



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 November 2023

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12.12.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/23/3330671

9 Vine Lane, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4TD

- 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 Amanda Fisher against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2023/01076, dated 9 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of fence to front boundary.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The planning application was made retrospectively and at the time of my visit I saw that the fence had been erected and that its construction was complete.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the fence upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Vine Lane is an unadopted, unmetalled track which, together with Vine Way, runs in a loop linking at both ends to Jubilee Lane and within a wider residential area. The immediate area around the appeal site comprises an eclectic mix of dwellings and displays a distinct semi-rural feel, principally derived from the narrow width of the lane, the absence of pavements, and the tightly aligned, predominantly verdant enclosures to the properties' front boundaries. No 9 is a detached dwelling which occupies a corner plot where Vine Lane turns through almost 90 degrees. The close-boarded timber fence that has been erected follows the property's boundary line, according to the appellant, and measures on average just under 2m in height. It runs over 20m along the front boundary of the property with a recessed pair of ranch style entrance gates towards one end. At the opposite end it turns the corner for a short return length before following the boundary away from the lane and behind the corner wedge-shaped plot of No 7.
5. In terms of height and position, the fence is equivalent to many front boundaries along Vine Lane and the immediate surroundings. Nevertheless, I

found its solid form so tight to the lane, represented an overly harsh enclosure to the property's front boundary that was uncharacteristic and out of keeping with the area's otherwise dominant verdant qualities. I am not persuaded that an alternative colour treatment for the fence would mitigate its visual prominence or negative impact.

6. The appellant points to alternatives that could be erected as permitted development. However, a 1m high fence along the same alignment would be visually less imposing and less dominant than the fence which has been erected. A 2m high fence recessed behind the highway's frontage would be less intrusive, enabling a soft edge to the lane that, in my assessment, would be more in-keeping with the area's semi-rural character.
7. My attention has been drawn to some other examples of similar fence enclosures in the area, which I saw during my visit. I do not know the planning background to any of these other cases but in no instance did I detect any fence line that encased a property's entire frontage along the public domain. The examples that I saw facing the public domain around the intimate setting of Vine Lane were limited in length and appeared to serve an obvious purpose for providing security and privacy to rear garden settings. Moreover, they were only part of a more comprehensive boundary, usually giving way and merging with softer, more verdant treatments around the property's frontage. I found the overall impact of these other examples to be a reasonable balance between security/privacy for the occupiers and visual harmony within the wider area. Neither the context nor the visual impact of other examples in the vicinity of the appeal site are comparable to the fence in question.
8. I understand that the fence has not impacted sight lines or created any danger to users of the adjoining highway. I also understand that the appellant was unaware of the need to obtain planning permission for the works. However, neither of these factors, nor the letters of support that have been presented by some nearby residents, alter my view that the fence represents a visually prominent and intrusive feature that is out of keeping with and harmful to the character and appearance of the area. By failing to respect or respond positively to the local distinctiveness of the area, the development conflicts with Policy TD1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites February 2018 and Policy DM4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies March 2023, specifically criterion h) which requires boundary treatments to respond positively to the local context around and within the site. For the same reasons there would be conflict with Policy FNP1 of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2032.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given, I conclude that the fence is harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR