



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

by **SE Hughes BA (Hons) PGDip MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H5960/W/25/3362391

83 Drakefield Road, Wandsworth, London SW17 8RS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Mont Lafta of Studio Mont against the decision of the London Borough of Wandsworth.
 - The application Ref is 2024/2895.
 - The development proposed is the amalgamation of two flats into a single family home including the alteration of internal layout throughout, including the erection of single-storey rear and side extensions, and excavation to create an enlarged basement including the formation of front and rear lightwells.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The Council has not raised any objections to the erection of the proposed single storey rear and side extension, the installation of rooflights to the main roof, the excavation to enlarge the basement or the installation of Heaver style railings to the front boundary. Based on the evidence before me, and my observations at the site visit, I have no reason to take a different view.
3. In view of the above and my duties under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 that I pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area, the main issues in this appeal are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the mix of housing stock in the community; and
 - the effects of the lightwell on the character and appearance of the appeal property and the Heaver Estate Conservation Area (HECA).

Reasons

Housing Mix

4. To ensure that there is an appropriate mix of dwellings in the borough, Policy LP25 of the 'Wandsworth Local Plan 2023-2038' (WLP) resists the loss of existing self-contained housing units via the amalgamation of separate units. One concession of Policy LP25 is when two non-family sized dwellings are combined to create a family sized dwelling which has a resultant floorspace no greater than 130sqm. The

glossary to the WLP defines a family sized dwelling as a housing unit with three or more bedrooms.

5. Whilst I acknowledge that the property was originally constructed as a single dwelling, it is clear from the application documents and plans that it is now arranged as two separate units. One of the units is a family sized three-bedroom unit and the other unit is a non family sized two bedroom unit.
6. The resultant dwelling would not be a new home as it would remain a family dwelling albeit it would have a greater number of bedrooms. Furthermore, the appeal proposal would result in the loss of a self-contained two-bedroom unit, therefore it would result in a reduction in the borough's overall housing stock. In addition, as the dwelling would significantly exceed 130sqm in floor area, it would also fail to comply with spatial parameters set out in Policy LP25 when such a loss may be considered acceptable.
7. Given the unambiguous wording of the development plan's policy, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the mix of housing stock in the community. It would therefore conflict with Policy LP25 of the WLP.

Character and Appearance

8. The appeal site lies within the Heaver Estate, a late nineteenth century suburban housing estate built by the developer Alfred Heaver in a Queen Anne style which is a designated heritage asset. The estate is characterised by its long rows of detached, semi-detached and terraced red brick houses which incorporate decorative carved brickwork, multi-paned windows and front doors, tile paths, and front gardens enclosed by low walls and decorative cast iron gates and railings. In so far as relevant to the proposal, the significance and special interest of the HECA lies partly in its grid street pattern, its narrow building frontages offset from the street by short front gardens and its architecture.
9. Policies LP1 and LP5 of the WLP requires development to relate positively to the character of the street scene. In addition, Policy LP3 of the WLP aims to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of heritage assets, by requiring development to consider the features that contribute to the heritage asset's significance and character.
10. With regards to the provision of basement lightwells to the front of houses in Conservation Areas, Policy LP6 of the WLP requires the front garden to have a retained depth of at least 2m or for half of the original front garden to remain after the lightwell has been excavated (whichever is the greater). If this cannot be achieved, then the 'Wandsworth Local Plan: Supplementary Planning Document: Housing' Adopted November 2016 (SPD) indicates that a front lightwell would usually be an inappropriate solution.
11. The retained front garden would have a depth of approximately 1.5m across a width of approximately 1.9m, reducing to approximately 0.9m over a width of approximately 1.45m. Whilst the appellant indicates that 50% of the original garden would remain, given that the policy requires the retained garden to be the greater of the two areas, the proposal would fail to meet the provisions of Policy LP6.
12. Consequently, despite the lightwell being below street level, and proposed screening from the reinstatement of the traditional boundary features, given its

overall size and the shallow depth of the front garden, the proposed lightwell would be over domineering and would erode the elegance of the property and the character of the street scene.

13. Therefore, based on the above, and in the terminology of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the HECA, the desirability of the preservation or enhancement of which I am required to pay special attention. As the harm to the HECA is less than substantial, it should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. Paragraph 202 of the Framework states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and paragraph 212 of the Framework establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
15. The appellant is of the opinion that the proposal would be beneficial because it would provide a new family home in accordance with the Council's housing strategy which aims to deliver new homes, including family sized homes in the Borough and it would reinstate the property's traditional features and prevent further degradation of the building, preserving it for future generations.
16. With regards to the providing a new family home, given that I have concluded above that the proposal would remain a family dwelling and would not amount to the creation of an additional family dwelling, it would not assist in the delivery of family housing rather it would lead to a loss of a non-family unit. Therefore, there would be no public benefit in regards to the supply of family housing in the borough.
17. In respect of the restoration of the building and its features, whilst these benefits may be achieved by other means other than by the appeal proposal, they would still be of public benefit. There would also be some economic benefits arising from the construction work. Given the scale of the proposal, I have given these benefits modest weight.
18. Given that the Framework, establishes that great weight should be given to the conservation of a heritage assets I find that the modest public benefits of the proposal are not sufficient to outweigh the degree of harm identified.
19. In view of the above, I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character or appearance of the appeal property and the HECA, conflicting with the historic environment policies of the Framework. Furthermore, it would conflict with policies LP1, LP3, LP5 and LP6 of the WLP.
20. In arriving at this conclusion, I have taken into account the examples of other lightwells in Drakefield Road provided by the appellant and the Council. However, I do not know the full circumstances of those cases. In any event, I saw during my site visit that where lightwells had been installed on the street, they varied in size. The largest ones served to confirm that the consequential loss of the soft landscape and traditional garden space had been detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, whilst I accept these developments have adjusted the area's character, I do not consider that it should justify a further erosion of the character that would arise from the appeal proposal.

Other Matters

21. With regards to the example of the de-conversion of four units into a single dwelling at 2 Patten Road, I note that it benefited from an extant planning permission which weighed in favour of the development. Unlike 2 Patten Road, the appeal property does not benefit from any such extant permission, so the circumstances are not the same.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

SE Hughes

INSPECTOR