
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2021

by R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/21/3275604

7 Georges Wood Road, Brookmans Park, AL9 7BY

- 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 Kevin Canning against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2021/0597/HOUSE, dated 23 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of railings and electric gates.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Georges Wood Road is characterised by detached dwellings with large front gardens and parking areas that are set back from the road, behind wide grass verges. Some properties have open frontages and others are enclosed. Hedges and other forms of planting are common between properties as well as along some plot frontages, in between vehicular access points and gates. Several properties have low level walls. Black wrought iron gates exist at varying heights, which correspond to the height of the adjacent hedges or low walls, as demonstrated by the photographs submitted with the appeal. Railings, other than gates, are quite uncommon in the area. Although the apartment block on the corner of the street has some railings, these are set back from the road with their appearance softened by high quality and well maintained landscaping on either side of them.
4. At the time of my visit the whole frontage of the appeal site was covered with a hardcore surface. The only form of boundary treatment and landscaping was a hedge along the boundary between Nos. 7 and 9 Georges Wood Road, which appears to belong to No.9. The absence of any landscaping to the front of the appeal site, to soften this expanse of hardstanding, harmfully detracts from the generally green and leafy appearance of the area.
5. The proposed railings and gates would do nothing to soften or screen the large open area of hardstanding and car parking. Although they would, retain views of the existing hedge adjacent to 9 Georges Wood Road and would not restrict

its growth, if this hedge is outside of the appellant's ownership and control, it cannot be relied upon to permanently reduce the prominence and visibility of the proposed railings.

6. Given the size of the front garden and the set back of the proposed gates and railings from the road, this form of enclosure could potentially be appropriate, subject to suitable siting, scale and substantial landscaping to mitigate its visual impact. Unfortunately the only form of soft landscaping shown on the submitted drawings is a very small area of grass verge in front of the railings. At the time of my visit even this area was covered by hardcore. I have considered whether my concerns could be overcome by imposing landscaping conditions, but due to other concerns with the submitted drawings, I have concluded this would not be appropriate.
7. The submitted drawings fail to show how the existing boundary hedge adjacent to No.9 would be retained and protected or to show how the railings adjacent to the boundary with No. 5 and the front of the site would be adequately screened by an appropriate form of landscaping. The drawings do not identify which side boundary the proposed dwarf retaining wall would be located on (it is assumed this would be on the boundary of No. 5, which is visibly higher than the appeal site). The plans indicate that each access gate is a single large sliding electric gate. It is however unclear how these sliding gates would operate given the differing site levels shown on the drawings, which also appear inaccurate. The large sliding gates, given their positions close to either side boundary, would both have to slide into the centre of the site, parallel to the front boundary railings that are set forward. This arrangement would restrict the type and amount of landscaping that could be accommodated in the central area of the front garden, between the gates, driveway and parking areas.
8. In the absence of accurate detailed drawings, levels and landscaping proposals the height and position of the railings and gates would harmfully detract from the pleasant, soft-landscaped character and appearance of the area. Consequently the development would be contrary to policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the council's Supplementary Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework, which collectively seek to ensure that new development is of high quality design that relates well to the character and context of its surroundings.

Other Matters

9. Although I understand the appellant's desire to improve the security of his property, I am not persuaded by the evidence before me that there is no other, less visually harmful, way of achieving this aim. I have therefore given this matter very limited weight, which does not override the harm that would be caused to the street scene.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachael Bartlett

INSPECTOR