
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 August 2025

by **L C Hughes BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 September 2025.

Appeal Ref: APP/C3430/W/25/3367687

The Cottage, Wolverhampton Road, Dunston, Stafford ST18 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 Mr P Thomas against the decision of South Staffordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00989/FUL.
 - The development proposed is improvement of existing means of enclosure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above, which is taken from the application form, it is clear from the plans, accompanying details, and my own observations that the development comprises a part replacement of existing boundary treatment and erection of new timber panel fencing and brick piers to front and side boundaries. The Council dealt with the proposal on this basis, and so shall I.
3. The appellant has not agreed to the change in description. However, I agree with the Council that the word 'improvement' is subjective, and the Council's description more accurately describes the proposal.
4. The boundary treatment that is the subject of this appeal has already been erected. This appeal therefore seeks retrospective permission for the development.
5. The low brick wall, metal railings and the piers on the north side of the appeal property are long standing existing features and therefore not included in the scope of development for which permission is sought.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

7. The appeal property comprises a detached family house. To the rear of the property is an equestrian centre in the ownership of the appellant. The appeal site is located within the open countryside, at the end of a short row of dwellings fronting the A449. Whilst the dwellings are not of a uniform size or design, and the

appeal property is set down from its neighbours, they are nevertheless viewed together as a row of dwellings within the countryside.

8. A fence has been erected at the next-door property to the appeal site. However, the front boundaries to the neighbouring dwellings comprise short walls with railings set between low brick piers. The low boundary heights and the railings allow for views of the properties and provide a level of openness which is a positive element of the street scene.
9. Mature trees and hedges line the opposite side of the road directly opposite the appeal site, and to the south of the appeal site lies open countryside, enclosed by mature vegetation along the boundary with the footpath which runs along the A449. The road is well lit, with streetlamps and signage and a speed camera opposite the appeal site. However, despite the presence of the highway and associated features, the area retains an informal rural character.
10. Submitted photographs show that the low brick wall and railings are longstanding features, along with the wall and brick piers to the northern side boundary. Previously the front boundary of the property comprised a timber fence behind the railings, albeit of a lower height than that proposed. Brick piers and fencing along the southern side boundary of the property have also been present at the appeal site for some time, although less tall than those proposed.
11. Policy OC1 of the South Staffordshire Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 (CS) states that the open countryside will be protected for its own sake, whereas the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes. However, the Framework is clear that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised.
12. Policy EQ11 of the CS highlights that development must respect local character and be consistent with the Village Design Guide Supplementary Planning document (SPD) or any subsequent revisions and be informed by any local design statements. The South Staffordshire Design Guide SPD (2018), although guidance rather than policy, is clear that boundaries should not be visually intrusive.
13. Whilst views into the countryside would be restricted by the appeal scheme due to the additional height of the boundary treatment, any loss would be marginal due to the existing built form present at the site. Moreover, most views through the site to the countryside would be fleeting, glimpsed when passing along the A449. As such, any limited loss of countryside views would not be significantly harmful.
14. The proposed fence, however, despite being of a hit and miss design, has a stark, solid appearance and its height and form harmfully contrasts with the more open frontages characteristic of the neighbouring dwellings. The piers at the southern boundary of the appeal property are not uncharacteristic features of the locality, but their height along with that of the panelling exacerbate the uncharacteristic sense of enclosure to the property and harmfully detract from the more natural rural surroundings.
15. The gates are less prominent and visually distracting than the piers and fence due to their set back from the main road. The use of timber is not in itself untypical of rural areas, and I do not consider that the cream colour of the timber and railings is significantly jarring. However, due to its height and form the proposed boundary

represents a harsh enclosure to the appeal property that is visually prominent and forms an obtrusive and incongruous feature that is at odds with the prevailing character.

16. The submitted photographs show that the appeal property has historically had a less open frontage than that of neighbouring dwellings. Nonetheless, the previous fence was not as high as that proposed, and as such it did not contrast as starkly with the neighbouring boundaries as the appeal scheme.
17. The submitted photographs also highlight that in recent years the property was partially screened from view by dense vegetation along its boundaries. However, the trees and greenery gave the site frontage a softer and more natural appearance than the proposed boundary, that did not detract from the rural character of the area.
18. The proposed boundary would be robust and of good quality. It would provide security and would also provide privacy for the occupiers of the appeal property, particularly as the dwelling is set down below the level of the street. However, whilst the appeal scheme has not altered the physical fabric of the landscape, it is visually insensitive from public vantage points and unacceptably harms the character and appearance of the area. This harm materially outweighs the benefits for the appellant that would result from this particular boundary treatment.
19. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore not conform with Policies OC1 and EQ11 of the CS which seek to ensure that the carrying out of engineering works or other operations have no material effect on the appearance and character of the open countryside and respect local character and distinctiveness, including that of the surrounding development and landscape.

Conclusion

20. The development would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole and material considerations do not indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
21. As a result, the appeal should be dismissed.

L C Hughes

INSPECTOR