



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8th October 2025

by **Simon J Cater MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D1780/D/25/3371376

17 Vespasian Road, Southampton SO18 1AY

- 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 Rahim Owji against the decision of Southampton City Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00450/FUL.
 - The development is replacement of front boundary wall and gates up to 1.9m in height
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development provided on the application form is imprecise and lacks clarity. I have therefore adopted the wording from the Council's decision notice, omitting the term "retrospective" from the banner heading as this is not a description of development. As the development has already been carried out, the appeal is retrospective in nature. I have determined the appeal based on the submitted plans, which show a replacement front boundary wall with infill panels and gates.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the street scene and the surrounding area; and
 - Whether the development has an unacceptable impact on pedestrian safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal relates to a front boundary wall with infill panels and gates at No 17 Vespasian Road, a detached dwelling situated within a residential area of Southampton. The surrounding estate comprises a mix of detached and semi-detached properties of broadly similar architectural style and layout, contributing to a coherent and suburban character.
5. The area is characterised by a conventional suburban layout, with dwellings generally set back from the road behind open or modestly defined front gardens.

Along Vespasian Road, front boundaries are typically left open or marked by low-level treatments such as hedging, planting, or dwarf walls, which collectively contribute to a spacious and visually permeable street scene. While taller fences and walls are present in some locations, particularly on corner plots where side boundaries adjoin public footpaths or roads, these are not representative of the prevailing character along principal frontages.

6. The appeal development has been constructed along the full width of the front boundary, immediately adjacent to the public footpath, and is readily visible within the street scene. Its siting and scale render it a prominent feature to both pedestrians and passing road users.
7. The wall and gates introduce a more enclosed and visually assertive element along the frontage, which contrasts markedly with the prevailing openness of front gardens that defines the character of the area. Although the materials are domestic in nature, the overall effect alters the spatial character of the street. As a result, it is incongruous in this context.
8. The appellant has also submitted photographs said to show boundary treatments at No. 46 Vespasian Road. However, I have verified that the property shown is No. 61a Steuart Road, a corner plot with dual frontage. Other examples put forward, including Nos. 2 and 24 Vespasian Road, are also located on corner plots. Such locations typically feature greater enclosure, which is more common and contextually appropriate. In contrast, the appeal site occupies a mid-plot position along a principal frontage, where the prevailing character is defined by openness and visual permeability. Accordingly, the examples provided do not offer a compelling precedent.
9. Paragraph 3.11 of the Council's Residential Design Guide (2006) advises that front boundary treatments should be in keeping with other boundaries along the street and consistent with the predominant positive characteristics of the area. The use of dwarf walls is encouraged. The appeal scheme, by virtue of its height and solid construction, fails to reflect these principles and is therefore contrary to the guidance.
10. I therefore conclude that the development harms the character and appearance of the area. The development conflicts with Policies SDP1, SDP7 and SDP9 of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review (2015) and Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy (2015). Collectively these policies seek to ensure that development responds positively to its context, reinforces local character, and avoids adverse impacts on visual amenity.

Pedestrian Safety

11. The appeal development includes a solid front boundary wall and gates positioned immediately adjacent to the public footpath. Although the access point to the driveway remains in its original location, the increased enclosure and opacity of the boundary treatment materially alter visibility conditions for vehicles exiting the site.
12. The submitted drawings demonstrate visibility using a 2.0 metre set-back from the edge of the carriageway, corresponding to the full width of the footway. This is appropriate given the residential context of Vespasian Road.

13. However, the driveway layout does not provide sufficient space for vehicles to turn within the site and exit in forward gear. As a result, vehicles must reverse across the footway when leaving the site if they entered in forward gear, and reverse in from the carriageway when arriving to exit in forward gear. The act of reversing inherently limits the driver's ability to observe pedestrians approaching from either side, particularly where lateral views are restricted by the solid boundary treatment.
14. The proximity and opacity of the boundary wall restricts lateral visibility from within the site, especially during reversing manoeuvres. This is particularly relevant for vulnerable pedestrians, who may not be visible to drivers until they are directly in front of the access. No evidence before me identifies that such reversing movements, either into or out of the site, would not result in harm to pedestrian safety.
15. I find that the development fails to provide adequate visibility for vehicles entering and exiting the site and results in an unacceptable risk to pedestrian safety. The development therefore conflicts with Policy SDP1 of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review (2015), which requires that development does not unacceptably affect the health, safety, and amenity of the city and its citizens. It is also inconsistent with the principles of safe and inclusive design set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Other Matters

16. Past incidents of unauthorised access to the appeal site and exposure to public views are advanced by the appellant as justification for the increased height and enclosure of the boundary treatment. Security and privacy are material planning considerations, and boundary treatments can contribute to residential amenity. In this case, the wall may offer enhanced privacy for a habitable room and a greater sense of security for the occupiers. However, the appeal site occupies a mid-plot position along a principal frontage where visual openness and continuity are defining characteristics. The boundary treatment introduces a sense of enclosure and defensiveness that is at odds with the prevailing pattern of low-level and open boundaries. Any gains in privacy or amenity do not outweigh the wider harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Simon J Cater

INSPECTOR