

Shortlands Golf Club has just erected railings outside its car park in Ravensbourne Avenue. They are nearly two metres tall. There may be implications in this.

The golf club is within the Shortlands Village Conservation Area which is a designated area considered to have special architectural or historic interest, the 'character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'

With regard to the railings themselves, unless there are special considerations which do not appear to exist, it is the case that any 'boundary treatment' over one metre tall on the front boundary of a property will require planning permission. There is no planning permission for the railings at the time of writing. Bromley Council is currently assessing whether a retrospective planning application should be submitted which would be assessed in the normal way

What is the normal way? The legal test, amongst others, for any development in a conservation area is 'does the development cause any harm?' Such an assessment will lead to one of three conclusions: - no harm; less than substantial harm; and, substantial harm.

In this case, the view into the car park of the golf course beyond is important and was noted in the BEAMS report which was fundamental to the establishment of the Conservation Area. This report stated: - *"There are also key views into the golf course at Ravensbourne Avenue" (page 12)*

While the railings can be seen through, they undoubtedly diminish the view and as such cause 'less than substantial harm'.

In this case, an assessment has to be made as to whether the public benefit of the development (in this case the railings) outweighs the harm. The benefit of the railings is presumably enhanced security but this is a benefit accruing to the private golf course not to the public. As such, there is no public benefit.

Therefore, we would expect that the planning application would be refused. We have also seen the planning inspector giving great weight to the Conservation Area and not allowing developments to cause harm. It is likely therefore, but not certain, that the railings will have to be reduced in height or removed altogether.



