alteration of front driveway and boundary wall already in place, but with erection of a front gate and addition of metal railings on the boundary wall yet to be completed. The appeal will therefore be considered on this basis.
 6. The Council has not raised any substantive concerns over the alterations to the front driveway, and I find no reason to disagree. The erection of front gate and boundary wall are severable from the alterations to the front driveway. Therefore, I recommend a split decision that will grant planning permission for the alterations of front driveway.
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7. Given the retrospective nature of the part of the appeal that is to be allowed, it is considered there is no need for the standard time condition or conditions ensuring compliance with plans or the use of matching materials. For the same reason, a condition regarding landscaping is also considered unnecessary.
8. The remainder of this report will focus only on the erection of front gate and boundary wall.

Main Issue

9. The main issue is whether the erection of front gate and boundary wall would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stanmore Hill Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

10. Stanmore Hill Conservation Area (SHCA), particularly in the area around the appeal site, derives its key characteristics from informal hedges, fences and low walls, combined with open entrances, presenting a spacious, green view into the front of the properties. The Stanmore Hill Conservation Area Policy Statement (2003) describes the treatment of boundaries on the appeal street as a distinctive feature of the SHCA. The appeal property plays a positive role in the SHCA through its low boundary combined with a hedgerow, and no entrance gate, contributing to the open, green and informal character of the street.
11. The proposal seeks to retain the slightly increased height boundary wall and place railings between the pillars introduced on this wall. The height and materials of the main lower part of the wall do not appear overly intrusive, due to the range of materials used for boundary treatments in the area. However, the combination of tall brick pillars and the proposed metal railings would appear overly official and restrict the views into the front of this property, thus diminishing the open, green and informal character of the street. The possibility for future greening behind these metal railings would not sufficiently lessen the harm they would cause.
12. Whilst boundaries in the area play an important role in separating public and private space, these are predominantly softer, less intrusive or lower than the proposal, such as those found at Olde Cottage and Tremar. These lower boundaries allow views into the front gardens and preserve the spacious character of the area. The boundaries at Applegarth, The Orchard and Boveda use either hedges or wooden fences, which ensure a softer appearance that maintains the informal character. In contrast, the appeal site would use a combination of brick and metal, which together would appear intrusive and overly formal. The neighbouring property, The Glade, uses metal railings, however the design of these and the fact they are on top of a much lower wall than the proposal ensures they protect the informal character of the area.
13. The boundary at Rylands consists of a tall wall, however it marks the end of the SHCA and a distinct change in the character of boundary treatments, whereas the appeal property is sited in a more central position within the Conservation Area. There are high walls found at Green Lane Cottage, however there are also two wide entranceways to this property, which ensures a feeling of openness.

14. The development would introduce a large, metal front gate at the entrance to the driveway. The size and design of this gate, in combination with the proposed boundary treatment, would appear overly defensive, which would be to the detriment of the informal character of the area. The gate at Boveda is of a similar size and material to the appeal gate, however it is combined with hedgerows and therefore the overall appearance of this boundary is less intrusive. There is a gate present at the Orchard, however the design drops down in the middle, and thus maintains the informal character of the area as well as views into the front space of the property. Other examples of gates in the vicinity are either smaller in size or on properties that have less of a significant spacious character than the appeal site.
15. The appellant has suggested a condition could be used to ensure appropriate design for the front gate and metal railings. In this case, the combination of the erection of the front gate, the introduction of metal railings and the overall height of the boundary together would harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, a condition regarding the design of the front gate and railings would not reduce this harm to an acceptable level.
16. The boundary treatment and proposed gate would only interrupt the view in a relatively small part of the Conservation Area, and therefore the harm caused to the heritage asset would be less than substantial. Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires, when this is the case, that the harm is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The increased height of the boundary and provision of front gate may potentially deter intruders and provide additional security for the occupants of the dwelling. However, this would only relate to a single property. The Framework requires that great weight should be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and in this case, the public benefit would not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the SHCA.
17. Overall, the erection of the front gate and boundary wall would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the SHCA. The development would therefore be contrary to Policies CS1.B and CS1.D of the Harrow Core Strategy (2012) and Policies DM1 and DM7 of the Harrow Development Management Policies (2013), which together intend to prevent development that is harmful to the character of an area, with particular regard to protecting heritage assets. It would likewise conflict with Policies D3 and HC1 of the London Plan (2021), which aim to ensure development responds to the existing character of a place and preserves the significance of heritage assets. It would also not comply with Section 4 of the Supplementary Planning Document Residential Design Guide (2010), which aims to ensure appropriately designed boundary treatments.

Conclusion and Recommendation

18. For the reasons given above and having had regard for the Development Plan when it is considered as a whole, I recommend that in relation to the erection of the front gate and boundary wall, the appeal is dismissed. However, I recommend that in relation to the alteration of the front driveway, the appeal is allowed.

Max Webb

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

19. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and, on that basis, a split decision is made as set out in the formal decision above.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR