



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 10 August 2021

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/B9506/D/21/3269190

Field House, Arnewood Bridge Road, Sway SO41 6DA

- 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 Ms C Sellars against the decision of New Forest National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 20/00588, dated 16 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is 2 metre high close boarded front boundary fence.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a 2 metre high close boarded front boundary fence at Field House, Arnewood Bridge Road, Sway SO41 6DA, in accordance with the terms of application, Ref 20/00588, dated 16 August 2020 and the plans submitted with it.

Procedural Matters

2. It was noted during my site visit that the fence has already been erected and is consistent with the submitted drawings. Therefore, I have determined the appeal on the basis that the appellant is seeking permission for what is now in place.
3. I have taken the description of development in the heading and my decision above from the Council's refusal notice which describes the development more concisely than the application form, while removing superfluous information.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed fence on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises Field House, a detached dwelling facing Arnewood Bridge Road on the outskirts of the village of Sway. This section of Arnewood Bridge Road is located outside of the main built-up part of the settlement. The road is lined either side by a dense covering of hedges and tall trees, yet this verdant boundary is intermittently broken by residential driveways that allow glimpsed views of dwellings and property forecourts. There are also lengths of existing close boarded boundary fencing running alongside the roadside vegetation, which when combined with the presence of existing residential dwellings, give the immediate area a semi-rural character.
6. The proposal comprises two sections of wooden closed boarded fencing set back a short distance from the highway edge. These have a length of around 15m and 25m respectively and are positioned either side of the vehicular access to Field House.

7. A short section of roadside verge consisting of thick grass partially screens the lower portion of the fence, while boundary trees positioned along the appeal property's frontage and set immediately behind the fence rise noticeably above it. The presence of those existing vegetation features has the effect of softening the appearance of the fence, while its natural wood finish does not appear stark or overtly prominent in the context of the surrounding vegetation.
8. I noted during my site visit that fencing of similar height and appearance has been erected along the roadside frontage of Claywood House on the opposite side of the road. This is a much longer boundary enclosure, although it is similarly integrated into the immediate landscape, while the adjacent roadside trees that rise above it have the effect of muting its appearance when viewed from the road. Whilst there are more trees in front of that neighbouring fence, it has a short set back from the road making it no less noticeable along this stretch of Armwood Bridge Road than the appeal fence. Therefore, in the context of the immediate area the proposal is consistent with prevailing boundary features in terms of appearance and location, while also assimilating sympathetically with existing roadside vegetation.
9. The Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)¹ advises that vegetation should be allowed to grow through boundary enclosures, while lower fence heights of around a metre should be achieved. Although the proposed fence will not strictly comply with this advice, the SPD is only a guide, and my assessment of the proposal on the ground, was that it is visually acceptable in its surroundings.
10. In view of the above, the proposed fence will not harm the character and appearance of the area and therefore accords with Policies DP2 and SP17 of the New Forest National Park Local Plan 2016-2036, adopted August 2019. These require, amongst other things, that proposals are sympathetic in terms of scale, appearance, form, siting and layout, respect the natural, built and historic environment and that materials and boundary treatments are appropriate to the site and its setting. The development also complies with paragraphs 130 and 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which require proposals to be sympathetic to local character and history and that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks.
11. There is no requirement for a plans condition as I was satisfied that the submitted plans matched the fence I saw during my site visit, while a commencement of development condition is not necessary given that the appeal development has already been erected.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

RE Jones

INSPECTOR

¹ New Forest National Park Local Development Framework, Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document, December 2011 (SPD)