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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 February 2025

by **Lewis Condé BSc, MSc, MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 April 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/24/3353407**

**The Manor House, 147 Ringwood Road, Longham, Dorset BH22 9AB**

- 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 Mrs Victoria Phillips, Martingales Ltd, against the decision of Dorset Council.
  - The application Ref is P/HOU/2024/02685.
  - The development proposed is erection of a fence.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. In respect of issues of pertinence to this appeal, there have been no fundamental changes to national policy.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
  - i) Whether the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt having regard to the Framework and any relevant development plan policies;
  - ii) The effect of the development on the openness of the Green Belt;
  - iii) The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area;
  - iv) The effect of the development on the setting of designated heritage assets; and
  - v) Whether any harm by reasons of inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposed development.

### Reasons

#### *Green Belt*

4. The appeal site is located within the Green Belt. The Framework identifies that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It goes on to state that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Framework further establishes that development in the

Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate, subject to a number of exceptions as set out in paragraph 154.

5. Paragraph 154 h) of the Framework is of relevance to the appeal scheme. It provides exceptions for some forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, this includes for engineering operations.
6. From the available evidence, the proposed fence would fall within the definition of an engineering operation. However, it would create a physical barrier, and due to its length and scale would have a harmful effect on the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt. It would therefore not comply with the exceptions outlined at paragraph 154 h) of the Framework.
7. Accordingly, the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt that causes harm to its openness, contrary to the aims of the Framework.

*Character and Appearance and Heritage Assets*

8. The appeal site lies in a prominent position alongside Ringwood Road (the A348). It consists of an area of grass verge open onto the road, beyond the grass verge the site is then largely bound by mature vegetation. There are several properties nearby, mainly residential dwellings, that are laid out in a rather loose knit pattern either side of the A348, beyond which are several expansive areas of open space/fields. The layout of buildings together with the wider rural setting, and the presence of significant mature vegetation, including grass verges, results in the area having a pleasant, verdant, semi-rural character.
9. The appeal site also lies within the setting of several listed buildings, namely, The Manor House<sup>1</sup> (Grade II), Home Farmhouse and Longham Farmhouse (nos. 72 and 76 Ringwood Road – both Grade II). From the evidence before me and my observations on site, the significance of each of the listed buildings lie in their age, architectural interests, as well as likely historic associations with the area. Despite some modern development having taken place within their immediate surroundings, the semi-rural character of the area and their verdant setting, also contributes to the appreciation and significance of the listed buildings.
10. The proposed close boarded fence would be substantial in length and positioned rather close to the roadside. It would thereby obscure much of the existing grass verge lining the road, somewhat eroding the verdant character of the streetscene. Furthermore, due to the proposed fence's overall scale and design it would appear as a highly urbanising and obtrusive feature. This would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area, with consequent harm to the setting of the listed buildings.
11. Although the proposed fence would match an existing close boarded fence at the appellant's property, from the information before me, that existing fence does not benefit from planning permission. Moreover, I do not consider it to be a feature that should be emulated further, across a substantial expanse of the streetscene.
12. There are also examples of other similar style fences nearby. Notwithstanding that I do not have details of whether each of those fences required or benefit from planning permission, they are not as considerable in length or as highly prominent

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<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as Longham House, 147 Ringwood Road

as the appeal proposal would be. As such, they do not provide suitable justification for the proposed development.

13. In the context of the Framework, I consider the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the designated heritage assets. No public benefits have though been presented that would outweigh the harm to the designated heritage assets.
14. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies HE1 and HE2 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Core Strategy (adopted 2014). Together, amongst other matters, these seek to promote development that is of a high quality and reflects its surroundings, including through protecting and enhancing the area's historic environment. Likewise, the proposal would also conflict with the aims of the Framework in respect of promoting well-designed development that conserves and enhances the historic environment.

#### *Other Considerations*

15. The appeal scheme may provide some security and privacy benefits to the appellant, but these do not amount to very special circumstances required to justify the appeal proposal.
16. Similarly, a lack of objection from the highway authority also does not amount to very special circumstances or overcome my above concerns.

#### **Green Belt Balance and Conclusion**

17. The proposed development is inappropriate development in the terms set out by the Framework and would result in a harmful loss of openness to the Green Belt. Whilst the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be relatively localised, the Framework requires that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt.
18. The proposed development would also result in harm to the character and appearance of the area, as well as less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets, which would not be outweighed by public benefits. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
19. The considerations presented by the appellant do not clearly outweigh the totality of the harm that I have identified. Consequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify planning permission do not exist. Furthermore, the proposed development is contrary to the adopted development plan and there are no other material considerations to indicate a decision other than in accordance with it.
20. For the reasons outlined above, the appeal is dismissed.

*Lewis Condé*

INSPECTOR