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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 February 2022

**by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/22/3307635**

**The School House, 3 West Street, Welford, Northants NN6 6HU**

- 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 Anthony Stevens against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
  - The application Ref WND/2022/0518, dated 7 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2022.
  - The development proposed is replacement of boundary fence.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the banner heading above has been taken from the Council's decision notice as it is a far more succinct description than provided on the planning application form.

### Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the replacement boundary fence on the character and appearance of the Welford Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

### Reasons

4. The appeal property is a two-storey brick built dwelling under a slate roof that is situated at the rear of its plot with amenity space and a gravel driveway to the front. The property is Grade II listed and is located centrally within the Welford Conservation Area (the CA).
5. The front boundary of the appeal property is to West Street, angled away from the road to allow good visibility from the entrance of the Welford, Sibbertoft and Sulby Endowed School which adjoins its north-east boundary. The proposal is for a timber close boarded fence, around 1.8 in height, along the front fence line and continuing to the side of the appeal property.
6. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) gives a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a CA. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) further advises

that when considering the impact of development on the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to their conservation.

7. The *Welford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* (2020) describes the significance of the CA as derived in part from its historic street pattern, high number of nationally designated heritage assets and strong, local vernacular. It further describes tall, enclosing boundary walls as an important feature of the CA and I observed on my site visit that such walls on the east side of this part of West Street, notably the wall of Manor House opposite, make an important and positive contribution. The west side, however, differs in character and whilst there are properties who have their gable-ends to West Street, which provide enclosure, the pattern of development is more open and where set back from the road, properties have low boundary walls, fences and/or hedges. Whilst I appreciate that the close boarded fence would only be around 0.4m higher than the fence it replaces, it nonetheless encloses the site on its frontage in a way that is incongruous with this pattern of development, and causes harm to the character and appearance of the CA.
8. The boundary fence is in the setting of the appeal property itself and No.1 West Street (No.1) which is Grade II listed and sited at right angles to the appeal property, with its gable to West Street. The building line of No.1 is set forward such that when travelling south to north the boundary fence is not visible. However, because of its height, it is unduly prominent in views of both listed properties from the north. The fence partially obscures the north (and most prominent) elevation of No.1 harming the way the significance of this asset, a dated example of brick construction, is appreciated. I find that harm to be less than substantial.
9. The Council have no objection to the boundary fence where it adjoins the school entrance and car park on the north-east boundary and I agree that this part of the proposal does not cause the harm I have identified above in respect of the front boundary.
10. The guidance at paragraph 202 of the Framework is that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits. Whilst I note the safety and security benefit of providing a higher fence along the north-east boundary with the school, the front boundary does not share such public benefits. The provision of improved privacy during school drop off and pick up times would be a benefit, but only to the occupiers of the appeal property.
11. In the absence of any other public benefits, I conclude that the replacement fence would cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of nearby listed buildings. It would therefore conflict with Policies S10 and BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (2014) and Policy ENV7 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) for Daventry District 2011-2019 (2020) (LP2) which require development to conserve the built environment or designated heritage assets. It would further conflict with LP2 Policies RA2 and ENV7 and Policy W1 of the made Welford Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2029 (2017) which together seek to protect the character of a village and reinforce local distinctiveness.

## **Conclusions**

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

*R Jones*

INSPECTOR