



Appeal Decision

by G Hall BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Welsh Ministers

Decision date: 23.04.2026

Appeal reference: CAS-04741-D9L7J7

Site address: Marchwood, St Lawrence Road, Chepstow, NP16 5BJ

- 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 Mrs Sophie Daly against the decision of Monmouthshire County Council.
 - The application Ref DM/2025/01100, dated 10 July 2025, was refused by notice dated 6 November 2025.
 - The development is Retention of boundary fence and entrance gate.
 - A site visit was made on 14 April 2026.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal seeks retrospective planning permission, and I have dealt with it on that basis. There is a minor discrepancy between the description of the development in the planning application and the appeal form, referring to a 'gate' and 'gates' respectively. However, I am satisfied that there is no ambiguity as to the development carried out or the nature of the permission sought, and no party would be prejudiced by my determination of the appeal on this basis. I have therefore used the description given on the planning application form and decision notice.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - biodiversity interests.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a detached two-storey dwelling occupying a prominent position close to the junction of St Lawrence Road and the A48. It benefits from a large front garden enclosed by a timber fence, comprising a close-boarded lower section with open trellising above along the highway frontage. Two close-boarded gates are set on pillars

within the site. The principal section of the boundary treatment sits behind a low painted wall, with a planting strip of varying width between the wall and the fence.

5. Along this part of St Lawrence Road, front boundaries are typically defined by low brick or rendered walls, sometimes incorporating railings, often accompanied by planting including hedging. Along the A48 in the vicinity of the site, boundaries are similarly characterised by low stone walls, frequently with hedging above. A tall, continuous hedge lies adjacent to the appeal fence, enclosing part of the appeal property's rear garden, and it is common ground between the parties that the appeal site was previously bounded by a hedge along the line of the existing front boundary fence.
6. Policy DES1 of the Monmouthshire County Council Adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) states that all development should be of a high-quality sustainable design and respect the local character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire's built, historic and natural environment. Amongst other things, this policy requires proposals to contribute to a sense of place (criterion b), respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting (criterion c), respect built and natural views (criterion e), and incorporate and where possible enhance existing features that are of visual value (criterion g).
7. The A48 is a busy and important gateway into Chepstow with, at the time of my visit, a constant flow of traffic. The appeal site forms part of a transitional area between the surrounding countryside and the urban edge. Here, grass verges, tree planting, and predominantly low walled and planted boundary treatments combine with a high level of vegetation within plots to soften this transition and contribute positively to the character and appearance of this approach to the town. Travelling into Chepstow along the A48, as the urban form intensifies, boundary treatments begin to change and walls and fences become more prevalent.
8. The continuous timber fence appears as an abrupt and discordant feature. It introduces a strong, engineered edge to the public realm and results in a noticeably enclosed frontage that is at odds with the more open and verdant character of the area. By reason of its height, length and close-boarded form, the fence is visually dominant and incongruous in the street scene, eroding the established character of this gateway approach. The presence of trellising on the upper part of the fence does little to mitigate this effect, and I am not persuaded that painting the fence would materially alter this conclusion. Whilst a more recessive colour may help to reduce its prominence somewhat, this would not overcome the perception of enclosure or the introduction of a hard boundary in this prominent location.
9. I have had regard to the examples of more solid boundary treatments nearby, including at 'Lai See' and 'Fair View'. However, I do not have full details of these cases before me and, in any event, neither site context provides a direct comparison with the appeal site. As such, these examples do not establish a precedent that would justify the appeal scheme. The scheme must therefore be assessed on its own merits, having regard to its specific siting, design and context.
10. Drawing these matters together, the appeal scheme results in a visually dominant and incongruous feature, that fails to respond appropriately to its transitional gateway context, and which is harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It is therefore contrary to LDP Policy DES1 b), c), e) and g).

Biodiversity interests

11. Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) requires development to maintain and enhance ecosystem resilience, including through improvements to the diversity, extent,

condition and connectivity of ecological networks (para 6.4.3). It also requires development to deliver a net benefit for biodiversity, with the step-wise approach providing the framework for demonstrating how this is achieved (para 6.4.5). Future Wales Policy 9 supports these objectives. LDP Policy NE1 aligns with these aims and requires, amongst other things, that development retain and where appropriate enhance nature conservation features.

12. The appellant has provided a Green Infrastructure Statement which outlines biodiversity enhancement in the form of a bird box and bug hotel. They explain that the previous hedge was in poor condition and accordingly provided minimal biodiversity value, and that they have offered to plant both in front of and to the rear of the fence to mitigate environmental impacts and enhance biodiversity. I noted that there is planting in the area between the low wall and the timber fence.
13. The evidence before me on the health and condition of the previous hedge is limited. The Council's Biodiversity Officer says that the hedgerow was a single-species non-native hedgerow which would have provided ecosystem benefits including shelter for birds and filtering pollutants.
14. The appeal scheme has resulted in the loss of this boundary hedgerow. Even if of limited species diversity, it would have contributed to habitat provision, foraging opportunities and ecological connectivity, as well as delivering wider ecosystem services. Its replacement with a solid timber fence represents a marked reduction in biodiversity value and ecosystem resilience.
15. The identified measures and the additional front planting I saw, are modest in scale and function. I am not persuaded that they provide meaningful compensation for the loss of the hedgerow or its associated ecosystem functions. On the evidence before me, it has not been demonstrated that the development would deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. Consequently, the development conflicts with the requirements of PPW, Future Wales Policy 9, and LDP Policy NE1.

Other Matters

16. The appellant explains that the fence is necessary to ensure the safety and security of their family. The front garden serves as the primary outdoor space and, without a secure boundary and gates, would not provide a safe environment for children or their dog. Particular concern is raised regarding the site's proximity to the A48, which I observed to be heavily trafficked, together with issues relating to crime and antisocial behaviour. It is also explained that the former boundary hedge attracted significant littering. A supporting representation indicates that, upon its removal, hazardous items including needles were found within it.
17. In addition to safety considerations, the appellant refers to increased traffic levels along the A48 in recent years, including activity associated with nearby commercial uses. Concerns are raised regarding idling vehicles, noise, air quality and light disturbance. Photographs submitted show vehicle lights and glare experienced from within the property, which I accept are evident even with the fence in place.
18. The concerns relating to safety and wellbeing are supported by correspondence from medical and education professionals. In the interests of privacy, I do not rehearse the details, but I have taken this evidence fully into account. I have had careful regard to the appellant's personal circumstances and the safety and security concerns raised, which are supported by professional evidence and carry significant weight.
19. The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates into domestic law the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, including Article 8 (respect for private and family

life and the home) and Article 1 of the First Protocol (protection of property). These are qualified rights, and interference may be justified where it is proportionate and necessary in the public interest, including through the proper planning of land use. I have also had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

20. In this case, the development gives rise to unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of this prominent gateway location and fails to demonstrate a net benefit for biodiversity. There is no substantive evidence before me to indicate that the appellant's objectives in respect of safety and security could not be achieved through alternative boundary treatments or other measures that would be less visually intrusive and more consistent with the prevailing character of the area.
21. In the overall planning balance, while I attach significant weight to the appellant's personal circumstances, they do not outweigh the identified conflict with the development plan and national policy. I am therefore satisfied that it is proportionate and necessary to dismiss the appeal.
22. I have considered the representations in support of the appeal scheme, including those from neighbours and the local member, and the suggestion that the fence assists in maintaining privacy and amenity. However, the absence of objection does not in itself indicate acceptability, nor does it overcome the identified harm. I am not persuaded that the current form of development is the only means of achieving a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring properties. I have also had regard to views that the fence improves the appearance of the property and its marketability. For the reasons given above, I do not agree that it enhances the character and appearance of the area, and the effect on property values is not a material planning consideration and therefore carries no weight in my assessment.

Conclusion

23. For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.
24. In reaching my decision, I have taken into account the requirements of sections 3 and 5 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. I consider that this decision is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives.

G Hall

INSPECTOR