



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2025

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/25/3366902

300 Fir Tree Road, Epsom, KT17 3NN

- 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 Mr J Mogridge against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00586/HHOLD.
 - The development proposed is erection of a front boundary wall with sliding entrance gates and side boundary timber fence.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal insofar as it relates to the erection of a front boundary wall with sliding entrance gates. I allow the appeal insofar as it relates to the side boundary timber fence at 300 Fir Tree Road, Epsom, KT17 3NN, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00586/HHOLD and the plans submitted with it in so far as they are relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans in-so-far as they relate to the side boundary fence hereby permitted: Location Plan, 300FTR-100, 300FTR-101, 300FTR-102-A and 300FTR-103-A.

Preliminary matter

2. It is noted that during the processing of the applications revised drawings which reduced the height of the wall were submitted. The council decision is based on the revised drawings. For the avoidance of any doubt, I confirm that this decision is similarly based upon the amended drawings submitted on 28 April 2025.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area within Fir Tree Road.

Reasons

4. At the southern end of Fir Tree Road, close to the road junction, there are a number of tall fences and walls which front onto the pavement. Their urbanising

impact is partially offset by trees and/or mature hedges within the gardens immediately behind the walls/fence. Beyond the road junction with Runden Way the street scene is visually softer, with an abundance of mature hedges, shrubs and trees within the front gardens partially screen the dwellings and soften the appearance of the existing low walls and fences. Together with the wide street with grass verges, these feature collectively make a strong contribution to the verdant and spacious character and appearance of the street scene.

5. As pointed out by the appellant there are some taller walls and fences along this and other parts of Fir Tree Road. Their suburbanising impact on the street scene varies depending on their height and materials, coupled with the level and nature of any planting to the rear of them and within the associated front gardens. Overall, the existing tall front walls, fences and gates serve to demonstrate the hard urbanising impact they can have on the street scene. Rather than set a precedent they highlight the need to assess each proposal on its individual merits and in accordance with the prevailing planning policies. The appeal proposal has been assessed on this basis.
6. The appeal property occupies a prominent position within the street scene, opposite the junction with Chestnut Way. The majority of the appeal property's front garden is hard surfaced. It is enclosed to the front and one side by a light coloured stone wall which is comparatively visually soft due to its modest height and materials. Also, this wall is partially screened from the street scene by shrubs and hedging planted in the verge and along the edge of the adjacent public footpath. On the other side the property is a tall vertical close boarded fence.
7. Together with amongst other things policy DES1 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 (DMP) and policy CS4 of the Reigate and Banstead Core Strategy 2024 (CS), seek to ensure that new development is of a high quality design and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of its surroundings. New development should reflect, promote and reinforce local distinctiveness and create safe environments.
8. On its own the proposed wall would not look out of place within the street scene. However, due to their combined siting, height and palette of materials and finishes the proposed wall, brick piers, fence and gate would have a visually hard and urbanising impact on the street scene. The proposed horizontal slats and gate would emphasise the width of the boundary treatment and the proposed gate piers and grey coping pads would increase the uncharacteristic formal appearance and prominence of the proposed front boundary treatment.
9. The proposed drawings show three trees planted within the southerly corner of the front garden. In time they would soften the end section of the wall and fence, but would do little to offset the urbanising impact of the remainder of the wall, piers and gates. Whilst the appellant has stated their willingness to introduce soft planting, other than the three trees minimal soft planting is shown. In view of the harm the proposed front boundary treatment would cause to the character and appearance of the immediate and wider area I am not convinced that on its own planting would satisfactorily offset the harm. Accordingly, this is not something that could be satisfactorily addressed through the imposition of landscaping conditions.
10. For these reasons I find that the proposed front boundary treatment would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the immediate street scene

and surrounding area. In reaching this conclusion I have taken into account the security concerns raised by the appellant. In this instance the harm that would be caused would clearly outweigh the security benefits. I am also not convinced that proposed front boundary treatment is the only way to provide a reasonable level of security.

11. Conversely, although the proposed side boundary fence would be visually stark, tall side fences are not an uncommon feature in the immediate and wider area. Also, the proposed side fence would be partially screened by the mature planting along the edge of the footpath. For these reasons, on balance the proposed side fence would not be unduly prominent when viewed from the street scene. This is subject to the imposition of a condition relating to adherence to the submitted plans, which confirm that the proposed fence would match the existing fence.
12. I conclude on the main issue that the proposed front boundary treatment would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area within Fir Tree Road. Accordingly, it would conflict with DMP Policy DES1 and CS Policy CS4. Conversely, the proposed side fence would be satisfactorily assimilated in to the street scene and would not conflict with the above policies.

Conclusion

13. The proposed front and side boundary proposals are clearly severable, being both physically and functionally independent. Therefore having regard to the conclusion on the main issue and taking all other matters raised into consideration I propose to issue a split decision in this case.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR