



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2023

by L Hughes BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F4410/D/23/3322016

8 Auckland Road, Wheatley, Doncaster DN2 4AG

- 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 Mrs Dorri Vickers against the decision of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00187/FUL, dated 31 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 19 April 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of rear single storey extension, formation of roof terrace with balustrade above and increase in height of gate piers to approximately 2m.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development is retrospective, as the majority of the rear extension has been erected which appears to be as shown on the plans before me, and the front gate piers and gate are in position. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the streetscene, with particular regard to the preservation or enhancement of the Thorne Road Conservation Area; and
 - highway safety, with particular regard to visibility upon exiting the site.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site is a large semi-detached dwelling, in a relatively large plot including front and rear gardens and a driveway. Its frontage comprises an attractive period brick wall, with a gate for pedestrian front door access bounded by brick gate piers topped with coping stones. The driveway is bounded by similar but higher gate piers with a metalwork gate in between, being the subject of this appeal. Attached to the furthestmost driveway gate pier is a gate pier of the neighbouring property, of a more recent brick construction and lower in height. The street slopes slightly down across the frontage such that the furthestmost gate pier is taller than its counterpart.

5. The site lies within the Thorne Road Conservation Area (CA), and so I have a statutory duty under section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing its character or appearance. Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') (2021) also requires that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. The significance of the CA is as a planned suburban expansion of Doncaster's residential area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the relatively homogeneous architecture of most of its period buildings. Their architectural features are often elaborate, and brick front boundary walls with decorative copings are a key feature of the streetscenes in the CA.
6. The appeal site makes a positive contribution to the CA. It reflects the key features of the CA in its form, detailing, and front wall, as well as its cohesive nature in this regard with relation to its neighbours.
7. The Council has raised no issue with the single storey rear extension and its roof terrace and balustrade. This is on the basis that it is modest in size and appears subservient to the host dwelling, does not cause overdevelopment of the site, and thus is not detrimental to the CA. I agree with this conclusion, and find this element of the proposal to be acceptable.
8. However, the raised height of the front gate piers is particularly noticeable due to their juxtaposition against the lower conjoined gate pier, and the other gate piers on the property. This is pronounced due to the slope down across the properties. As such, they appear somewhat obtrusive within the streetscene. While the conjoined pier does not directly match in design and detailing, this difference is further heightened due to the height differential.
9. There are multiple examples along the street and those adjacent of varying heights and types of walls and gate piers, including some of a similar height to that at the appeal site. However, I have not noted any which have the same immediate relationship with the conjoined and adjacent gate piers as at the appeal site. It is this particular context which gives rise to their negative impact, and affects the significance of the CA.
10. The gate piers have incorporated their original capping stones, and used reclaimed brick which forms a positive match to the existing wall. The condition of the front wall and the presence of the trees also make a positive contribution to the appearance of the CA. However, repair works to the wall and the retention of the trees are not included in the description of the development, and so are outside the parameters of this appeal. The cumulative positive effect of these works does not outweigh the harm in this instance.
11. The development therefore causes less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the streetscene, with particular regard to the lack of preservation or enhancement of the Thorne Road CA. It conflicts with Policy 37 of the Doncaster Local Plan 2015-2035 (DLP) (2021), whereby proposals should not detract from the heritage significance of a CA by virtue of their nature, height, form, or scale. It also conflicts with the Framework Section 16 on conserving and enhancing the historic environment, and specifically paragraphs 199 and 202.

Highway safety

12. The Council identifies that the site's access point may require visibility splays of 2.0 x 2.0 metres, which should be kept clear of obstructions over 900mm in height. The plans do not identify any visibility splays, and therefore the application was refused based on a lack of information.
13. However, even if the gate piers were to be reduced back to their original height, the driveway exit would not meet this requirement. The site's frontage and side walls and the adjacent neighbouring gatepost are also higher than 900mm. The height increase of the gate piers therefore makes only a very marginal difference to highway safety in terms of visibility of pedestrians or wheelchair users. Being in column form they also do not fully block views of the street. The driveway's exit point is also similar in visibility terms to that of numerous other properties on the surrounding roads, and I have been provided with no evidence that there have been any nearby highway safety incidents.
14. Overall, the development therefore has not been demonstrated to have a harmful effect on highway safety, with particular regard to visibility upon exiting the site. It complies with the DLP Policy 13 and the Framework paragraph 111, which require development to not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Other Matters

15. The development provides an increased level of security for the dwelling's occupants, but a gate between the original height gate piers would also provide security. This is only a minor private benefit to which I give very limited weight.
16. I do not find that that the development would preclude the future change of occupation from that of a single family dwelling to that of shared rental accommodation. On the evidence presented to me this is therefore a neutral matter. It is not directly relevant to my assessment of external appearance and impact on highway safety, that the interior of the dwelling has been sympathetically renovated. This is only a private benefit with limited weight.
17. Although some other properties have undertaken alterations which have negatively impacted on the CA, this does not justify further harm.

Conclusion

18. I have found above that the proposal would cause harm to the character of the streetscene. With relation to the CA this would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 202 of the Framework identifies that less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. No public benefits of the scheme have been presented. I therefore give this harm considerable importance and weight.
19. In conclusion therefore, the scheme conflicts with the development plan as a whole. With no other material considerations indicating otherwise, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

L Hughes

INSPECTOR