

---

# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 September 2016

**by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC**

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

**Decision date: 29 September 2016**

---

**Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/16/3152354**

**171 Fentiman Road, London SW8 1JY**

- 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 John Rees against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
  - The application Ref 16/01300/FUL, dated 1 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 29 April 2016.
  - The development proposed is basement enlargement with front and rear lightwells.
- 

## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

## Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the St Marks Conservation Area (CA), towards its western-most edge. The CA is primarily characterised by Victorian terraced housing, which contrasts with the open space at Kennington Park. The property at 171 Fentiman Road is one of a terrace of three storey red brick houses which are characteristic of those found within the CA.
  4. The significance of this part of the CA lies in the architectural quality of the terrace, which retains many of its original features. The appeal proposal would result in the enlargement of the basement area, and would include a lightwell at the front of the property. The Council's concern focuses on the effect of the lightwell on the CA.
  5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to its conservation.
  6. Externally, the front lightwell would be covered by a metal grill with a brick-on-edge surround, set at a distance of approximately 4m from the pavement. On my visit, I noted that none of the terraced houses in the vicinity have lightwells or any other obvious indication of the presence of basement levels. The proposal would alter the original form and character of the appeal property by extending the front elevation below street level. It would thus depart from the
-

- uniformity of the buildings, interrupting visual coherency of the terrace as a whole. In terms of the detailed design, the width of the grill would exceed that of the adjacent bay window on either side, thus appearing out of scale in relation to the building.
7. The frontage where the lightwell would be situated is enclosed by metal gates and gate posts to the front, which would be retained. These allow clear views of the hardstanding area from the street. The appellant states that the grille would be screened from view by planting. However, whilst some soft landscaping is indicated on the proposed plans, it would do little to obscure the clear lines of sight from the street towards the grille, especially when the existing parking space on the frontage was vacant. In any case, it would be difficult to ensure the long-term retention and maintenance of any new planting. The proposal would therefore be visible from the street, albeit from fairly close quarters.
  8. I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character of the appeal property, and would thus fail to preserve the character or appearance of the wider conservation area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy Q11 of the Lambeth Local Plan (LP, September 2015), which, amongst other things, resists basement extensions if they would undermine the appearance of the host building. It would also conflict with LP Policy Q22, which seeks to protect conservation areas.
  9. Whilst the harm to the significance of the CA would be less than substantial (in terms of the phraseology used in the NPPF), this does not mean that the harm would not be significant. In support of their case, the appellant sets out a number of benefits that would arise from the scheme, including the improvement of the property by means of additional living accommodation, and the provision of a means of escape from the basement. However, these would be private benefits. I have not identified any public benefits that would outweigh the harm to the CA.
  10. The appellant states that local policies need to be applied in the context of the wider aims of the NPPF. I accept that the appeal site is in a highly sustainable location, and that the improvement of existing housing stock and efficient use of land are important wider policy objectives. However, there are no considerations before me that would outweigh the great weight that the NPPF apportions to the preservation of heritage assets.
  11. I note the appellant's contention that a number of the front gardens in the vicinity are in a state of disrepair. However, this circumstance would not justify the harm that I have identified. My attention has been drawn to a number of typical examples of flush lightwell grilles. However, there is no detail before me as to the circumstances in which these were found to be acceptable, and I cannot be certain that they provide direct parallels to the proposal before me. In any case, I have considered the appeal scheme on its own merits.
  12. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Elaine Gray*

INSPECTOR