

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 July 2024

by N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1770/D/24/3340064

172 Reading Road South, Church Crookham, Hampshire, GU52 6AE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by G Phillips against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01774/HOU.
 - The development proposed is described as a replacement boundary wall with timber fence.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. This part of Reading Road South is defined by a broadly verdant character of trees and hedging. The green landscaping, which generally runs along the street facing boundaries of this part of Reading Road South, softens the frontages of this reasonably trafficked route.
4. This gives the streetscape a leafy distinctive appearance and this makes a positive contribution to the character of the area. While there are some examples of fences and walls within the local streetscape, these detract from the overriding green character of this part of Reading Road South.
5. The proposed development would introduce a new hard boundary treatment in a prominent location to both the front boundary facing Reading Road South and to part of the side boundary facing the private drive. The submitted drawings show that this proposed front facing fence would be taller than the existing wall.
6. I acknowledge that the planning policies before me do not indicate specific maximum or minimum boundary heights, therefore the impact of the proposed development is a matter of planning judgment. In addition, I am not aware of any adverse objections from neighbouring properties, the existing wall is part demolished, and the appellant intends to install an environmentally friendly, robust premium fence.

7. However, the introduction of a hard boundary treatment of greater height than previously sited would create an austere and urbanising effect in a sensitive and prominent location along this part of the Reading Road South. This would significantly erode the verdant character of the area and would not reflect the distinctive positive qualities of the locality.
8. I note the list of other fences and walls within the local area which has been provided by the appellant and I have visited these other examples. I do not have the planning history or details regarding these other boundary treatments and therefore it is difficult to understand how or if they obtained planning permission.
9. However, what I noted is some of these are not as tall or long as the proposed development and some others are set back behind vegetation or splayed in design. The ones which are more closely aligned to the proposed development are more limited in number and these erode the valuable verdant character of the area. For these reasons I am not convinced that the existence of harmful development elsewhere would be justification to introduce further harm to this verdant part of Reading Road South.
10. I appreciate that an appropriate boundary treatment would be desirable in the interests of reducing light and noise from the highway, privacy, and safety for children. However, it has not been robustly shown that a hard boundary means of enclosure to the dimensions as proposed would be the only way to achieve this. This, therefore, has limited bearing on my overall findings.
11. Consequently, the proposed development is unacceptable and would not sympathetically respond to the existing character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with the relevant provisions of Policy NBE9 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy and Sites) 2020 and Policy GEN1 of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 2020. These, amongst other things, require development proposals to be sensitive to their surroundings and positively contribute to the quality of the area.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has expressed concerns regarding the time taken to reach a decision by the Council during the application process. Whilst this must have caused the appellant some distress, this does not materially affect my consideration of the planning merits of the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

13. The proposal is contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no other material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Praine

INSPECTOR