
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 October 2023

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/D/23/3328490

42 St. Edmund Road, Weeting, Brandon, Norfolk, IP27 0QZ

- 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 Barry Joseph against the decision of Breckland Council.
 - The application Ref. 3PL/2023/0504/HOU, dated 21 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 23 June 2023.
 - The development is described as '2x fence that has been installed by Anglian Water to replace our 6ft Conifer Bushes'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The development was described as 'retention of frontage fencing (Retrospective)' on the Council's decision notice, but as I have not been provided with any confirmation that a revised description of development was agreed by the appellant I have used that given on the original application form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the fencing on the character and appearance of the street scene and the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is located in a residential area, and this part is characterised by mostly single-storey dwellings set behind front gardens. Some properties have completely open frontages, but where there are boundaries they generally take the form of low fencing or walls, with planting behind. There is the occasional property with more substantial front boundary hedging, and some with tall fencing or walls next to the footway. However, the latter tend to be on corner sites where the boundary treatment is necessary to enclose private amenity space.
5. The fencing the subject of this appeal is in place, and is a notable feature given its prominent position at this point of St. Edmund Road. It is understood that it was installed to replace tall conifer bushes that were removed to facilitate repair of a burst water pipe. Whilst I appreciate that the fencing sought to reinstate the privacy afforded by tall bushes, it has a stark and intrusive

appearance compared to the more open and low-key front boundaries which prevail in the street scene and wider area. It also appears somewhat incongruous alongside the low post and rail fencing on the southern side boundary of the driveway.

6. I am mindful that the appeal fencing is seen alongside gates, wall with fence inserts and hedging of similar height at 43 St. Edmund Road, but that is a corner property which would have no private space without a tall enclosure. Moreover, the boundary treatment to that property is the exception in the immediate street scene of more open front gardens.
7. The appellant has provided a number of photographs of other boundary treatments within the wider area, some of which appear more successfully integrated in the street scene than others. However, no details have been provided of any planning permissions granted for these enclosures, and as such the circumstances of their installation is not known. In any event, whether or not these required or received express planning permission, the prevailing and more characteristic form of front boundary treatment in the vicinity of the appeal site is much lower and softer than the installed fencing to which the appeal relates.
8. I note the appellant's view that the fencing has made the front of the property look neat and tidy, and better than before, but such an effect could be achieved in a less prominent and visually intrusive form. I am sympathetic to the aim to maintain privacy at the property, but again, this could be secured by other means.
9. I acknowledge that there has been no objection from local residents (and one letter of support), nor objection from the Parish Council or any other party. However, this is only one factor to be taken into account in assessing the visual impact of a development.
10. I therefore conclude that the fencing detracts from the more open character and appearance of front gardens which prevail in the street scene and wider area. This conflicts with Policy COM 01 of the Breckland Local Plan 2019 (LP), which amongst other criteria seeks high quality design which responds appropriately to and is completely integrated with the existing layout of open spaces and patterns of development, and which positively contributes to street frontages; and contrary to the requirement in LP Policy GEN 02 to promote high quality design which respects and is sensitive to the character of the surrounding area and makes a positive architectural and urban design contribution to its context and location, and to the public realm.
11. For the above reasons, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR