

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/03157/FPH
CASE OFFICER:	TR
APPLICATION SITE:	15 Deards End Lane, Knebworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6NL
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Installation of 2 motorised entry and exit timber gates.

RECOMMENDATION:

I raise an **OBJECTION** providing the following reason for refusal:

No.15 Deards End Lane is a Neo-Georgian style Lutyens designed grade II listed building which is located within the Deards End Lane Conservation Area, the prevalent character of which is that of a 'garden village'. Whilst the proposed pair of timber gates would not necessarily be incongruous in the context of the style of the host building and their materiality and height is an improvement when compared with the previously refused metal gates, they would nevertheless enclose the property, be prominent within the setting of the lane, and would be at odds with the prevailing character of the Deards End Lane Conservation Area where non-gated frontages prevail. The private garden area is screened by buildings and hedges and although the Heritage Impact Assessment says that the gate installation "will create an enhancement to the site by securely protecting the historic building" this is not considered to be a convincing justification. The proposal would be contrary to the character and appearance of the area occasioning harm thereto and would fail to satisfy the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031. The proposal will occasion less than substantial harm towards the lower end of the less than substantial harm continuum and no public benefit has been identified.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on the setting of Beacon House (no.15) and upon the character and appearance of Deards End Lane Conservation Area.

The proposal will have an impact upon both designated heritage assets.

SITE CONTEXT:

Beacon House (otherwise known as no.15 Deards End Lane) is grade II listed and is located within the Deards End Lane Conservation Area. The building and the area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF. The list entry for no.15 is found at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1102763?section=official-list-entry>

The fact that no.15 (Beacon House) was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and was one of only three structures erected on the lane as part of the scheme for Knebworth Garden Village is significant and this significance is heightened yet further by the fact that this building is now within a conservation area.

The adopted Deards End Lane Conservation Area Character Statement observes that:

High, metal security gates and red brick piers have been introduced to the front of some properties creating a more formal suburban environment. Whilst their design allows views through to the properties beyond, a lower timber gate alternative supported on timber posts would have maintained a more rustic character to the lane. Where the latter has been implemented, it has been relatively successful and no.9 Deards End Lane highlights this particularly well.(page 11)

Whilst under the subheading 'Opportunities for improvement' it states:

Houses on Deards End Lane are approached along driveways, **which are typically not gated from the public highway.** Gates are being introduced, and the most successful of these in conservation area terms are traditionally mounted timber gates, of a design which reflects the character of the building on the plot i.e. at no. 9. There are examples of high metal security gates being erected, and areas of hedge being replaced with brick walls; these introduce a 'hard' edge to an otherwise 'soft' boundary treatment common on the lane. **These gates neither preserve or enhance the special interest of the area and are indicated on the conservation area plan;** (page 12)



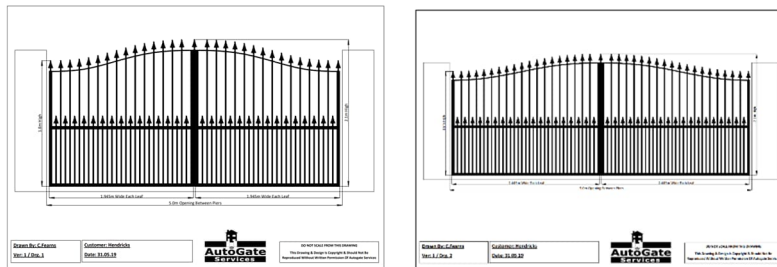
The map shows 6no. such metal gates in existence in 2008 (4no. gates relate to 3no. 'Positive Buildings' whilst the other two gates relate to 2no. unlisted buildings). No ornamental metal security gates relate to listed buildings or Buildings of Local Interest in the conservation area although no.9 does have a timber gate. It is important to note that the vast majority of properties on this lane (30+) do not have gated entrances.



This ultimately comes down to the question as to whether any gates are considered acceptable in this location.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

I previously commented on application ref: 19/01289/FPH on 4 October 2019 which related to the following gate design.



This pair of metal gates were 2.1m high and would have been supported on 1.8m high metal post. Although ornate metal gates would not necessarily be out of keeping in the context of a Neo Georgian house, the host building is not located within an urban environment, and its Neo Georgian influences are relatively restrained. I stated that the gates would introduce a more suburban presence to the streetscene contrary to the prevalent 'garden village' character of the conservation area. I raised an objection providing a robust reason for refusal and the proposal was refused planning permission.

The applicant appealed but the appeal was dismissed on 13 February 2020, the following are extracts from the Inspector's decision:

5. *The appeal property is also known as Beacon House, and the significance of it being a LB is that it forms one of three structures that were erected on the lane as part of the scheme for Knebworth garden village, it was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, and it fuses elements of Neo-Georgian style with arts and crafts devices. It is a large detached house of red brick with lighter brick dressings with steeply hipped pantile roof dated from 1912. The CA was designated in 1984 and has the character and appearance of a garden village, **whilst identified within the Council's character statement that houses on Deards End Lane are approached along driveways, which are typically not gated from the public highways and those that are, introduce a 'hard edge to an otherwise 'soft' boundary treatment common on the lane.***

8. *The proposal would involve the erection of a pair of metal gates to each of the vehicular entrances of the property fronting Deards Lane, these are currently free of built development. Whilst, a large hedgerow fronts the site, contributing to the open nature and soft boundary appearance of the lane itself. **Both sets of metal gates would be of substantial width and over two metres in height, supported by metal posts, but marginally setback from the highway.***

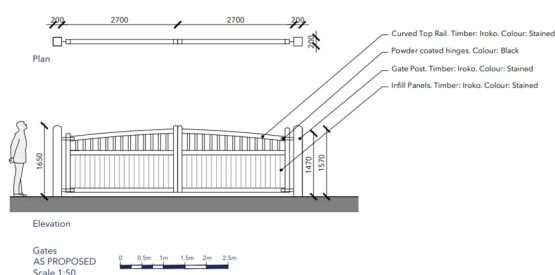
9. *As I saw at the time of my site visit, the majority of properties within the area had open frontages with soft boundary treatments, this was particularly visible along Deards Lane. Those that had gates were generally set back by long driveways and were not prominent within the street scene. **Although, the design of the ornate metal gates is not necessarily out of keeping with the context of the style of the dwelling, they would enclose the property, be prominent within the setting of the lane, whilst creating an imposing suburban addition to the area. This would be at odds with the prevailing character of the CA which is of a garden village and of predominantly non-gated frontages.***

10. *For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and fail to preserve that of the CA, and cause harm to the setting of LB.*

15. *In support of the appeal, my attention was drawn to other properties in the area that have already been altered in a similar manner to the proposal. I saw that these are very much in the minority and without information about the individual circumstances relating to other gates in the area I am unable to give significant weight to the issue of precedent. **In event, those that I saw served to confirm that such alterations do reduce the soft boundaries within the area,***

change the nature of the relationship between the appearance and prevailing character of a garden village, all to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area.

The proposed gates (below right) are to be constructed in timber. They would no higher than 1650mm i.e. approximately half a metre lower than the previously refused scheme and would be less imposing upon the established character of the area when compared with the previously refused gates. They do, however, appear to be a relatively ubiquitous gate type which compares less favourably with the Lutyens/Arts and Crafts inspired gates below left but these gates are taller and are supported off masonry piers which would not be appropriate here.



HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 66(1) & 72(1)

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy HE1

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

- **135 c)** (*sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment*),
- **207** (*local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting*)
- **210** (*desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*),
- **212** (*great weight should be given to the asset's conservation*),
- **213** (*clear and convincing justification*), and
- **215** (*harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use*).

CONCLUSION:

I have a duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. Section 66(1) of the Act also requires the decision maker, in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. I have considered this very carefully and find the proposal **OBJECTIONABLE**.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 13/02/2026