



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2025

By G Powys Jones FRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/T5720/D/25/3372904

117 Cambridge Road, London, SW20 0PU

- 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 Dong-Oh Shin against the decision of the London Borough of Merton.
 - The application Ref is 25/P1279.
 - The development proposed is two-storey side extension; single-storey rear extension; alterations to rear dormer; installation of rooflights at the front and rear roof; and erection of a single storey outbuilding in rear garden.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on: (a) the character and appearance of the host property and its surroundings, and (b) the living conditions of the residents of 115 Cambridge Road with particular reference to light and visual impact.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a semi-detached dwelling set within a pleasant residential area, comprised of a mixture of house types and forms. The appeal property's front elevation fronts Cambridge Road, but in common with its adjoined dwelling, its rear garden extends to Richmond Road to the south. The distinctiveness of this part of Cambridge Road derives partly from the modest density of development, where gardens and gaps between dwellings give rise to a sense of spaciousness. Coupled with the significant presence of trees, the increasing maturity of local landscaping and planting, and the nearby public park, the local verdant characteristics exude an aura more akin to a garden village than a London suburb.
4. The Council's concerns centre on the proposed two storey element of the scheme, and the impact on the closure of the gap between properties. The appellant does not dispute the nature of the general characteristics of the locality, but seeks to distinguish the appeal property. In this respect, its front elevation is set back from that of its neighbour at 115 Cambridge Road, and the gap between the properties is already closed to an extent by a single storey side extension. The appellant maintains that the existing gap between the properties at first floor level does not represent a meaningful break given that there are few vantage points where it is

discernible. It is also considered that the two properties would be perceived as separate entities, even if the extension were built.

5. The house would be extended sideways at first floor and roof level virtually to the common boundary separating Nos 115 & 117, so that the gap between the properties at these levels would be reduced to less than a metre. I acknowledge that the almost complete closure of the gap would not be widely seen, being limited to discrete views to the front and rear in Cambridge and Richmond Road respectively. However, that which would be seen would prove unacceptable since it would smack of overdevelopment giving rise to a terracing effect with harmful visual consequences. The proposal, if implemented, would also be atypical of development in the locality, eroding its spatial characteristics.
6. The courts¹ have provided guidance on how the terms ‘*appearance*’ and ‘*character*’ play their parts in planning assessments. In this instance, the visual impact of the proposal on the appearance of the surrounding area may not be substantial, but the perceived effect on its underlying character in the light of the closure of a distinguishing gap between properties would be significant. Although not decisive in my considerations, a successful appeal could also encourage others to pursue similar proposals which the Council could find difficulty in resisting, leading to a further diminution of local character.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of its surroundings. Accordingly, a material conflict arises with those provisions of policies D12.3 & D12.4 of the Merton Local Plan (MLP) and policy D3 of the London Plan providing that development and its design should respond positively to the site’s context and character and local distinctiveness.

Living conditions

8. As already described the proposal would entail the construction of a two storey element virtually on the boundary between 115 and 117 Cambridge Road. Having regard to the position of the fenestration and glazing in No 115’s rear elevation I do not consider that the proposals, including the single storey proposal at the rear, would result in a material diminution in either sunlight or daylight entering No 115’s habitable rooms.
9. However, the proposal, since it would bring two storey development closer to No 115, this element of the scheme would to my mind be perceived by No 115’s residents as an oppressive and intrusive structure when viewed the garden, particular that part laid out formally closest to the dwelling, which is likely to be the most used and enjoyed part of the external amenity space. I therefore consider the development to be unneighbourly in its effects.
10. I conclude that the proposed two storey element of the scheme would harm the living conditions currently enjoyed by No 115’s residents by reason of its adverse visual impact upon them. Accordingly, a material conflict arises with those provisions of policies D12.3 & D12.4 of the Merton Local Plan (MLP) and policy D3 of the London Plan providing that development should be of a high quality design ensuring that a high standard of amenity is provided in a proposal’s surroundings. I

¹ *Nasir Kazalbash v Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities & Anor* [2023] EWCA Civ 904

am also conscious of the Framework's² advice providing that planning decisions should ensure that developments should assist in creating places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other matters

11. Since the Council did not object to the erection of the proposed outbuilding, I have considered the possibility of issuing a split decision. However, I am not convinced that the effect of erecting the outbuilding on the health of trees growing in the adjoining garden has been appropriately assessed and considered, notwithstanding the submission of the appellant's arboricultural report.
12. All other matters raised in the representations have been considered, including the representations made by neighbouring residents and the West Wimbledon Residents Association. No other matter raised outweighs the considerations that led me to my conclusions.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR

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