
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 April 2022

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28TH April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N1920/D/22/3291317

41 Watford Road, Radlett, Hertfordshire, WD7 8LG

- 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 Dr A De Vos against the decision of Hertsmere Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/1834/HSE, dated 11 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is the installation of electric entrance gates with piers and railings to front boundary.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed treatment of the front boundary of the property on the character and appearance of the area along Watford Road.

Reasons

3. No 41 is a detached house situated on the southern side of Watford Road, a little over 1km from the centre of Radlett. It appears as being set a little further forward in its plot than the neighbouring houses. The western half of the front boundary is currently open, to provide access to the parking area in the front garden, while the eastern half comprises a low hedge and low wall.
4. The proposed new boundary treatment would comprise a long, electrically-operated sliding gate, with railings 1.8m high and brick piers to each side, across the western part of the boundary. On the eastern side of the boundary, the existing hedge and low wall would be removed, and replaced with 1.8m high railings. A low landscaped strip is shown to the front of these railings. From the Entrance Gate & Wall Railings Plan, it would appear that the gate itself would be set around 5m back from the edge of the highway.
5. Policy SADM30 of the Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADM) indicates that development should make a positive contribution to the built environment; recognise and complement the particular local character of the area in which it is located; and result in a high quality design. In order to achieve a high quality design, a development must respect, enhance or improve the visual amenity of the area.

6. Policy HD3 of the Radlett Plan indicates that development proposals should reflect and respond positively to local townscape, and respect local character. Gates and entrances should respect local character and not dominate their surroundings, while highway boundary treatments should reflect the prevailing character of boundaries, with special attention to retaining open character and green hedges, and avoiding boundaries that appear unduly prominent.
7. Section 7.k of Part E of the Hertsmere Planning and Design Guide (PDG) indicates that where planning permission is granted for high security gates because of the particular circumstances of an individual property, they should be set back from the street, modest in scale, well screened, capable of closing quietly and should not dominate the street scene in any way. The same principles will apply to piers, columns and walls adjoining the gates.
8. The Council contends that the proposed railings, gates and piers, by virtue of their excessive height, would unduly dominate the property and its surroundings and would not retain the open character of the site to the detriment of the character and appearance of the existing property and wider street scene.
9. The appellant contends that the appeal proposal would provide visual contrast and interest, thereby making a positive contribution to the local built environment, and that this would complement the urban grain and form of the locality. Moreover, it is contended that the distinctiveness of the area is defined by the fluctuating variety of built forms and changing boundary treatments, and that the appeal proposal would accord with, and visually compliment, these distinctive elements. Finally, the appellant contends that the proposed front boundary treatment is required for security reasons.
10. The area around the appeal site is characterised by detached houses of varying design, and with a range of front boundary treatments. The appellant has made mention of the boundary treatments apparent in some of the nearby houses. I note the variety in evidence, but the majority of examples include low walls with railings or hedges above or behind. These tend to be lower in height overall, and/or softer in appearance, than the proposed gates and boundary at the appeal property. Most have gates that are set back some distance from the carriageway, or where the whole of the front boundary is itself set further back than that of the appeal property, as is the case with properties to the west of No 41.
11. I find that the overall height of the gates, piers and railings across the whole of the frontage would appear as a dominant feature, accentuated by the proximity of the gates and boundary to the carriageway. The gate plan indicates that there would be low planting outside of the boundary railings, but from the site plan it would appear that there would be very little room outside of the railings, but still within the property, for any meaningful planting. In the light of this, the gate and railings would be a prominent, and effectively unbroken, visual feature in the vicinity. This would be uncharacteristic and, whilst the use of railings would maintain some degree of openness, the dominance of its appearance and lack of variation would be harmful in the context of the area.
12. I acknowledge the personal circumstances of the appellant's family, and sympathise with the issues raised in the appeal statement. However, the proposal, as submitted, is unlikely to be the only solution to this situation, and I find that, in these circumstances, the harm done to the character and

appearance of the area would outweigh any personal benefits that would accrue to the appellant from the scheme as proposed.

Other Matter

13. The Highway Authority has indicated that the submitted layout plan shows the position of the gates as being set back from the carriageway, and that this should be a minimum of 5.5m distance from the carriageway to allow vehicles to wait clear of the road while the gates are opened or closed. From the submitted plans, it would appear that the gate would be only 5 metres from the carriageway. Moreover, owing to the proximity of the front of the house to the boundary, it would appear that it might be difficult to move the gates any further back into the property. Whilst this would not in itself be reason to dismiss this appeal, it does add to my concerns about the potential dominance of the gate, piers and boundary railings in the context of the appearance of the property in the street scene.

Conclusion

14. I find that the proposed gate, piers and railings at the appeal property, by virtue of their scale, design and dominant appearance, would be harmful to the character and appearance of this part of Watford Road. They would conflict with Policy SADM30 of the SADM, Policy HD3 of the Radlett Plan, and elements of Section 7.k of Part E of the PDG. Accordingly, I dismiss this appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR