

RATIONALE:

My wife and I purchased this house in August 2007. It required a great deal of modernization, and we invested considerably in renovating both the interior and exterior of the property. Unfortunately, security at the property is an issue as it is easily accessible from both the Highmoor Road and Woodcote Road aspects, as there is no fence enclosing the property, no gate to the side of the property, and only a small pedestrian gate to the front. Despite fitting a Burglar Alarm shortly after moving in, we have been burgled 3 times, the most recent last year. This burglary was the most upsetting - at approximately 1.30 on a Thursday afternoon, our front door was kicked/hit with a heavy object until the lower panel was destroyed and the burglars able to gain entry. Despite the Alarm sounding, they ran into our bedroom, opening drawers, and stole jewellery of considerable monetary and inestimable sentimental value. For some time we considered selling the house and moving, but we have invested a lot of money and love into it and do not want to give in and be driven out by criminals. That said, my wife still feels uncomfortable in our home, especially when I am away travelling, which is quite often. We have spoken to several security companies, and upgraded our alarm and installed CCTV, but the advice we have received is that to really improve our security we need to install fences and gates to prevent unwanted access to the property.

Following this advice, we wish to install a fence to both the Woodcote Road and Highmoor Road aspects of the property, with gates to both the front and side entrance. As part of our renovation of the property, we used Creative Landscapes to design and landscape the garden, and continue to use them to maintain the garden. They are an extremely professional company and have won Gold medals at the Chelsea Flower Show. We have approached them to help us with the design of the fence and gates, with a view to using them to do the subsequent work, in order to ensure that the aesthetics of our house and the area are not compromised, and to protect as much as possible the existing planting.

Having considered the possible options, we wish to install ornamental railings with matching gates. The railing fencing and gates would be made from galvanized steel with a black polyester powder coating, giving the appearance of traditional iron railings. Document 7 shows the design we have chosen. This type of fencing and gates were typical of the Victorian era when this house was built. There is evidence throughout the small wall at the front of the property that in the past this type of fencing was fitted to the small perimeter wall at the front of our house (see Doc 2). Many houses in the vicinity, including one directly opposite (Doc 3), have railing fencing, so it would match the character of the area and would not dominate the streetscape the way some close board fences do.

There are no Tree Preservation Orders in force at our property, and no trees will be removed during the proposed development. We will need to move some plants to accommodate the fence, but we hope to reuse these in the garden where possible (see Doc 4 detailing an Arboricultural Consultant's view on the impact of the railings and gates on the existing trees and shrubs).

As can be seen from the drawing in Doc 5, the fence falls broadly into 3 areas:

1. From the driveway along the side of the property
2. Along the front of the property from the side by the driveway to the front gate
3. From the front gate to the end boundary of the property

Looking at each area in turn:

1. The drawing in Doc 5 shows that our proposed fence and gates do not adjoin the highway. The gates are considerably set back from the highway as we need to allow room for any vehicle to pull off the highway before opening the gates, and the fence will be behind existing trees.

We propose to install a fence and gates to 2m (This is obviously the most vulnerable area of the property, and we feel we need this height to prevent people easily climbing over them, unseen).

In your response to our Pre Application Enquiry (Doc 6), your advice was that the fence and gates “could be erected under permitted development rights and without the grant of a planning permission”, but it would be wise to include it in this application in the interest of avoidance of doubt.

2. The fence here will also be constructed behind the existing planting, so as to not be visible from the road (note that this differs from our Pre Application Enquiry as we proposed under that to place the fence in front of the existing planting, making it visible from the road). We would like to install a fence of 1.83m, using style A on the Fence Suppliers sheet in Doc 7. The proposed pedestrian gate will also be 1.83m and Style A. There are many examples of fences going up to 2.2m in the area, and as previously stated we feel the use of ornamental fencing is not as dominant as close board fences.
3. Due to the limits imposed by the existing privet hedge, which we do not wish to destroy, we intend to construct the fence behind the hedge, so it would not be directly adjoining the highway. As per 2, we would like to install a fence of 1.83m, using Style A on the Fence Suppliers Sheet in Doc 7.

Document 10 shows the existing elevations, and Document 11 the changes to these elevations that will be visible after the works. You will note that the only visible change from the road will be the front pedestrian gate. The rear gate will only be seen after you enter our driveway, and the fencing will only be visible from inside the property as it will be concealed behind existing planting.

There will be little impact on the pavement and none on the road outside our house while the work is being done. We shall be using a professional company with adequate Public Liability Insurance and providing personal supervision to ensure that any safety barriers and notices are erected as required by Reading Borough Council. There is pedestrian access along the pavement of Highmoor Road immediately opposite.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require clarification or to discuss any point, or if you would like to arrange to visit.

Documents attached:

- 1 Rationale
- 2 Photo – remains of railings at 63 Highmoor Road
- 3 Photo – railings at 34 Woodcote Road
- 4 Arboricultural report
- 5 Illustration of garden showing proposed works
- 6 Pre Application Planners response
- 7 Railing design
- 8 Location Plan
- 9 Site/Block Plan
- 10 Photos - Existing elevations
- 11 Photos - Changes to elevations