



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 September 2025

by **M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/D/25/3371645

215 St Walburgas Road, Blackpool FY3 7EE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant [outline] planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Andrea Stewart against the decision of Blackpool Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/0193.
 - The development proposed is described as the 'widening of existing access, removal of part of existing front wall, rebuilding of existing gatepost and alterations to hardstanding.'
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal upon i) the character and appearance of the area and ii) highway safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached dwelling fronting St Walburgas Road. Although accepting that there are slight variations in house types at either end of the row of houses, the appeal site forms one of a number of pairs of semis of the same design, that share a consistent building line and repeated architectural features including 2-storey bay windows and projecting front facing gables. In conjunction with the small front gardens, driveways and low boundary walls, this provides a strong degree of uniformity to the street scene. The appeal site therefore contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area through its consistent appearance with neighbouring dwellings.
4. Whether or not there are no planning policies that would preclude the principle for alterations to a residential property, new development is required to comply with the development plan for the area. In this case, Policies DM17 and DM21 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (LP Part 2) 2023, seek to ensure development is of a high quality, responds to the characteristics of the local area including the pattern and arrangement of buildings and boundary treatments, and does not involve the hard surfacing of more than 50% of a garden.
5. The proposal seeks to remove a section of the front boundary wall and create a new area of porous tarmac for car parking within the front garden, as well as the removal of a section of the grass verge to form a wider crossover. The Council has not raised any concerns with the proportion of the front garden that would be hard surfaced and I have no reason to take a different view.

6. The driveway of the appeal site adjoins that belonging to No 213 St Walburgas Road by a gate pier and low boundary wall. The properties share a crossover from the edge of the carriageway over a narrow verge and pavement. The crossover forms a repeated feature within the street scene, given the regular pattern of the recurring house types and the consistent position of driveways.
7. Even though the appeal site does not comprise a listed building, nor is sited in a designated area such as a conservation area, all repeated house types have retained the original low boundary walls across their frontages, other than at the point of the narrow vehicular accesses. This means that low front boundary walls remain an important and consistent feature within the street scene, contributing to the uniformity described above.
8. In contrast, the loss of the wall and enclosure to the front garden along with the widened crossover when read in conjunction with the break provided by the driveway to No 213, would result in an uncharacteristically wide gap that would harm the uniformity of the street scene. It would also serve to unbalance the corresponding appearance of the attached property at No 217 St Walburgas Road. Although the imposition of a planning condition requiring additional landscaping would address the needs of Policy DM21 of the LP Part 2, such landscaping would not replicate the degree of enclosure and consistency with neighbouring properties that the front boundary wall provides.
9. I observed that although No 211 St Walburgas Road had a widened access point, it was only marginally so, roughly consistent with the width of a gatepost. It was not therefore particularly noticeable within the street scene.
10. For the above site-specific reasons, although the harm would be limited due to the scale of development and localised due to the lack of wider visibility, the proposal would nonetheless adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. Hence, it would conflict with Policies DM17 and DM21 of the LP Part 2 as set out above.

Highway Safety

11. The Council suggests that its Footways Crossings document requires turning space to be provided within the site, if situated on a classified road¹. However, I am mindful that this is guidance and it is necessary to consider the site-specific circumstances. In this case, a vehicular crossover and access to the appeal site already exists which the proposal seeks to amend.
12. St Walburgas Road has 2 lanes carrying traffic in both directions. However, on the north-bound side of the road, the inside lane is given over to on-street car parking in marked bays. This reduces the northbound section of road to one lane. A designated cycle lane exists between the car parking bays and the vehicular lane.
13. Although a snapshot in time, during my visit I observed that the road was well-trafficked. This chimes with the appellant's description of the road being 'busy.' On-street car parking was at capacity but vehicles were parked largely within the marked bays. These bays are set in from the edge of the vehicle crossovers so that even if occasional overhanging of vehicles were to occur, they would not unduly restrict the crossovers or prevent vehicular access to the residents' properties.
14. Currently, there is insufficient room for vehicles to turn around within the front garden. Although the road is relatively straight and flat in this location, visibility for

¹ As cited within paragraph 7.4.3 of the Council's officer report.

vehicles leaving the appeal site as well as adjoining properties is to some extent hindered by the presence of the frequent parked cars to either side of the vehicle crossovers. The verge here is not sufficiently deep enough to accommodate a vehicle off the road while a driver exits the appeal site. This results in a temporary blockage of the footway until the driver is able to make the manoeuvre safely. These circumstances would not change as a result of the proposal.

15. If vehicles reverse into the appeal site presently, they are required to pull alongside the cars parked on the street, partially blocking the cycleway and the single lane of traffic. Although this is a temporary situation, it nonetheless limits the free-flow of traffic along this well-used route.
16. The appellant suggests that the widened driveway and crossover would allow vehicles to pull into the side of the road so that drivers can wait safely without causing obstruction, before making the reversing manoeuvre into the appeal site. This may provide a minor benefit to traffic flow but it could be limited by the need for vehicles to partially swing into the road to make such a manoeuvre.
17. I am not satisfied that the proposal would significantly improve visibility from the appeal site given that this could continue to be affected by the sizes of vehicles that park in the marked bays on the road². Nonetheless, the proposal seeks only to widen an existing driveway and crossover, rather than create a new one. The appellant has confirmed that the proposal would not result in an increase in vehicles attending the property but would instead allow more room for safe access. Whilst I do not necessarily agree with all of the purported highway safety benefits of the scheme, I can see that the provision of a wider area for access would make manoeuvring in and out of the property easier for the appellant.
18. It seems to me however, that the main effect of the proposal would be the loss of one on-street car parking space arising from the extension of the crossover. On-street car parking was at capacity. I acknowledge that if a widened crossover was allowed, other properties within the street may make a similar request in future. However, neither the Council nor Highway Authority has provided compelling evidence to demonstrate that the loss of a single or multiple on-street car parking space(s) would be detrimental to highway safety in this location. Nor have I been provided with accident figures that demonstrate the existing accesses have contributed to collisions here.
19. There is no evidence before me that the residual cumulative impacts of the proposal on the road network would be severe. Neither has it been demonstrated that the proposal would result in an unacceptable effect on highway safety over and above the existing situation. I therefore find that the proposal would not have an unacceptable highway safety impact. It would comply with Policy DM41 of the LP Part 2 which requires amongst other things, a safe and appropriate connection to the road network. It would also accord with paragraphs 115 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other Matters

20. Even if I could accept that the front boundary wall could be removed under permitted development rights afforded to the host dwelling, it nonetheless forms part of the proposal before me which includes the widened crossover. The fallback position as described by the appellant would only involve the removal of the wall.

² As suggested in the appellant's 'comments on the review of the vehicle crossing policy' received by email 18 September 2025.

Thus, it would be less harmful than the proposal before me, such that I attach limited weight to it.

21. The Council's position with regard to biodiversity is unclear. Although it suggests that the loss of landscaping would result in an impact on biodiversity, it goes on to advise that no unacceptable biodiversity impacts are anticipated³. With no evidence to the contrary, it therefore follows that the proposal would not conflict with LP Part 2 Policy DM35.
22. I understand the appellant's desire for quick and ready accessibility to their home for all occupants. I must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which requires me to consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, such as disability, and people who do not share it. The concept of proportionality is key.
23. Having carefully considered the benefits of the scheme, I understand and sympathise with the need for additional space within the front garden to park a larger car and/or to enable doors to be opened fully. However, the removal of a large section of front wall would not be necessary to achieve these benefits, as these activities would take place within the front garden, not on the boundary. A smaller alteration to the wall as suggested by the Council could provide sufficient width for a large vehicle to access the dwelling.
24. Whether or not the proposal would enable the use of a 3-wheeled bike for exercise purposes, it seems to me that the opening up of the front boundary would increase the opportunity for ready access to the well-trafficked road. This would escalate the potential for harm to personal safety for an individual residing at the dwelling, particularly if there is a diminished understanding of road danger. Even if I could accept that the proposal would result in quicker vehicular access to the appeal site, I am not satisfied that the proposal would be conducive to providing a safe space for a person with a protected characteristic as described by the appellant⁴. I am also mindful that personal circumstances and ownership of the land can change, but the effect of the development would be permanent.
25. Whilst giving moderate weight to the appellant's needs and subsequent consideration under the above duty and act, dismissal of the scheme is a proportionate response to the well-established planning objectives of protecting the character and appearance of an area.

Conclusion

26. Whilst I have not found harm with regard to highway safety, this weighs neutrally in the planning balance. With regard to the character and appearance of the area, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR

³ As cited at paragraph 7.5.2 of the Council's officer report.

⁴ As set out in the appellant's additional statement contained within the email to the Planning Inspectorate dated 12 September 2025.