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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

**by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 27 March 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/D/19/3244059**

**4 Alexandra Walk, London SE19 1AL**

- 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 Nicholas Borowiecki of Mellow Property Developments Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
  - The application Ref 19/02862/FUL, dated 5 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 October 2019.
  - The development proposed is a first floor extension and refurbishment to a single storey family house, including replacement double glazed aluminium windows and external doors.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host block and the Alexandra Walk estate.

### Reasons

3. The appeal site is a single-storey L-shaped house set within a group of nine similar dwellings arranged around and along a pedestrianised courtyard. The group is in turn part of the small Alexandra Walk estate, which is set on a gentle slope and which has a uniform architectural style, with buildings increasing in height through two, three and finally four storey flats as the land rises to the south east towards Victoria Crescent. Neither the appeal property nor the estate of which it is part are Listed or within a Conservation Area. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the modest size and functional design of the housing within Alexandra Walk, the estate displays considerable coherence of form, materials and detailing, and taken as a whole creates a distinctive and well-ordered environment. The wider area contains housing of a broad range of ages and styles.
4. The proposal is to add a first-floor extension to the appeal property to provide two new bedrooms with ensuite shower rooms. It is also proposed to replace the existing windows and doors, as well as to refurbish and reconfigure the building so that although it would remain a four-bedroom property it would offer modernised and more spacious living accommodation. The new first floor would be clad in timber, with aluminium windows to match those proposed for the rest of the house.

5. The appeal property is the middle house of a block of three and I accept that, were it possible to view the block in isolation, the addition of a new first floor could result in it remaining a balanced, if altered, composition. However, neither existing house nor the block of which it is part stand alone or are seen in isolation, and the consistency of design and form is a notable characteristic of the estate taken as a whole. This would be significantly diminished by the addition of a new floor to a single property as proposed. I note also that none of the other dwellings within the estate have been extended in such a way.
6. Considered in the context of the modest scale of the existing house and block, and the tight setting of the pedestrian courtyard in front of them, the new upper floor would also appear dominant and overbearing. Furthermore, while certain design elements such as the flat roof would echo the existing original buildings, others such as the fenestration and the use of timber cladding for the entire upper floor would not. Within the broader setting of the estate, the proposed extension would appear incongruous because of its size, dominance and design.
7. No concerns have been raised about the impact of the proposed extension on the living conditions of neighbouring residents. On the basis of the evidence before me, and what I saw at the time of my site visit, I agree that the proposal would be acceptable in this regard. However, a lack of harm on this matter is not a factor in favour of the proposal and does not outweigh the other harm I have found.
8. The proposed extension would compromise the harmonious design and unified appearance of the appeal property and the wider estate, and I conclude that it would therefore be harmful to the character and appearance of the host block and the Alexandra Walk estate. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies Q5, Q7 and Q11 of the 2015 Lambeth Local Plan (the LLP). Taken together, these policies seek to ensure that development proposals sustain local distinctiveness, including by reflecting the prevailing bulk and scale of local buildings, to ensure that extensions are subordinate to existing buildings and retain the architectural integrity of the host building and group. Insofar as it relates to the impact of the external appearance of the proposed extension on visual amenity from adjoining sites and the public realm, I also find limited conflict with LLP Policy Q2, although this policy is primarily concerned with the effect of proposed developments on living conditions and I find no conflict in these regards. The Council's decision notice also cited conflict with LLP Policy Q6, but that policy relates primarily to ensuring the provision of good-quality public realm, and I do not find conflict with that policy. Nonetheless, the proposal conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole.
9. The appellant has also drawn my attention to paragraph 118 (e) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which encourages the use of airspace and upward extensions in order to support the effective use of land. However, as the proposed extension would not be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring properties and the wider estate it also conflicts with the guidance in the Framework.

### **Other Matters**

10. The proposed extension would improve the environmental performance of the host property, and from the evidence before me it is clear that the existing

house would benefit from some degree of refurbishment, although this does not in itself justify or weigh in favour of the particular proposal before me.

11. I acknowledge also that the appellant has clearly given considerable thought to how the property could be reconfigured to provide improved living conditions, including larger rooms and more adaptable housing, for residents. While these are benefits which carry modest weight in favour of the proposal, they do not outweigh the significant harm to character and appearance which I have identified.
12. Members of the government have previously announced the intention to increase the scope of permitted development rights to allow for upward extensions without the requirement for formal planning permission. However, such a proposed change has not yet been incorporated into the planning system. In itself, the announcement at a political party conference which the appellant has drawn my attention to carries negligible weight in my determination of this appeal. I have reached my decision in accordance with the development plan, on the basis of the evidence before me and other material considerations including current national planning policy and guidance.

### **Conclusion**

13. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

*M Cryan*

Inspector