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Front Boundary Wall – Retrospective Application

25 Slewins Lane, Hornchurch, RM11 2BZ

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Introduction

This statement supports an application to the London Borough of Havering for a new boundary wall at 25 Slewins Lane, Hornchurch RM11 2BZ. The wall is 1.3m high with piers at 1.8m. It replaces a low front wall and a clipped hedge of roughly 0.9m, so the increase in height along the frontage is about 400mm. The site falls from the house down to the street, and the wall is built in level bays that step down with that fall.

The site and its levels

25 Slewins Lane is a large detached house set back about 10m from the back edge of the footway. The frontage to Slewins Lane measures roughly 12.7m and the two flank boundaries each run back about 9.5m.

Salstan,
6th Floor, 2 Lakeside Drive, London NW10 7FQ,
hello@salstan.co.uk
020 7302 3111

The ground does not sit level, the land rises about 300mm from the front boundary up to the front elevation of the house, a gradient of roughly 1 in 32. The front boundary is therefore the lowest point on the site, and the carriageway sits a further 150mm or so below the footway at the kerb. The house itself stands around 9.4m to the ridge above street level.

This fall is gentle but it runs the full depth of the front garden, and it is the reason the wall has been designed in stepped bays rather than as a single level run.

The Pre-existing boundary

The frontage was enclosed by a low brick wall of about 0.9m, shown on the existing front elevation. Both flank boundaries carry a clipped hedge. The hedge had been cut to a level top, so because the ground falls away towards the street its height above the ground beside it varies, from roughly 0.8m at the house end to about 1.05m where it meets the footway.

The frontage was therefore already enclosed on all three sides. What is proposed is a change in the form and quality of that enclosure rather than the introduction of enclosure where none exists. Measured against the pre-existing wall and hedge, the increase in height is about 400mm at the front and about 300mm along the flanks.

The proposed wall

The heights below are taken from the submitted elevations, measured in each case from the ground immediately beside the wall.

Element	Height	Notes
Front wall to Slewins Lane	1.3m	Level frontage, so the height is constant along its 12.7m
Flank walls, each side	1.1m to 1.3m	Built in level bays that step down with the fall; about 9.5m long each
Piers, front and flanks	1.8m	To the top of the cap, at bay ends and either side of the gate
Vehicular gate	Open metal railings	Hung between piers, vertical bars with open spaces between

The wall is brick throughout, in a buff stock to match the ground floor of the house, with a recessed herringbone panel to each bay and a brick coping. The piers are the same brick with a cast stone cap. The gate is a vertical bar railing, finished dark, with no solid infill.

Only the piers reach 1.8m, and they are isolated vertical accents occupying a small part of the frontage. The continuous element that a passer-by reads as the boundary is the 1.3m wall.

Appropriate Heights

The slope matters here, and it works in the proposal's favour in three ways.

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First, the wall sits at the lowest point of the site and the ground rises behind it. A wall on flat ground hides a band of everything behind it, all the way back. Here the ground climbs as it goes back, so the amount concealed reduces with distance. By the time the eye reaches the front of the house, some 10m in, the ground is already 300mm higher than at the wall. The house and the greater part of the driveway stay in view from the footway and from across the road. The wall defines the frontage rather than screening it.

Second, the flank walls are built in level bays that step down as the ground falls. Measured against the ground beside it the wall is never a constant figure, varying between about 1.1m and 1.3m. The stepping keeps the wall tied to the ground it stands on and avoids the long unbroken horizontal line that makes a boundary read as a barrier. Neighbouring gardens sit at broadly similar levels, so from either side the wall reads as an ordinary garden wall.

Third, scale. The house rises about 9.4m to the ridge above street level. At 1.3m the wall is roughly a seventh of that, and the piers at 1.8m stand below the ground floor window heads. In the street scene the building remains plainly dominant and the wall reads as a base to it.

Boundary treatments in Slewins Lane

A photographic survey of eleven nearby frontages accompanies this application. It was carried out to establish what the prevailing boundary character of the street actually is.

Property	Existing front boundary
7 Slewins Lane	Buff stock brick piers with dark stone caps, metal railings between
11 Slewins Lane	Solid brick wall at the back of the footway, well above the height proposed here; tall railed double gates between brick piers
15 Slewins Lane	Red brick wall with taller capped brick piers, hedging above
17 Slewins Lane	Red brick entrance pier with planting behind
19 Slewins Lane	Red brick pier and a continuous brick wall along the footway
21 Slewins Lane	Capped brick pier with a rendered wall
27 Slewins Lane	Tall dark metal palisade fencing along the full frontage
53 Slewins Lane	Buff brick wall with decorative capped piers and black railings, with a long run of wall, railings and gates to the road frontage
85 Slewins Lane	Buff brick wall with red brick banding, capped pier with name plaque, railings and hedge behind
Slewins Close	Buff brick piers of around 2m with close boarded fencing and tall railings between
1 Ardleigh Green Road	Brick wall with piers, black metal railings and gates

The pattern is consistent. Brick walls, capped brick piers, metal railings and gates are the established boundary language of this part of Slewins Lane, not the exception. Several of the examples are taller than what is proposed at No. 25, and a number are solid where the proposal is partly open.

This is not an argument that the proposal should be allowed because others have done the same. It is the evidence that the proposal respects and reinforces the character of its street,

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which is the test the development plan sets. A 1.3m brick wall with 1.8m capped piers and railed gates at No. 25 would sit comfortably among its neighbours and would be at the lower end of the range already present.

Access, parking and highway safety

The existing vehicular access to Slewins Lane is retained in the same position. The gate itself is an open vertical bar railing, so a driver waiting to leave looks through it rather than at a solid panel, and visibility along the footway in both directions is maintained at the point where it matters.

The gates will be hung to open inwards, so no part of a gate swings over the footway at any point. The applicant is content for this to be secured by condition.

The revised layout provides two off-street parking spaces on a widened area of hardstanding. Two cars can be accommodated clear of the highway, which is an improvement on the existing arrangement and reduces the need for vehicles associated with the property to stand on the street.

Planning policy

The relevant development plan is the Havering Local Plan 2016 to 2031, adopted in November 2021, read with the London Plan 2021 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy 26 (Urban Design) asks that development is informed by and respects the distinctive qualities and character of its locality, that it respects, reinforces and complements the local street scene, and that it respects the visual integrity and established scale of frontages. The survey above goes directly to those criteria. A buff brick wall with capped piers and railed gates is the frontage language of this stretch of Slewins Lane, and the proposal is at the modest end of it.

Policy 7 (Residential Design and Amenity) is concerned principally with living conditions. The wall is a boundary structure of 1.3m on a frontage that already carries a wall. It causes no loss of light, outlook or privacy to any neighbour.

For context, Schedule 2 Part 2 Class A of the General Permitted Development Order allows walls of up to 1m adjacent to a highway and up to 2m elsewhere without planning permission. The proposal exceeds the 1m frontage allowance by 300mm, which is why consent is sought, but the flank walls at 1.1m to 1.3m sit comfortably below the 2m that Class A permits away from the highway frontage.

The NPPF at Section 12 asks for development that is sympathetic to local character while not discouraging appropriate innovation. Paragraph 139 is clear that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance, having regard to any local design standards. The proposal is a well detailed, traditionally built brick boundary that reflects what is already there.

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Conclusion

The proposal replaces a tired low wall and a clipped hedge with a properly detailed brick boundary of 1.3m, with piers at 1.8m and open railed gates. The increase over what is there today is about 400mm at the front and 300mm along the flanks.

The site rises from the street, so the wall stands at the lowest point and the ground behind it climbs away. The house and most of the driveway remain in view from the footway, and the flank walls step down with the fall rather than running as one level line. The survey of eleven neighbouring frontages shows that brick walls, capped piers, railings and gates are the established character of Slewins Lane, and that several existing examples are taller and more solid than what is proposed.

The development accords with Policies 26 and 7 of the Havering Local Plan and with Section 12 of the NPPF. We would be glad to discuss any detail with the case officer, and the applicant is willing to accept conditions on materials and on the gates opening inwards. Planning permission is respectfully requested.

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