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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2017

**by Keith Manning BSc (Hons) BTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Decision date: 1 September 2017**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/G4240/D/17/3176001**

**1 Longfellow Walk, Denton, Manchester M34 7JD**

- 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 Mr Rafal Gwozdz against the decision of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 17/00149/FUL, dated 27 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 25 April 2017.
  - The development proposed is erection of porch.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural Matters

2. The appeal concerns a development that has already taken place. I therefore treat it as an application for retrospective planning permission.
3. The Council's decision notice cites two identical reasons for refusal. I take this to be an administrative error and accordingly assume that the Council's objection to the proposal is fully encompassed by the duplicated wording.

### Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area with particular regard to the street scene.

### Reasons

5. Longfellow Walk is a relatively modern terrace of 5 houses of conventional design, brick built with pitched tile roofs and small porches with pitched roofs. This style of porch is common throughout the surrounding residential area which although mixed in appearance and style nevertheless generally accords with that theme so far as the two storey houses which predominate in the close vicinity are concerned.
6. No 1 Longfellow Walk is situated at the western end of the terrace, side-on to Wordsworth Road. It is highly conspicuous by reason of its prominent location, effectively at a corner in the street scene, although Longfellow Walk itself is a pedestrian access way across the front of the terrace, rather than a vehicular route. The manner in which the property has been rendered contrasts starkly with its neighbours, and leaves no doubt in visual terms of its individuality.

7. The porch proposed would effectively appear as a large square box-like structure, also rendered, projecting from the front elevation to Longfellow Walk. Like the host dwelling, it would be prominent not only in the street scene of Longfellow walk but also that of Wordsworth Road. The manner of its rendering, like that of the house itself, would immediately draw the eye from all points of visibility. Its strident individualism would be wholly incongruous within a street scene which relies for its overall pleasantness and local distinctiveness not so much on uniformity as cohesiveness within an overall theme. The porch at issue would be totally at odds with that context, which is generally characterised, where changes have been introduced, by well-mannered developments respectful of it. Because it has already been constructed its ongoing incongruity, were it to remain, is readily predictable.
8. Individualistic and innovative design has a role to play in the urban environment as the National Planning Policy Framework recognises. But the context has to be appropriate and equally, the importance of good design in context is emphasised. Whilst great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Clearly, innovative high quality design is not to be equated with radically different design irrespective of context.
9. The proposed porch, by reason of its incongruity within the street scene would indeed fail to take such opportunities it might otherwise present for improving the character and quality of the area and, bearing in mind its context, cannot be considered outstanding or innovative. Rather it would simply be starkly and unjustifiably different by reason of mass, geometry and materials which would visually overpower those at neighbouring properties, including those attached to other properties in the terrace to which it belongs and those within the street scene of Wordsworth Road. The effect on the character and appearance of the area would, for all the above reasons, be distinctly negative and correspondingly harmful.
10. Policy H10 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan, concerning detailed design of housing developments, is broadly consistent with the Framework's intentions regarding design insofar as it endorses innovative design, where this can be achieved without adverse effects on existing character, and requires designs which complement or enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposed porch neither adds an extra feature in a way that improves the area nor enhances its existing character and appearance. The proposal would therefore conflict with the intentions of the policy. Although the primary target of the policy appears to be new housing development, it is reasonable to assess a proposal such as this, which ultimately concerns the detail of house design notwithstanding it represents alteration to existing design, against its basic intention of achieving suitable design in context.
11. Policy RED9 of the relevant supplementary planning document *Residential Design* generally discourages front extensions other than modest porches in keeping with the street scene and the style and materials of the dwelling. The proposal at issue would not appear modest in relation to the host dwelling due to its uncompromisingly rectilinear geometry and substantial overhang. Nor could it be said to be reflective of the style of the house notwithstanding its original brickwork has been rendered in similar fashion to the proposed porch.

12. If considered a general purpose front extension, as opposed to a porch specifically, it would fail to meet a number of the relevant criteria in that it would not align with the architectural style of the existing dwelling and its surroundings, not least its immediate neighbours along the terrace, and it would detract from the existing street scene and character. To some extent its deceptively apparent bulk would begin to dominate the façade of the house.
13. All in all, it would be hard to reconcile the proposal with the intentions of the guidance of the SPD which merits significant weight as a material consideration, albeit not the weight of the development plan itself. It is of course guidance and cannot be said, therefore, to be overly prescriptive or “dictatorial” as the appellant asserts. It seems to me it is simply an aid to understanding what forms of house design are to be considered mannerly in context. That cannot be said of the proposal at issue. It would be starkly incongruous.
14. That incongruity derives from its massing and geometry as well as the proposed rendering; and the harm to the intentions of policy would not therefore be sufficiently diminished by imposing a condition regarding colouration to make it acceptable.
15. In conclusion, the development plan is not in effect silent and there would be harmful conflict with its intentions and those of other relevant policy at national and local level. I have taken all other matters raised into account, but no material considerations sufficient to outweigh the harm to the street scene and the character and appearance of the area and consequential conflict with the development plan have been identified. On that basis, my overall conclusion is that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Keith Manning*

Inspector