



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2023

by G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/23/3324859

7 Princes Road, Bromham, Bedford MK43 8QD

- 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 Harry Alston against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
- The application Ref 23/00303/S73A, dated 9 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 5 April 2023.
- The development proposed is erection of front driveway gate (aluminium, 1.8 metres tall, 4 metres wide) and walkway gate (aluminium, 1.8 metres tall, 1 metre wide), supported by four brick pillars (brick and render, approximately 2 metres tall, 0.5 metres wide each).

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The development proposed has been started with the pillars constructed, however, the development has not been completed and as such I have considered the development as proposed, whilst taking into consideration the pillars that have been built as per the plans.
3. I have taken the description of the development in the banner heading from the application form. However, in the interest of clarity I have removed the sections within it which addressed the purpose or merits of the case as they were not a description of the development.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are: the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the host property and the area; and the effect of the proposal upon highway safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. 7 Princes Road is located on the corner of a junction within a predominantly residential area. The houses are a mix of single storey and two storey buildings that are typically set back behind relatively deep driveways or gardens. The boundary treatments along the road are generally low-level and are a mix of shrubs, hedgerows and brick walls. There are timber fences that bound the pavement, but these are typically located along the flank boundary of gardens next to junctions. The relatively deep front driveways and gardens, alongside the low-level boundary treatment creates an openness in front of the dwellings where the front gardens are the dominant element in the street scene, and this

complements the low density of the estate. These features make a positive and distinctive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and the consistency in terms of the set back and scale of the boundary treatment maintains this.

6. The pillars that have been built are significantly taller than the other boundary treatment in the area as well as being very bulky. There are rendered properties in the area and as such, the render used does not appear out of character in the area. However, given the limited width of the front boundary, the scale of the pillars conflicts with the limited scale of the house and site and relates poorly to it. Whilst the house could be extended in the future, the appeal must be considered in relation to the current street scene. Even without the gates the significant scale of the pillars partly erodes the openness in front of the house and would not integrate well with the character of the area.
7. Where gates have been erected in the immediate area, they are generally made from wrought iron that allows views through them. The gates as shown on the plans would appear to be horizontal slatted aluminium gates which would block views towards the house and across the estate and this would enclose this corner plot. The design and scale of the proposed development would erode the openness in front of the dwelling. This would screen the front garden and driveway of the dwelling and would consequently become the dominant feature of the house and would harm the site's positive relationship with the surrounding area. The gates and pillars are sought to provide privacy and security and local and national policy does support schemes that seek to provide this. However, I am not satisfied that this could not be achieved with a more proportionate design, as has been achieved in front of other dwellings along Princes Road.
8. Therefore, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host property and the area and conflict with Policies 28s, 29 and 30 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (LP). These seek, amongst other matters, for development to have a positive relationship with the surrounding area, integrating well with and complementing the character of the area in which the development is located. The scheme would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as it seeks to ensure developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.

Highway Safety

9. The pillars are tall and bulky; however, they are built within the boundary of the dwelling. Given the modest width of the pavement vehicular users exiting the site would have ample time to view oncoming pedestrians and other traffic and assess the situation before potential conflicts would arise. This would also ensure that pedestrians passing the site would have time and space to see vehicles entering and exiting the site. The set back of the pillars also ensures that the cone of view for vehicular users approaching the junction is not significantly screened by them. Additionally, the width of the pedestrian gate is wide enough to allow safe passage without significantly hindering pedestrian movement.
10. A condition requiring the gates to open inwards would also ensure that the scheme would not result in vehicles being parked across the highway when entering the site or that the gates themselves would hinder free movement.

This would ensure the scheme would not significantly increase the chances for conflict between highway users and would not have a significant adverse impact on access to the public highway.

11. Overall, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety nor would the cumulative impacts on the road network be severe. Therefore, the proposed development would not harm highway safety and would accord with Policy 31 of the LP. This requires, amongst other matters, to ensure development proposals do not have any significant adverse impact on access to the public highway.

Other Matters

12. There are gates and pillars that are similar in scale to this scheme, however they are typically located in front of dwellings on other roads. These areas generally have a different character, are located on busier roads or the gates are in front of larger dwellings where the scale is better related. Whilst there is close boarded timber fencing along the flank garden boundary of dwellings on Princes Road these are located next to a junction, and the front driveway and garden is left open with low-level boundary treatment. This has preserved the openness in front of the houses which this scheme would fail to do.
13. Whilst the appellant has suggested that the scheme could be modified. This appeal addresses the scheme which was the subject of the recent application and considered by the council and publicised at the time.

Conclusion

14. Whilst the development would not harm highway safety, the design and scale of the pillars and gates would harm the character and appearance of the area. The development would consequently conflict with the development plan as a whole and the other material considerations would not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

G Sibley

INSPECTOR