



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 September 2025

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V5570/D/25/3370079

6 Blythwood Road, Islington, London N4 4EU

- 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 Lisa Sharistani against the decision of Islington Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is P2025/1439/FUL.
 - The proposed development is described as excavation of a front garden light well approximately 4.5m x 2.5m with retaining walls on three sides, installation of a new external staircase and glazed doors to provide access and daylight to existing basement within the property.
-

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 host property and the area.

Reasons

3. Paragraphs 5.164 to 5.165 of the Islington Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017 ('the SPD') advise that lightwells should respect the architectural character of the host building, and should be compatible and complementary features in the streetscape. It continues that where a lightwell will impact on an established front garden or open area that is characteristic of the street or the terrace, the majority if not all of the front garden should be retained.
4. The appellant describes Blythwood Road as having a remarkably varied streetscene, including family homes, period conversions, a nursery, a former garage, and a block of flats. However, I observed that the properties on this part of it overwhelmingly comprise three storey houses, which are finished in brick, with many recurring design features. They are typically set back from the pavement behind low walls or hedgerows, with their front gardens either hard surfaced or landscaped. In my view, these characteristics give a significant sense of rhythm and cohesion to the streetscene.
5. The host is typical of the three storey houses in this part of the streetscene. As a result of the proposal, its gravelled forecourt would be replaced by a lightwell and an external staircase, which would extend from the front face of the building to the boundary wall, thus occupying most of the plot frontage other than the path leading to the front door. It would not be modest in scale.

6. The appellant says that 14 out of 58 properties in Blythwood Road have basements with direct access to the street, but I have not been provided with their addresses, or the evidence underpinning that claim. Neither property next to No 6 has such an arrangement, and I did not observe any nearby which have a similarly sized front facing lightwell compared to this proposal. Indeed, there are few lightwells in this part of the streetscene. The large lightwell as part of the dwelling which is under construction next to No 44 is some distance from this site, and in a part of the road which is less cohesive than here.
7. The proposal would therefore be markedly at odds with the established character in this part of the streetscene. Its incongruity would be exacerbated by the glazing which would cover the whole of the basement's front face, and which would extend beyond the corners of the bay window in the floor above.
8. The appellant maintains that the proposal would be imperceptible from public vantage points given the reinstatement of evergreen planting along the front boundary, and due to vegetation, which would grow from integrated planters on the sunken walls; and that a green roof to the bin store would provide further landscaping and screening.
9. However, there would be very limited space for the suggested planting next to the reinstated front wall, and whilst I understand that there are similar planters in the front garden at 12 Blythwood Road, I have few details. A planning condition requiring living vegetation to be maintained at a particular height and density would not pass the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework') tests of precision and enforceability; and even if such landscaping were to be provided, the lightwell would still be visible looking across the front path.
10. Finally, although the appellant has referred me to schemes involving lightwells and basement accesses in Islington and other boroughs, I have very few details of them. I am therefore unable to draw any meaningful comparisons between them and this proposal, and they do not alter my conclusions regarding this scheme's impact in this location.
11. For the above reasons, the scheme would significantly harm the character and appearance of the host property and the area. It would therefore conflict with Policy PLAN1 of the Islington Local Plan Strategic and Development Management Policies 2023. In broad terms, this requires high quality design which makes a positive contribution to local character, legibility and distinctiveness, having regard to matters including frontages. It would also conflict with the Framework's similar requirement for good design which is sympathetic to local character, and with the advice in the SPD.
12. Given that the basement can only be accessed internally and it has just a rear facing window, this scheme would improve daylight and ventilation to it, and enhance its usability as part of this family home. However, those benefits would not outweigh the significant harm that the scheme would cause.
13. For these reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, including a representation by an interested party, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR