



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by Philip Willmer BSc Dip Arch RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/24/3338943

20 St Ives Park, Ashley Heath, Dorset, BH24 2JY.

- 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 Miss Fiona Hooper against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref P/HOU/2023/04226, dated 24 July 2023, was refused by notice dated 24 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is for the retention of renewed fence.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application form describes the application as retention of renewed fence. It is clear from the evidence provided and my site visit that the fence has been erected onsite. I shall determine the appeal on this basis accordingly.

Main Issue

3. I consider the main issue to be the effect of the fence on character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property, 20 St Ines Park is a detached dwelling located in a large garden plot on the north side of the road. The area is characterised by similar properties in a suburban, yet mature verdant landscaped residential setting.
5. The appellant has erected a 15-meter-long x 1.8 metre high front boundary fence with an applied artificial hedge affixed to the fence. The fence has already been erected so I had the opportunity to see it in context. The remains of the former leylandii hedge can be seen above the fence.
6. The site is within the St Ives Park Special Character Area (SCA). I note by reference to the specific development criteria set out in the Council's Special Character Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance no.27 (Adopted October 2005) (SPG) that it states, amongst other things, *that existing hedging must not be replaced with fences or walls. However, where hedging is absent a combination of hedging and walls or fencing may be considered providing the hedging predominates and evergreen hedging species should be used.*

7. Although, green in colour with some texture it is clearly an artificial and not a living hedge. In appearance it is bland and synthetic and one that does not display any of the characteristics of a natural hedge. Furthermore, given its height and hard edge and uncharacteristic modern material it appears visually incongruous, incompatible, and out of keeping in the immediate street scene as well as the wider area.
8. I therefore conclude in respect of the main issue that for the reasons given the proposed fence causes significant harm to the street scene and thereby the wider area. To allow it to be retained would therefore be contrary to the objectives of Policy HE2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan-Part 1 Core Strategy 2014, the SPG the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) as they relate to, along with other things, the quality of development and the need to respect identified features and characteristics of an SCA.

Other Matters

9. I have noted that there are some differences, in terms of the appearance of frontage treatments between Ashley Drive and St. Ives Park. I also note that there are examples of a variety of the design of boundary treatments, including fences in St. Ives Park. Nevertheless, I have considered this appeal on its individual planning merits and its setting in the context of the street scene.
10. I appreciate, for the reasons given, the appellant's need for a protective barrier to street frontage of this property, and I am sympathetic to these reasons. However, in my judgement I consider that there are alternative solutions that would achieve this objective without causing the harm I have identified with the clearly artificial hedge that has been erected.

Conclusions

11. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the lack of any objection to the fence by the Parish Council or neighbours, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Philip Willmer

INSPECTOR