Planning Application: PP-14043937

“6 Bennion’s Road – Fence”

Retrospective application for a 63cm strip of wooden fencing in front of an existing 2.75 metre hedge, behind the existing boundary wall.

Context

I installed a narrow fencing strip along the front of my property, with three objectives:

1. Deter passing dog-walkers from dropping bags of dog faeces over my wall.
2. Increase privacy.
3. Increase security.

Prior to installation of this solution, the stench was vile. When work commenced, we discovered approximately 50 “poop bags” bags of dog faeces. I spent many years , and this is by far the most disgusting job I have ever done.

I was unaware of the requirement for planning permission; it didn’t occur to me that it would be necessary for such a minor piece of work. For this stupidity I apologise. As soon as I was contacted by Planning Enforcement, I ceased all work, pending the outcome of this application.

I understand that it is the policy of Wrexham CBC to approach each planning application/issue with an open mind, avoiding pre-conceived ideas. I hope you will understand and be sympathetic to the very specific and unpleasant problem that is solved by this narrow strip of fencing. I am told that WCBC Planning Officers are willing to engage in discussions and negotiations to resolve issues where possible, so I would welcome dialogue to find a different solution, if you feel that is appropriate.


6 Bennion's Road

Please note that this photograph does not represent the finished project. Only the first coat of primer paint has been applied. The plan was to paint the timber to blend with the hedge, and then to use plants and foliage on a “shelf” to entirely obscure it. The narrow strip of fencing would still technically be in breach of planning, but it would be completely invisible.

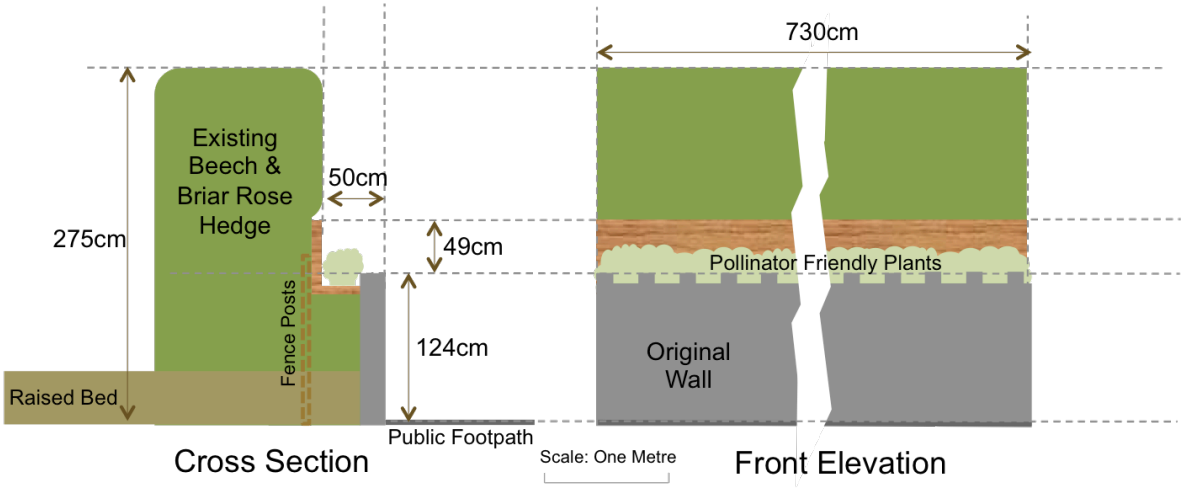
Clearly, this does constitute a technical breach, and for this I apologise, but I very much hope that you will conclude that the resulting harm is negligible/'de minimis'.

Current Situation

- Existing Beech hedge.
- Climbing pollinator-friendly Dog Rose/Briar (planted six months ago).
- Narrow strip of feathered fence paneling to increase privacy and security:
    - Set back 50cm from the front of the property.
    - 63cm wide (extends 49cm above top of the wall).
    - 730cm long (width of front patio).
- 25cm "shelf" at base of fence:
    - Deters passers-by from dropping rubbish between the wall and the hedge (dog faeces bags, beer cans, litter). This was a major issue, which has been entirely solved by the "shelf".
    - Moves the fencing strip half a metre back from the property front boundary.
    - Provides a ledge upon which to plant pollinator-friendly plants (e.g. Sedum varieties).
    - These plants would quickly establish to entirely hide the strip of fencing.

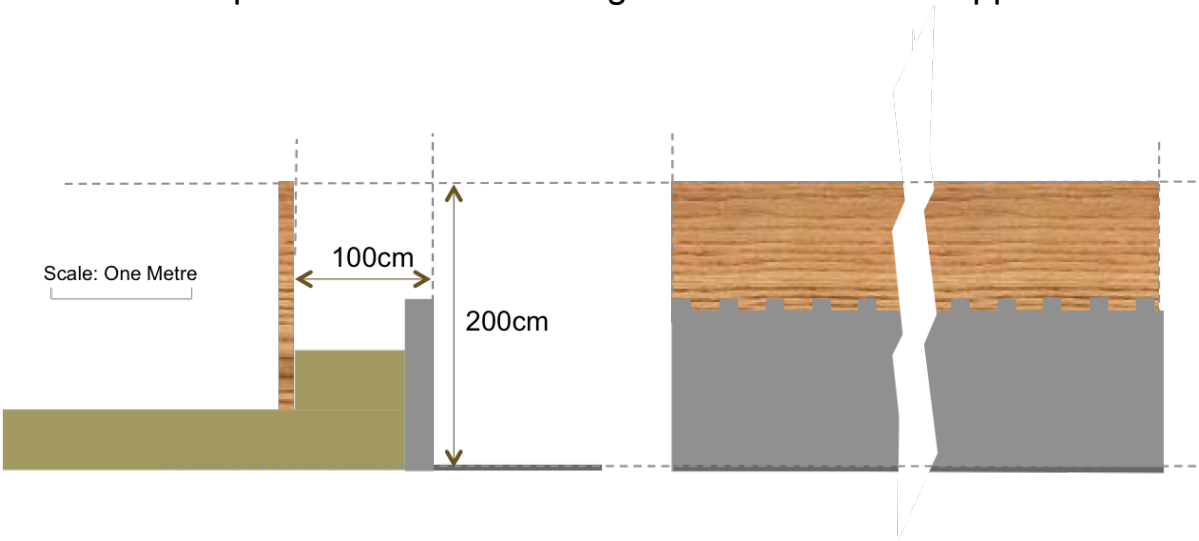


NB: I paused/ceased all work when I was contacted by Planning Enforcement. The fencing strip only has a single primer/undercoat of paint and the pollinator-friendly plants are not yet in place on the shelf. I intended to entirely obscure this strip of fencing, with paint, plants and foliage. It would become invisible.



Compliant Option 1: Two-metre Full Fence

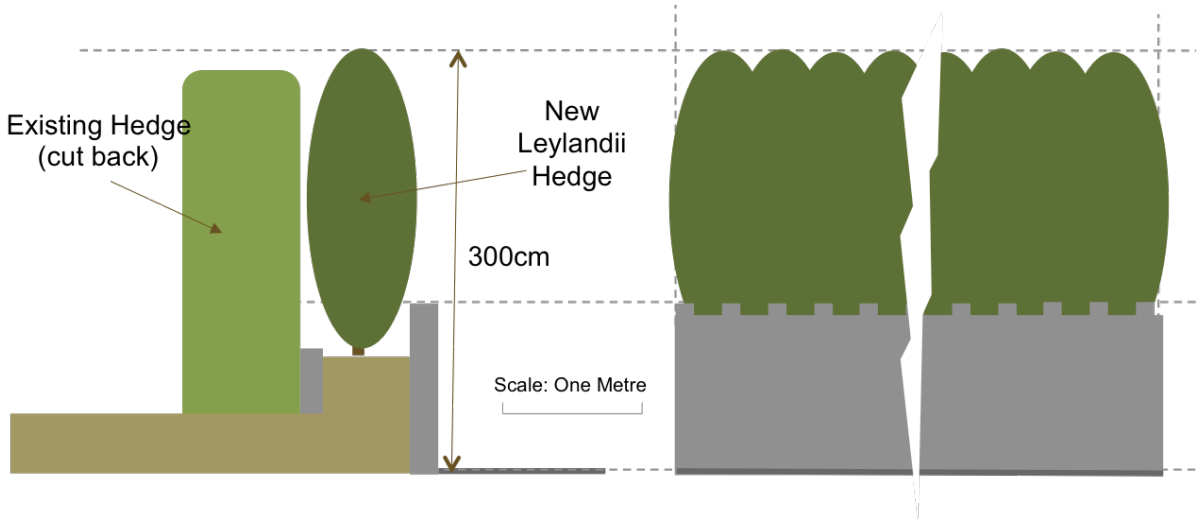
If planning permission is declined, this is the most likely alternative. This fence would be higher, more obtrusive and less environmentally friendly than the existing fence. It would be 19½" further back and therefore compliant. The Beech hedge would have to be ripped out.



- Replace the existing narrow timber strip with a standard 2 metre wooden fence.
- 100cm from the front of the property
- Just 50cm further back than the current narrow strip of fencing.
- 30cm HIGHER than the current fence (would actually improve my privacy).
- Necessitates ripping out the existing Beech and Briar hedge (the "trunk" structure of the existing hedge is precisely where the fence would need to be).
- Moving the fence behind the hedge would unnecessarily waste a large area of a very small garden. Obviously, I'm not going to do that.
- I would therefore completely lose the pollinator-friendly hedge.
- This would create a 75cm wide gap between the wall and the fence which would inevitably be used as a rubbish skip by passers-by; even more so than it was previously. It would be too wide for me to do anything to stop that. It would inevitably be filled with dog faeces bags, beer cans and litter.
- I could plant a hedge between the new fence and the wall, but unless I use Leylandii (which I dislike intensely), this would take years to establish. This would also not solve the littering or dog faeces problem.
- I would have lost the "shelf" for the pollinator-friendly plants.
- This solution would be significantly more ugly and obtrusive in the neighbourhood, than the current (non-compliant) narrow strip of fencing.
- It would be a great shame to rip up a beautiful Beech and Briar Rose hedge, simply to install a higher fence, *nineteen and a half inches* behind the unobtrusive one it would replace. That does not feel to me, to be either "expedient" or "in the public interest".

Compliant Option 2: Three-metre Leylandii Hedge

This is the cheapest, easiest alternative if planning permission is declined. I would prefer not to select this option as it is ugly and obtrusive in the neighbourhood. It is however, compliant.



- Cut back the front of the existing Beech hedge, to plant 3 metre Leylandii Hedge.
- Hardcore to fill one metre depth between the existing hedge and the wall.
- 15 x mature Leylandii plants (two metres tall).
- Retains half the existing pollinator-friendly Beech hedge.
- Destroys half of that hedge.
- Wouldn't solve the problem of dog-walkers dropping dog dirt in my garden, or the relentless beer cans and litter from passers-by.
- Easy, cheap option (£500). I could do this in a weekend.
- Ugly. My house would look identical to all the other houses with 3 metre Leylandii hedges. I'm surrounded by them.
- I genuinely do not understand how a preference for this solution could be described as "expedient", or "in the public interest".

Immediate Neighbourhood



Every one of the fences pictured below is within approximately 100 metres of my house. This does not represent every "non-compliant" fence in the immediate local neighbourhood; it's a sample. One of them is the house directly opposite mine; another is next-door to me. Please consider my "fence" *(right)* in context, and also please note that I am entirely willing to completely obscure the visible part of this narrow strip of fence, with plants and foliage. Obviously, all these existing local fences have planning permission, or have cleared the 4/10 year rule. I highlight them purely as an appeal to empathy and common sense.



Nesting Birds

It would be impossible to take any action with regard to the fencing strip without significant disturbance to the existing hedge. If the decision of the committee is that this application should be denied, I would request that we adhere to the general consensus of guidance specifically with regard to Beech hedges, and wait until after August 31st.



"Hedge and tree cutting should be avoided between March and August, as this is the main breeding season for nesting birds." "We recommend waiting until after the main nesting season (March-September)."

RSPB

"The main nesting season in the UK is from March to August but it can go on for longer. It is an offence under the Wildlife & Coutryside Act to damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built."

Royal Horticultural Society

"The best time to trim or prune a Beech hedge is after late summer. Refrain from pruning during their nesting season."

Hedging Plants Direct

"To be on the safe side, trim hedges during the winter months when there is no danger that birds may be nesting."

UK Government Guidance (www.gov.uk)

Summary

There are so many high fences in the immediate vicinity that it simply did not occur to me that I would need planning permission. My apologies for that oversight. I absolutely accept that the strip of fencing is currently non-compliant, and I of course shall adhere to the decision of the planning committee.

I hope that you will consider the context for this application.

- This is the least obtrusive option (less conspicuous than fences which are technically compliant).
- It is the most environmentally friendly option.
- I see no other way to protect my property against the bags of dog faeces being deposited by passers-by.

I hope you will understand and be sympathetic to the very specific and unpleasant problem I am trying to solve and I would welcome dialogue to find a different solution, if you feel that is appropriate.