
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2023

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F4410/D/23/3330880

175 South Street, Highfields, Doncaster DN6 7JH

- 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 Arkadiusz Buja against the decision of the City of Doncaster Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02154/FUL, dated 26 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 17 July 2023.
 - The development sought is described as the extension of the garage and flat roof in front of the building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. While the appellant has described the proposal as in the above heading, the Council has referred to it as the erection of a garage to the side, a porch and canopy feature to the front elevation, a first-floor rear balcony and associated alterations to the appearance of the dwelling. From my inspection of the plans, I consider that the Council's description more fully reflects the development sought. I have assessed the appeal scheme on that basis.
3. The development sought is in place. It is broadly consistent with the details shown on the plans.

Main issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the development firstly, on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area; and secondly, on the living conditions of the occupiers of 173 South Street with reference to privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal property is a mainly 2-storey, semi-detached house. It stands within a predominantly residential area, wherein dwellings along the same part of South Street, are similar in design, type, and age and most are arranged in groups that each follow a similar front building line. Despite some variety in built form and use of external materials, there is a broad uniformity to the character and appearance of dwellings in the street scene and the local area to which the appeal property belongs. The site is not within a conservation area.

6. The new porch and canopy is a modern style, open fronted structure that provides shelter to the front entrance and garage door at the side of the property. It is a sizeable addition, projecting noticeably forward of the main front wall of No 175, across roughly one half of the 2-storey front elevation and well beyond the main flank wall. Taken together with its flat roof, this element of the appeal scheme appears as an overly wide and large 'box like' addition that relates poorly to the shape and proportions of the host building. That the appearance of the new addition, with its timber panels and thick black edging sharply contrasting with the light rendered walls and lower brick courses of the main house, emphasises its awkward relationship with the host building.
7. By disrupting the flat front of the main 2-storey house and unduly disturbing the unassuming, balanced façade of the host building, the appeal scheme detracts from the character and appearance of the appeal property. While some properties in the local area include small front porches covering the entrance door and modest canopies, none were comparable in scale and design to the development sought. As the only obvious example of such development in the street scene to which No 175 belongs, the new porch and canopy draw the eye as an obtrusive and discordant feature with an uncharacteristic, outward appearance.
8. I appreciate that the development seeks to introduce a contemporary twist to the traditional style of the dwelling. In my experience, residential extensions and alterations that contrast in style and materials can add visual interest to the host building and diversity to the local area. However, in this case, the new porch and canopy are an unwelcome addition for the reasons given. Applying a different colour to the timber cladding or the black surroundings of the porch and canopy to, for instance, more closely match the existing dwelling would not overcome my concern with regard its scale and design.
9. At the rear, the new first-floor balcony is a sizeable addition. It projects outwards from the main 2-storey house and extends across almost the full width of the building. With clear glazed panels along the outside edge, the balcony is a visually strong horizontal feature in a high-level position on the rear façade. Although not visible from the road, the balcony is clearly evident from the rear of the site and the back garden of the attached property, which is 173 South Street. From these vantage points, the balcony is a conspicuous feature in the rear elevation. Its modern appearance relates awkwardly to the traditional style of the existing dwelling and other nearby properties.
10. On the first main issue, I conclude that the development causes significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. Accordingly, it conflicts with Policies 41 and 44 of the Doncaster Local Plan 2015-2035 (LP). These policies aim to ensure that new development achieves high-quality design, responds positively to the context, and respects and enhances local character. It is also at odds with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which states that development should be sympathetic to local character and add to the overall quality of the area.

Living conditions

11. The rear balcony forms a platform upon which a small number of people would be able to gather and or sit outside. The outward projection and elevated position of the balcony would enable users to have largely uninterrupted and close-range views of the back garden of No 173. The extent of overlooking

possible as a result would seriously harm the neighbours' enjoyment of their back garden due to an unacceptable loss of privacy.

12. In my experience, some overlooking is often a characteristic of residential properties that stand side-by-side in built-up areas. In most cases, the external views possible from inside a property are normally restricted by the width of the window. In contrast, views from an external balcony are generally as open as its depth and outward projection would allow. In this case, the overlooking possible of the back garden of No 173 would be far greater and more sustained than would have been possible from the upper rear windows of the dwelling before the appeal works were carried out.
13. The introduction of obscure glazing around the outside edge of the balcony as a privacy screen could avoid these overlooking problems. However, the screen would need to be significant in width and reasonably tall to be effective, which in turn, would visually accentuate the presence and harmful visual impact of the balcony. For this reason, the introduction of a privacy screen would have little effect in diminishing the sense of being overlooked insofar it would be experienced by the occupiers of No 173.
14. On the second main issue, I conclude that the balcony seriously harms the living conditions of occupiers of No 173. Accordingly, this element of the appeal scheme conflicts with LP Policies 10 and 44 insofar as they seek to safeguard residential amenity.

Other matters

15. Others raise no objection, including the occupiers of No 173. A good-sized rear garden remains with the development in place. The development has no effect on the use of the driveway or the access arrangements to the site. The development makes efficient use of the space available within the plot. There would also be social and economic benefits from the use of the additional space provided and as a result of providing employment and through the sale of construction materials. Given the modest scale of development, I doubt that the wider benefits in supporting local services such as healthcare or public transport or in reducing energy use and diminishing the carbon footprint of the dwelling would be significant. Taken individually and together, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
16. The balcony provides additional outdoor amenity space, and it provides users with expansive views across the open field beyond the rear of the site. However, these benefits are insufficient to outweigh the significant adverse effects on the privacy of neighbours.

Conclusion

17. Overall, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the policies of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR