



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2020

by Robert Hitchcock BSc DipCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M2325/D/20/3252286

15 Poplar Avenue, Bryning with Warton PR4 1BS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Steven Critchley against the decision of Fylde Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0804, dated 2 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1800mm high boundary fence adjacent to Olive Grove.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The description of the development on the planning application form included a cladded storage container. According to the Council, this development was subsequently removed from the planning application at the appellant's request. Consequently, this decision relates only to the development described in the banner heading above.
3. At the time of my site inspection, a fence and gate had been erected similar to that shown on the appeal plans. Some deviations were apparent between the development and the submitted plans. For the avoidance of doubt, this appeal is determined on the basis of the plans as submitted with the planning application.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the fence on the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

5. Poplar Avenue is located within an estate of mixed housing. Houses on the road are set behind front gardens, the majority of which are open or benefit from low walls or boundary landscaping. The predominant absence of formal high boundary fences and walls within the streetscape enhances the sense of space between the buildings and creates a positive open feel to the locality.
6. No15 Poplar Avenue occupies a corner plot at the junction with Olive Grove, a small residential cul-de-sac. The site is bordered by footways on two frontages and benefits from a greater width than the majority of plots in the locality, including 17 Poplar Avenue, which lies on the opposing corner of Olive Grove.

7. The submitted plans show that the fence consists of concrete posts and gravel boards supporting solid timber panels to a stated combined height of 1800mm. That part of the fence fronting on to Olive Grove is sited immediately to the back of the pavement to screen the side and rear garden areas. The plans show the part of the fence facing Poplar Avenue to be set just forward of the front gable of the dwelling.
8. The height of the fence contrasts sharply with the predominant character of open plots. Furthermore, the siting forward of the dwelling on to Poplar Avenue and continuous length along the side boundary would form a conspicuous scale of development in the locality.
9. Whilst I saw that the front garden boundary remains free from any formal means of enclosure and offers opportunity for enhanced landscape screening of the fence, this is not the case along the boundary with the cul-de-sac. Here, the fence forms a significant length of dead frontage on the entrance to the cul-de-sac and a highly visible hard edge to the site. The fence subsequently closes down the characteristic sense of openness along Poplar Avenue and on the entrance to the cul-de-sac.
10. In support of the appeal the Appellant refers me to a similar means of enclosure at No17, on the opposite corner. Although that fence is slightly shorter in length on account of a narrower side garden and its set back position some distance behind the front elevation of the dwelling, it also appears to contrast with the prevailing character of development in the locality. The combined effect of the fencing of the corner plots closes down views into the adjacent road and provides a poor-quality appearance at the entrance into Olive Grove. The absence of soft landscaping and open feel within the first part of the cul-de-sac results in a harsh and less inviting environment.
11. Furthermore, I observed that there are other types of fences in the locality, including those to other corner plots. However, these do not have the scale of the proposal and are very much in the minority. In any case, the existence of development elsewhere does not represent an appropriate reason to find in favour of a proposal that would cause harm; a proposal which I have considered on its own merits.
12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the scale and appearance of the fence represents a form of development that contrasts with the character and appearance of the locality. It therefore conflicts with Policy GD7 of the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 (2018) and Policy BWNE2 of the Bryning with Warton Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2032, and the National Planning Policy Framework as they seek to achieve inclusive, high quality design which respects local character and reinforces local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

13. In support of the appeal the appellant has drawn my attention to the fact that the fence provides additional security for off-road parking, is a mechanism to contain pets and assists social seclusion, having particular regard to the recent Covid-19 outbreak.
14. Whilst I have little doubt that the fence could facilitate the more secure use of the side garden area in those respects, there is little evidence before me to demonstrate that these could not be achieved through other mechanisms that

are more sympathetic to the character and appearance of the locality. Accordingly, I do not find those arguments compelling and do not outweigh the harm identified.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, the appeal should be dismissed.

R Hitchcock

INSPECTOR