
Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 28 October 2025

Site visit made on 28 October 2025

by Mr Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/25/3369804

13-24 Linkenholt Mansions, Stamford Brook Avenue, London, W6 0YA

- 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 Dorrington London Flats Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application reference is P/2024/4275.
 - The development proposed is the removal of balconies to the front façade, reconfiguration of balconies to the rear façade, replacement of all single-glazed residential windows and external doors with double-glazing, reconfiguration of the rear garden and addition of green roof to single-storey extension..
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Before the hearing, the appellant had not seen neighbours' representations in full. I have taken the appellant's comments on them, made after the hearing, into account.

Main Issues

3. During the hearing, the Council withdrew its objection about storage space. Linkenholt Mansions have been included in the Council's Local List of Heritage Assets. Therefore, the main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the locally listed building, and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Stamford Brook Conservation Area (CA); and,
 - the living conditions of surrounding occupiers.

Reasons

The significance of the locally listed building and the CA

4. Background: London's population expanded exponentially from the mid C19, as new public transport and public sewerage systems made housing development possible on an unprecedented scale, including in the outer suburbs like Stamford
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- Brook. Indeed, the Council tells how building here accelerated after land was given to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1882. The architect John Gill-Knight was appointed to develop twelve acres to the south of the common. These were to be mansion blocks and semi-detached houses for middle class families and tenants.
5. His development began at the turn of the C20 with the four mansion blocks we see today, including the appeal site. The mansion blocks and some houses were complete by 1913, the delay a result the Council suggests, of the late arrival of Stamford Brook railway station in 1912, and the imminent outbreak of war.
 6. As well as marking this shift of development to the suburbs, the CA also exhibits a new form of development emerging in the second half of the C19; the mansion block. Gill-Knight's Stamford Brook mansion blocks may not have reached the great heights or social sophistication of those which had been transforming central London. Nonetheless, his mansion blocks are typical of this popular, dense form of development; a block of 'horizontal houses' contained within what appears as a 'mansion', with well-designed common or circulation spaces. A preferable alternative to many housing options at that time.
 7. Architecture: Notably here, the planned form of the streets and houses is reported to be under the hand of a single architect. Indeed, some of the pre-war houses standing between the four mansion blocks share some of their architectural language of grandeur. For instance, polychrome masonry including lintels; prominent canted bays; shaped gables; and porches framed in prominent curves, above decorated pilasters.
 8. More significantly, the impression of this mansion block, like its counterparts here, relies not only on its size, but equally its form and its features. In the case of Linkenholt Mansions, these are the wings paired around central, decorated common entrances under double-height stair windows, and the mansions themselves being part of a pair sharing many similarities of form, height, footprint, building lines, and street enclosure.
 9. There are subtle distinctions between some of the features across the Linkenholt pair of blocks. The porches of the lefthand block have a square form rather than curved; the outermost most bays of the righthand block, the subject of this appeal, which the appellant observes is the more architecturally ambitious of the pair, includes rectangular as well as canted bays, whereas the bays in the left hand

block are canted throughout; and, the shapes and positions of the gables over the bays of the two blocks differ.

10. Notwithstanding these subtle differences, there is a broad, architectural coherence within each of the blocks and between the pair of the blocks: symmetry in form and in the arrangement of elements; modelling from the depths and faceting of the front bays; the projection of the balconies beyond the bays; the decorated corbels 'supporting' them, the decorative metal work in their balustrades; expressive entrances; generously sized openings with timber windows and doors; and a layering of the buildings' presentation to the street by the means of front enclosure; front bays; entrance porch; and front wall, with its architectural features including balconies.
11. Many of the features of both the Linkenholt mansions appear in the other mansion blocks in the CA. Stamford Brook Mansions, a group of three blocks, has a similar polychrome effect as Linkenholt, though its gables and entrance porches appear to have been altered. It is unclear if it had walk-on balconies at one time, but the main windows of the flats are served today by juliette type balconies, which are more for appearance than for sitting or standing on.
12. So too the commanding Ranelagh Gardens mansion block, with its central 5-storey section of canted bays around a rising polychrome stair enclosure. Many of its balconies too appear to have been replaced by juliette balconies. Hauteville Court Mansions, on the other hand, has retained its full balconies on both of its street elevations. Some of the decorative corbels under its balconies may have been lost, but the structures themselves, and the metal work around them, is intact. As at Linkenholt, the sumptuousness of the block's elevations signals the spatial quality of the flats within. They are a key part of its modelling, and its attractive appeal in the street.
13. Notably, at Linkenholt, when viewed from along the street, the arrangement, depth, and detailing of the balconies and their proximity to the street makes for an exuberant enclosure. Furthermore, the Council's Conservation Area Appraisal¹ (CAA) describes how the mansion blocks arguably provide the area with its most unusual features, and that the blocks all have balconies of some form.
14. This is the significance of the locally listed building, and the historic and architectural context of the CA, the desirability of preserving or enhancing the

¹ Stamford Brook Conservation Area Appraisal, January 2021, London Borough of Hounslow

character or appearance of which requires that special attention be paid, and to which the appellant recognises that Linkenholt Mansions makes a positive contribution.

Effect on the locally listed building and whether it would preserve or enhance the CA

15. Works behind the building: The Council does not object to the reconfiguration of the rear garden, the addition of a green roof to the rear extension, and the sensitive replacement of windows and doors in timber, double-glazed. I have no reason to disagree. These elements of the proposal would not harm the integrity of the locally listed building, and they would preserve the appearance of the CA.
16. Neighbours objected to the design of the new and the enlarged balconies proposed at the rear. I acknowledge that the existing rear balconies share a similar slab design to those at the front. However, there is an architectural hierarchy between the frontages of these buildings and their rears. The higher quality materials, the more intricate detailing, and the more elaborate decoration is reserved for the front. The rear appears more utilitarian. Indeed, I saw steel balconies supported on columns at the back of the counterpart block in Linkenholt Mansions and behind Stamford Brook Mansions and Hauteville Court Gardens.
17. The new and enlarged rear balconies would be slightly larger than typical. However, I can see no harm to the architectural integrity of the locally listed building from the new designs, nor in these circumstances, to the character or appearance of the CA. The new and enlarged balconies would not harm the integrity of the locally listed building and would preserve the appearance of the CA.
18. Front balconies: I appreciate that front balconies, considered in isolation, do not a mansion block make. There are many features in the design of this kind of housing which have made it so popular and attractive. Nonetheless, taking off the front balconies would remove a key, architectural feature of this block, a feature which displays publicly the confidence in how it provided quality living spaces at the time of its construction. The removal of this feature of living would efface an element of the typology of this housing in this place, and a significant part of its architectural charm.
19. It would diminish the attractive modelling to the frontage. Because the counterpart block would retain its balconies, the proposal would unbalance part of the symmetry and coherence between the pair of the two Linkenholt blocks. This would harm the architectural integrity of the pair of blocks, which are, together, a locally

listed building, the similarity and richness of whose townscape makes a substantial contribution to the architectural significance of the CA.

20. I saw that two of the other mansion blocks in the CA do not, or do no longer, have balconies. Nonetheless, the removal of these balconies at Linkenholt, and the alterations of openings, would weaken the architectural coherence between the mansion blocks in the CA, particularly with Hauteville Court Gardens, which has retained its balconies.
21. I acknowledge that not all mansion blocks in London, including others by Gill-Knight, had balconies on their front elevations. But there was more than one way to provide a degree of private, external space. Context, and the influences of the time must have played a part too in any mansion block design. Notwithstanding this, in this particular street, on this particular mansion block, the design incorporates handsome balconies. They are a prominent architectural feature. Their loss would diminish the architectural character of the CA as a whole, as well as its overall significance.
22. The appellant argues that the balconies are not crucial to the architectural composition of the building. But the same could be said of its gables; its entrances; its masonry work; its detailing; its stair opening; its bays; its ironwork, when these were sufficiently important to the architect who designed the buildings that he designed them so, and the builder built them accordingly. One only need look at the neighbouring mansion blocks which have lost their balconies to understand just how elegant these balconies are, how smart they make the building appear, and how they enrich the significance of the CA and lift up its appearance, especially given the bearing of the other mansion blocks which have retained their balconies.
23. The architect describes the proposal as revision rather than invention. His idea to adjust the openings, seems a bold one. It is arguably less insensitive and has more architectural integrity than replacing the full balconies with juliette balconies, which would appear as the poor cousins to those retained in the counterpart block. But this merely treats the consequence of the removal of the balconies. It softens the blow, but it does not justify their removal.
24. There is no dispute between the parties that the removal of the balconies would significantly change the character of Linkenholt Mansions. The appellant's point is that the significance of the CA would not be harmed because the building would still make a positive contribution after the balconies were removed.

25. However, the building has now been recognised as a non-designated heritage asset. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that the significance of any heritage asset should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. I describe its significance above. The building's balconies are an intrinsic part of an important element of the historic and architectural significance of the building. Their removal would not sustain the heritage significance of the building or the place, nor their contribution to the quality of life of present and future generations.
26. In conclusion, the removal of the front balconies would not preserve the appearance of the CA. Instead, it would undermine its architectural and historic significance, as well as the architectural integrity and significance of the non-designated heritage asset.
27. The unstable condition of the balconies, which have been sealed off and propped, was discovered only relatively recently, during conservation works. The balconies cantilever from steel or iron floor beams by steel filler joists. A clinker concrete between the joists forms the balcony slab. Moisture and the acidity of the clinker have severely corroded the infill joists, to the degree that in places the section loss of the joists is 100%. Indeed, cracking of the window heads below some balconies can be seen. Their detailing has also made a thermal bridge between the inside and the outside.
28. Because of the advanced stage of the deterioration of the balconies, in-situ repair, I heard, is no longer feasible. The options to solve the demise of the balconies are to strengthen them; to reconstruct them; or the subject of this proposal, to remove them.
29. Strengthening by inserting a new slab beneath the balconies and new supporting columns to carry their load would harm the appearance of the building more than this proposal, to remove them. Interested parties suggested an alternative, strengthening scheme, using steel corbels with strapping plates to support the existing balconies, like the recent repairs at Bridge Avenue Mansions. This was discussed at the hearing, and a structural engineer's evidence was submitted afterwards. The structures of the two buildings, and their conditions, are not comparable. The feasibility of such a scheme here was dismissed because of the

- more severe corrosion at Linkenholt, and the lack of suitable locations to carry the corbels. I have no reason to disagree with the structural engineer's conclusion.
30. Reconstruction could result in thicker balcony slabs, and the balustrades may need to be raised to meet Building Regulations. Thicker slabs would diminish some of the delicacy of the balconies. Raising the balustrades would bring them higher than the stone string course in the walls. However, I see no reason why a sensitive and compliant design of balustrading could not be devised to assist with alignment. Though there are no detailed reconstruction proposals before me, from what I heard, the impact on the significance of the CA would be substantially less than this proposal to remove an original feature, which the CAA identifies as being a threat to the CA.
31. I acknowledge that the cost of reconstruction would be substantially greater than the cost of removal. Reconstruction would require temporary propping to the building, and occupiers would have to live elsewhere during the works. However, there is no substantive evidence that reconstruction is unviable, rather than overly onerous, or that without the approval of the removals, the conservation of the building is in jeopardy. There is no clear and convincing justification for the harm to the significance of the CA, to the conservation of which the Framework requires that great weight be given.
32. Given the scale and the nature of the proposal, the degree of harm I have identified to the CA would be less than substantial, and at the lower end of that measure of harm, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight. However, this does not equate to a less than substantial planning objection, especially where the statutory test is not met. Under such circumstances, Local Plan² (LP) policy CC4 and the Framework advise that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
33. Occupiers presently have no access to the balconies, for safety reasons. And they are shallow and small by today's space standards. The proposal would be a significant improvement on this situation by providing alternative or additional private, outdoor space at the rear, and of a size and configuration that would meet modern standards in terms of space and utility. Such an improvement to housing would be a public benefit, though there is no evidence to suggest that the new and

² Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030

extended balconies at the back are dependent on the removal of those at the front, which tempers the weight I give this.

34. Under the proposal, the present propping would be removed and the risk of deterioration of the floors removed. This would contribute to the fabric conservation of the building, another public benefit. However, as there is an alternative, reconstruction option, which would conserve the building but with less harm, this limits the weight I can accord these proposals.
35. I acknowledge too that the new and enlarged balconies would have taller guarding than at present, to meet the fall risk requirements of the Building Regulations. However, I am not certain that there are no alternative strategies or designs which could sensitively mitigate any such risks on the present rear balconies, without the removal of the front balconies. Despite all the public benefits of the proposals, they do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
36. I conclude on this issue that the proposed development would not preserve the appearance of the CA. It would undermine its architectural and historic significance, as well as the architectural integrity and significance of the locally listed building. It would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, and paragraph 210 of the Framework. While London Plan policy D4 and LP policy SC5 to which the Council refers and which concern how good design is delivered and how much space to provide in new housing are less relevant, the development would conflict with LP policies CC1, CC2, and CC4. These say that the Council will seek to ensure that development conserves and takes opportunities to enhance the special qualities and heritage of the borough's places; support high quality architecture to create attractive, distinctive places; and which require development to conserve the character of the area, to respect among other things, the form of the existing architecture, and to have regard to any harm to the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, including locally listed buildings.
37. It would also conflict with London Plan policy HC1 which requires development to conserve the significance of heritage assets by being sympathetic to their significance and appreciation within their surroundings.

The living conditions of surrounding occupiers

38. The proposals include, at the back of the building, and to the internal flank of one of its wings, enlarged and new balconies.
39. Vaughan Avenue: There would be a risk of overlooking into No.2 and its garden from the new balconies. However, this would be from an oblique angle, rather than head-on. Trees and shrubs between the balconies and Vaughan Avenue would help to mitigate overlooking into the garden. Given the angle of view, the separation distance, the trees, and the fact that the rooms which the balconies would serve already look onto Vaughan Avenue, I cannot find a risk of unacceptable loss of privacy because of overlooking from the new and enlarged balconies.
40. The risk of some degree of noise or disturbance is not unusual in built-up residential areas, including from the use of balconies. However, the size of these balconies, and their splayed plan shape, would limit the number of people they could contain, as well as the activities people could do while upon them. Over the present condition, and given the location of the proposal in this built-up area where rear balconies on mansion blocks have been a feature for more than 100 years, I find no risk of unacceptable loss of privacy to occupiers in Vaughan Avenue because of noise, disturbance, or artificial light from the balconies.
41. Pleydell Avenue: New and enlarged balconies on the rear elevation would be around 18m from the houses in Pleydell Avenue. There is substantial tree screening on the boundary between these houses and the balconies. Moreover, the rooms serving the balconies, and the existing rear balconies in similar positions to those proposed, already look out towards Pleydell Avenue. In these circumstances, the degree of any additional overlooking from the proposals would not harm the privacy of occupiers in Pleydell Avenue. For similar reasons to my findings above on Vaughan Avenue and the risk of noise or disturbance including from artificial light, I cannot find a risk of unacceptable loss of privacy in these aspects either.
42. Stamford Brook Avenue: The new and enlarged balconies would introduce the risk of overlooking into the back gardens of No.1 and 7-12 Linkenholt Mansions. However, the bedrooms of the flats already overlook obliquely into these gardens. As above, the size of the balconies, and their splayed plan shape, would limit the range of activities and the number of people they could contain. Furthermore, in

the built-up area, there is a degree of commonly accepted overlooking. For similar reasons as above, I find no risk to the privacy of the occupiers of No.1 and Nos. 7-12 from this additional overlooking, nor from noise and disturbance and artificial light.

43. Within Linkenholt Mansions: A small balcony serves flat No.16. A similar one serves flat No.18. These project into the space between the two wings of the building. These would be slightly enlarged, and their shape altered. However, the increase in their area and projection would be marginal. Their splayed design would limit the number of people using them and their activities. Moreover, the building was designed to provide several aspects to the flats including small areas of private space by means of balconies. In these circumstances, I see no risk to the loss of privacy from the proposed enlargements to the occupiers of the flats opposite or around them.
44. I conclude on this issue that there would be no harm to the living conditions of surrounding occupiers, and no conflict with LP policy CC2 which expects development to have a positive impact on the amenity of current and future residents, to provide adequate levels of privacy, and to minimise direct overlooking through careful layout and design. Nor would there be any conflict with the Framework, where it indicates that developments should have a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Conclusion

45. Though the proposal would not harm the living conditions of surrounding occupiers, it would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act, and paragraph 210 of the Framework. It would not be in accordance with the development plan, when read as a whole, and there are no other material considerations, including the Framework, which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, and having considered all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Mr Patrick Whelan
INSPECTOR

Appearances

For the appellant:

Helen Cuthbert FRTPI

Planning Advisor, Planning Potential Ltd

Dr Jonathan Edis BA MA PhD MIfA IHBC

Heritage Consultant, HCUK Group

Sam Holden ARB

Architect, Stephen Taylor Architects

Sam Logan

Investment Director, Dorrington London Flats Ltd

Julia Webb

Building Surveying Director, Dorrington London Flats Ltd

For the local planning authority:

Leon Machisa

Deputy Planning Area Manager,
LB Hounslow

Alexander De

Senior Conservation Officer,
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Evidence submitted after the hearing

Covering email to PINS from the appellant of 4 November 2025, together with a letter (structural strategy) from Ridge to the appellant, of 3 November 2025.