



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 May 2022

by Jonathan Manning BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/21/3288113

Eastwood Place, Eversley, Hampshire, RG27 0FQ

- 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 Nick Holman of Chaney's Chartered Surveyors against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00904/FUL, dated 25 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is for placement of electric entrance gates.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. Having regard to the evidence before me, the main issues of the appeal are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and whether the proposal would lead to a reduction in community cohesion and reduce people's quality of life through an increased fear of crime.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is accessed off St Neots Road and relates to the entrance of a small private cul-de-sac, that accommodates a residential development of four two-storey detached dwellings. The existing entrance is open and is bordered by railings and established trees and shrubbery. The proposal seeks to place electric gates on the access road and on the existing posts associated with the boundary railings. The proposed gates would measure 5.02 metres in width and 2.39 metres in height and would match the existing black metal railings.
4. Whilst I observed that there are examples of other similar entrance gates close to the appeal site, it was clear from the street scene that they serve single dwellings. It was evident from my visit that there were no other examples of entrance gates across entrance roads serving groups of dwellings. For this reason, I consider that the proposal would appear at odds with the existing character and appearance of the street scene.

5. The scheme therefore runs contrary to Policy NBE9 of the adopted Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites), 2020 (the LP), which seeks to achieve high quality design that positively contributes to the overall appearance of the local area.

Community cohesion

6. The LP at Policy NBE9 g) states that development should be supported where the design of external spaces (such as highways, parking areas, gardens and areas of open space) should be designed to reduce the opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour and facilitate the safe use of these areas by future residents, service providers or visitors, according to their intended function. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework, 2021 (the NPPF) at Paragraph 92 sets out that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion.
7. The proposed electric gates would create a gated off community that would not achieve a healthy and inclusive design and would adversely affect community cohesion. I also agree with the Council that it would create an impression that there is a fear of crime in the area that could undermine the quality of life of those that live in proximity.
8. The appellant has set out that there was an aggressive burglary in the area. Whilst this is acknowledged, the appellant accepts that this was a rare event and there is no evidence before me to suggest there is high risk of crime in the area that would justify the scheme.
9. Consequently, the proposal also runs contrary to Policy NBE9 of the LP in this regard. Further, it also conflicts with Paragraph 92 of the NPPF.

Other Matters

10. I note the appellant's concerns about vehicles seeking to access the school taking the wrong turning and entering the appeal site. Based on my observations and the proximity of the appeal site to the school entrance, I accept that this is likely to occur. Whilst I appreciate this is likely to result in some inconvenience to the occupants of Eastwood Place, I am not of the view that this is likely to result in any meaningful highway or pedestrian safety concerns, particularly given it was clear to me when turning off of St Neots Road into Eastwood Place that it is a small residential road. There is also a reasonable level of visibility along the access road and in both directions along St Neots Road.
11. The concern about satellite navigation systems directing traffic to the school via Eastwood Place is noted, however, as acknowledged by the appellant this will likely be as a result of such systems not being updated. In time and once such systems are updated, this matter should resolve itself.

12. I consider that occasions of vehicles accidentally accessing Eastwood Place are likely to be fairly limited and therefore any impact on the structure of the privately maintained road would be minimal. I did not observe any obvious evidence of damaged verges in and around the appeal site entrance from vehicles turning.
13. The appellant has pointed out that there have been two incidents of motorbike/moped drivers doing speed trials up & down St Neots Road late in the evening and using Eastwood Place as a gathering or marshalling rally point. Given the gates would be located some 10 metres back from the public highway, it seems to me that this could still occur even with the proposed gates in place.
14. Given all of the above, I therefore do not consider such matters individually or in combination outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, the proposal runs contrary to the development plan when considered as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan should be taken. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR