

Officer Report

Case Reference: 25/01040/HOUS
Location: 19 Town House Road Littleborough Rochdale OL15 9BG
Proposal: Erection of new 1.55m high boundary fencing - retrospective
Recommendation: Refuse
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE

The application relates to no. 19 Town House Road, a two storey, end of terrace dwellinghouse which occupies a prominent corner plot at the junction of Town House Road and Park View. The boundary treatment to the front and side previously comprised a low level picket fence (0.75m) with hedging, shrubs and small trees behind.

PROPOSAL

Retrospective permission is sought for the installation of a 1.55m tall close board timber fence following the removal of the existing 0.75m picket fence and established vegetation.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional Guidance

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) 2024:

JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Local Guidance

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

P3 Improving Design of New Development

DM1 General Development Requirements

T2 Improving Accessibility

Appendix 5 Schedule of Parking Standards

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Supplementary Planning Document 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (SPD) 2016.

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: N/A

Press Notice: N/A

Neighbour notification letters: 02.06.2026

ASSESSMENT

Design, character and appearance

When read collectively, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Policies P3 and DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the Council's Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD seek to secure development of a high standard of design that responds positively to local character and contributes to visual amenity. Development should function well and add to the overall quality of an area through appropriate scale, height, massing, appearance, landscaping and layout. The NPPF further states that significant weight should be given to good design and that development which is not well-designed should be refused.

The application seeks retrospective permission for a 1.55m high close-boarded timber fence along the front and side boundaries of the dwelling. The submitted plans demonstrate that the fence has replaced a lower, approximately 0.75m high, visually permeable timber boundary treatment together with areas of soft landscaping.

The property occupies a prominent corner plot and, as such, the boundary treatment is highly visible from the surrounding highway network. Whilst it is acknowledged that the fence provides increased privacy and security for the occupiers of the dwelling, these benefits must be balanced against its visual impact on the character and appearance of the area.

In this regard, the fence introduces a substantial and continuous form of enclosure that appears significantly more dominant than the previous boundary treatment. The replacement of a low-level, open boundary and associated soft landscaping with a 1.55m high close-boarded fence has resulted in a more defensive and visually intrusive feature that reduces openness and erodes the softer landscaped appearance previously present on the site. The development consequently fails to make a positive contribution to the street scene.

The applicant has referred to examples of taller boundary treatments within the wider locality. However, there is no evidence that such structures benefit from planning permission and, in any event, the existence of other poor-quality or unauthorised development does not justify further harmful development nor establish an acceptable design precedent. Each proposal must be assessed on its own merits against adopted planning policy.

It is also noted that all representations received in relation to the application are supportive of the proposal and no objections have been received from neighbouring residents. Whilst these comments are duly noted, the assessment of design quality is ultimately a matter of planning judgement against the Development Plan and other material considerations.

Overall, it is considered that the height, form and appearance of the fence, together with the loss of the previously open and landscaped frontage, results in a visually prominent and incongruous feature that fails to respond positively to the character of this corner plot and the surrounding area. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, Policies DM1 and P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, the Council's Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD, the National Design Guide and the design objectives of the NPPF.

Residential amenity

Policy DM1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy requires development proposals to demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. This approach is reflected within Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the NPPF.

The fence is located within the curtilage of the application property and does not give rise to unacceptable overshadowing, overbearing impacts, loss of outlook or loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers. No objections have been received from neighbouring residents and there is no evidence to suggest that the fence has adversely affected residential living conditions.

Accordingly, no objections are raised in respect of residential amenity.

Highway safety

The Local Highways Authority has assessed the proposal and raised no objection.

The principal consideration relates to visibility at the junction of Town House Road and Park View. The Local Highways Authority has confirmed that the available visibility splay measures 2.4 metres by in excess of 80 metres, significantly exceeding the 25 metres required for a road subject to a 20mph speed limit. The Authority therefore concluded that the fence would not prejudice highway safety and raised no highways concerns regarding the application.

Consequently, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy T2 of the Rochdale Core Strategy in this regard.

Conclusion

The comments of residents have been taken into account, however, for the reasons set out above, it is considered that the identified harm to the character and appearance of the area outweighs the benefits of the development.

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent to surrounding properties and representations were received in support of the application.

The comments received raise the following points:

- The fence is considered to be an attractive, well-maintained and high-quality boundary treatment which has improved the appearance of the property and surrounding area;
- The removal of previous bushes and vegetation is considered to have improved the usability of the adjacent footway, including for those with mobility difficulties;
- The fence provides increased privacy, security and safety for the occupiers of the property;
- The fence is not considered to be visually harmful, unsightly or out of character with the area;
- There are examples of higher fences, walls and hedges within the surrounding locality;
- No concerns are raised regarding visibility at the junction of Town House Road and Park View and it is considered that the fence does not prejudice highway safety;
- The works are considered to have improved the appearance and value of the property and surrounding area.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways (Summary): No objections.

PROCEDURAL STATEMENT

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. No significant problems have arisen during the consideration of this application, and the application has been determined in a timely manner, in accordance with the policies with the Development Plan.

Human Rights and Public Sector Equality Duty

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report. In particular, Article 6 (1), of the European Convention on Human Rights in relation civil rights and a fair hearing; Article 8 of the ECHR in relation to the right to respect for private and family life and Article 1 Protocol 1 of the ECHR in relation to the protection of property have all been taken into account.

In addition, the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination in respect of certain protected characteristics namely: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or beliefs and sex and sexual orientation. It places the Local Planning Authority under a legal duty to have due regard to the advancement of equality in the exercise of its powers including planning powers. Officers have taken this into account in the assessment of the application. In particular due regard has been afforded to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers are satisfied that the application material and Officers' assessment has taken into account these issues.

The application has been considered in accordance with the Rochdale Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy – Embracing All Voices (2024-2026), which seeks to promote a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion that benefit the community as a whole.

Recommendation: Refuse

Refusal(s) (1)

- 1 By virtue of its siting, height, scale, design and appearance, together with the replacement of a low-level, visually permeable boundary treatment and associated soft landscaping, the installed boundary fence constitutes an unsympathetic and visually prominent form of development which inflicts undue harm on the character and appearance of the application property and the immediate street scene. The development fails to respond positively to its context, does not make a positive contribution to local character and would not be well-designed. The proposal therefore represents an unsatisfactory standard of design and appearance, contrary to Policies DM1 and P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development', the National Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1 The Local Planning Authority offered solutions to the applicant in order to make the development acceptable. The applicant was however unwilling to amend the plans. Without these amendments the development would not improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and therefore does not comprise sustainable development.