



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 14 September 2021

by R Hitchcock BSc(Hons) DipCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H4315/D/21/3278989

18 O'Brien Grove, St. Helens WA9 1RB

- 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 D Imbrea against the decision of St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2021/0376/HHFP, dated 26 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is a porch and canopy right side and rendering all house with one coat rendering.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of the development in the banner heading above is taken from the planning application form except that superfluous elements which do not describe the nature of the development have been removed. This does not change the development for which planning permission was sought and I am satisfied that no party will be prejudiced by my use of it. I have proceeded on this basis.
3. At the time of my site inspection a development as shown on the appeal plans was partially complete. Some deviations were apparent between the development and the submitted plans. For the avoidance of doubt, this appeal is determined on the basis of the plans as submitted with the planning application.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the O'Brien Grove streetscene.

Reasons

5. The site features an end terrace 2-storey dwelling with a gabled roof. The building is set behind a deep front garden with enclosed private amenity space to the rear. The property is located within a residential cul-de-sac of similarly styled terraces and houses. The majority of buildings in the road are finished in brick with a variety of colours and types of roof coverings.
6. The proposal seeks planning permission for an extension to the front elevation to form a porch with a continuous canopy extending across much of the width of the property. The roof is proposed in roof tiles to match the main roof. According to the appellant's assessment, the porch projects some 1.8 m from

the front elevation and is enclosed for a width of about 2.6m. An additional 3.5m is covered by an open canopy. The canopy would be supported by brick piers in brickwork to match the existing building. The extension and dwelling would be rendered.

7. The streetscape of O'Brien Grove is dominated by rows of short terraces in consistent alignment. The main terraces have similar proportioning and common arrangements to their openings which gives a degree of uniformity to that element of the streetscape. Closer to the curved entrance of the road, development is more varied with some single storey units, blocks of flats and a pair of semi-detached houses.
8. Although the front extension appears subordinate in scale to the host building, it is prominent at the end of the first terrace. The combined effects of the depth of the canopy and its extent across much of the building's width draws the eye and becomes the focal element of the building's frontage. This introduces an incongruous element to the O'Brien Grove streetscene. In the broad views of the aligned terraces, the extension stands out as a contrasting form of development to the existing buildings and strong lines formed by the successive terraces.
9. There are other examples of porch extensions to the terrace frontages. However, these are of significantly more modest scale and generally incorporate higher proportions of glazing such that, despite their variety of forms and materials, they appear as minor elements which retain the integrity of the terraces' continuous principal elevations. Their lightweight construction and limited scale differentiate them from the larger proposal before me, a proposal I have considered on its own merits.
10. Despite the proposal to render the main elevations, the rendering of the enclosed part of the porch would serve to highlight the scale of the extension. This would cause it to have an enhanced degree of prominence that would emphasise its contrast to the surrounding forms of development.
11. In support of the appeal, my attention was drawn to another property in the area that has been extended in a similar manner to that proposed and I saw this and others during my site visit. These included other examples of canopies, including some with integral porches. Those observed appeared to have more limited projections or lighter construction whereby more of the original frontages were visible. Nevertheless, these are very much in the minority and, in any case, the existence of development elsewhere does not represent an appropriate reason to find in favour of a proposal that would cause harm to the O'Brien Grove streetscene or lead me to alter my findings on this issue.
12. Aside from the effects identified in relation to the rendering of the extension, the proposed rendering of the rest of the property's elevations would undermine the relationship of the appeal building to the remainder of the terrace. However, there are other examples of cream rendering in the immediate locality and some variations between materials used in the walls and roofs of buildings within the street.
13. In contrast to the detail provided on the planning application form, the appellant's statement suggests that the building would be rendered to match an existing bright off-white used to the rear of the property. As a stark contrast to the more harmonious retention of bricks or softer, more complimentary

cream coloured render used elsewhere, the use of the modern white colour would stand out as an uncharacteristic finish and detract from the terrace building and streetscape.

14. As advocated in Paragraph 55 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the final colour could possibly be secured through planning condition to harmonise with other rendered buildings in the street. However, as some of the works have commenced and it is unclear whether over-painting of one-coat silicone render would be practicable in visual terms, or desirable in performance terms, the use of such a condition may not be reasonable. It would therefore potentially conflict with Paragraph 56 of the Framework and I find that, in the absence of any indication otherwise, would not be appropriate in the particular circumstances of the case.
15. For the above reasons, I conclude that the scale and appearance of the extension and colour finish of the proposed render would lead to an incongruous form of development in the context of the O'Brien Grove streetscene. It would conflict with saved Policy GEN 8 of the St Helens Borough Council Unitary Development Plan [1998] as it requires householder developments to respect the scale, design, character and appearance of the original dwelling and the character of its neighbours and local setting.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Hitchcock

INSPECTOR