
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2025

by **M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 December 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/25/3371506

72-73 Lithos Road, London NW3 6EY

- 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 Ganiyu Laniyan [Shian Housing Association Ltd] against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
 - The application Ref is 2025/1968/P.
 - The development proposed is the replacement of single glazed timber frame windows and doors on front, rear and side elevations with double glazed uPVC frame windows and doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description in the banner heading above is taken from the Council's decision notice as it more accurately reflects the development proposed.
3. This appeal is one of 6 relating to the replacement of timber framed windows within different properties that form part of the Lithos Road estate¹. Each appeal has been considered separately and determined independently of one another, although there are common themes and repetition within my reasoning.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in relation to this appeal are i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and wider area and ii) whether the proposal is an environmentally sustainable form of development.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site comprises a corner building at the end of a terrace of town houses. It has a generally plain façade with the exception of the prominent projecting glazed feature to the stairwell, that mirrors the same feature at the opposite end of the terrace, outside of the appeal site. It therefore contributes to the strong architectural harmony of the symmetrically designed and proportioned terrace. The site forms part of a purpose-built 20th century housing estate arranged around a communal garden. The buildings visually relate to each other such that the estate has its own distinct character in contrast to the traditional terraces located further along Lithos Road to the north-east. As a component part of a

¹ Appeal references APP/X5210/W/25/3371504, APP/X5210/W/25/3371505, APP/X5210/W/25/3371507, APP/X5210/W/25/3371508 and APP/X5210/W/25/3371509.

larger terrace, the appeal site contributes positively to the overall appearance of the housing estate and wider area.

6. The Camden Planning Guidance; Design (CPGD) 2021 emphasises the importance of materials to the architectural design of a building. It recognises that the quality of a well-designed building can be reduced by the use of poor-quality or an unsympathetic palette of materials. The Home Improvements Camden Planning Guidance (HICPG) 2021 expands on this, by strongly discouraging the use of uPVC windows for aesthetic and environmental reasons. Such guidance applies regardless of whether a particular site is a designated heritage asset or located within one. However, it does not prohibit the use of uPVC. I will come back to the environmental considerations of the proposal in the second main issue below.
7. The more contemporary architectural language of the appeal site and the wider housing estate, whilst providing flexibility in material choice, does not automatically render uPVC acceptable. Notwithstanding that there are other buildings and dwellings nearby which have uPVC windows, within the housing estate timber windows and patio doors are the prevalent and original material. This is particularly the case for the terrace of town houses, where all of the existing windows remain as timber. The installation of double glazing is not in itself disputed by the Council, rather it is the specific material of the framing and the implications that has for the profile, proportions and design of the windows that is the cause for concern.
8. The submitted plans and details demonstrate that the proposed uPVC doors and windows would have chunkier frames and a more uniform, flatter finish. Even with a woodgrain finish and similar opening arrangements, they would not fully replicate the design or proportions of the existing windows. Without any ornamentation or other structures such as front balconies to filter views, the proposed windows would be distinguishable poor-quality replacements, visually jarring with the more slender and refined timber windows that would remain in the rest of the terrace.
9. The full-height stairwell window is a key architectural feature. Any increase in mullion thickness or alteration to its fenestration pattern would disrupt its deliberate proportions and balance of glazing to frame. However, it is unclear from the submitted plans how much of the full height feature window would be replaced or retained. The submitted elevation drawings indicate that the replacement windows would match the fenestration pattern of the feature window which includes panes of multiple sizes. However, the proposed window details for W4 indicate just one size of windowpane². This would result in an entirely different fenestration pattern to the existing, which would present a harmfully conspicuous design, contrary to the feature window at the opposite end of the terrace. The proposed development would therefore undermine and erode the rhythm and harmony of the principal elevation of the appeal site and the wider terrace. There are no other plans or details that would lead me to a different view.
10. The modest harm would be evident in close and medium range views from Lithos Road. While timber replacements might still appear new, they would not cause the same degree of harm. I find that the proposed development would not respect the specific context.

² As shown on drawing number 2023/148/72-72 -04.

11. I am also considering a separate appeal for the installation of uPVC windows in the adjacent properties of 67-71 Lithos Road³. It is suggested that this indicates a move towards visual consistency across the block. However, there is no evidence that there is a proposal to change the windows in the remaining terrace beyond No 67 to the east, or that those properties are within the control of the appellant. Rather than ensuring visual consistency, the proposal would harmfully erode the existing continuity of appearance.
12. The installation of thicker uPVC frames would not be particularly obvious within the rear elevation of the appeal site, given this would be seen in more medium distance views from the road and car park on the other side of the railway line. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the harm identified to the front elevation of the appeal site.
13. For the above reasons, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host building and the wider area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan (CLP) 2017 and Policy 2 of the Fortune Green and West Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (NP) 2015. Together these policies, amongst other things, require developments to comprise details and materials that are of a high quality and complement the local character.

Sustainability

14. Policy CC1 of the CLP requires all development to minimise the effects of climate change and encourages all developments to meet the highest feasible environmental standards, that are financially viable during construction and occupation. It supports and encourages sensitive energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings through criterion (d). I have not been led to a specific definition of what would constitute a 'sensitive' energy improvement. However, in the first main issue above I have found harm with regard to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, such that I am not satisfied that it could be considered as sensitive.
15. Moreover, criterion (f) of Policy CC1 expects all developments including refurbishments, to optimise resource efficiency by using materials with low embodied carbon content⁴. The explanatory text to the policy explains that embodied carbon is the carbon impact associated with the production, transport, assembly, use and disposal of materials. It does not include the carbon emissions associated with the energy used for heating, lighting or cooling in the building.
16. Therefore, the increase in the Standard Assessment Procedure rating for the energy efficiency of the dwellings by 5 points, and the high thermal performance of the proposed windows whilst important (U-value of 1.1 W/m²K), are not the only concern of the policy. Moreover, the suggested reduction in energy consumption relies on assumptions of energy sources and does not take into account actual usage of the residents within the appeal site, such that I do not find it a credible calculation.
17. In any event, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed uPVC windows and doors would have a better thermal performance than other material choices such as timber, or that they could not address the water ingress, decay and draught

³ Appeal reference APP/X5210/W/25/3371505.

⁴ As set out in paragraphs 8.17 and 8.18 of the explanatory text to Policy CC1 of the CLP.

penetration the appellant reports. No specific evidence has been submitted to substantiate the appellant's claim that uPVC is durable, recyclable and has a lower embodied carbon footprint compared to FSC-certified hardwood.

18. In contrast, the HICPG strongly discourages uPVC windows for environmental reasons. It states that timber window frames have a lower embodied carbon content than uPVC and aluminium versions, including emissions from extraction, refinement, transportation and processing. The CPGD also references the inability of uPVC to biodegrade.
19. To support this position, the Council has also provided numerous academic and other independent studies that recognise timber as a sustainable material that with maintenance, can last longer than uPVC⁵. The Roma Tre University review found that wooden frames generally have low levels of embodied energy and carbon dioxide emissions relative to their production processes. uPVC windows in contrast, were found to be more energy intensive and responsible for high emissions of harmful by-products such as hydrocarbons, dioxins, vinyl chloride, phthalates and heavy metals. Wood is consistently attributed by the academic and other sources as having the lowest embodied energy and the best environmental performance. They therefore reinforce what the guidance within the HICPG and CPGD seeks to achieve in conjunction with Policy CC1 of the CLP.
20. The appellant has not sought to dispute the findings of these studies nor provided a specific comprehensive assessment on resource efficiency/embodied carbon energy of the proposed windows, compared to possible timber or other alternatives. For this reason, I find that it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would optimise resource efficiency by using a material with a low embodied carbon content. Thus, the proposal would not be a sustainable form of development and it would conflict with Policy CC1 of the CLP, as set out above.

Other Matters

21. Reference is made to an appeal which allowed the replacement of timber windows with uPVC replacements at Sequoia House⁶. That site differs in its position, visibility and architectural style, including heavily detailed balconies that filter views of the windows behind. Whilst consistency in decision-making is important, I am satisfied that there are material differences between the contexts of the 2 sites, such that an alternative outcome to this appeal is not irrational.
22. I have come to a different conclusion in respect of the compliance of this scheme with Policy CC1 of the CLP, given that it requires all of the first 6 criteria to be met, to demonstrate appropriate climate change mitigation, not just whether it amounts to sensitive energy efficiency improvements⁷. In this regard, my findings accord with the Inspector for the Kilburn High Road appeals⁸.
23. The Council has previously permitted aluminium replacement windows in Laurel and Sandalwood House's. I have not been provided with any information other

⁵ Including but not limited to, 'Embodied Energy and Embodied GWP of Windows: A Critical Review' by Asdrubali et al of the Department of Engineering, Roma Tre University 2021; 'Double or Triple Glazing? All Pane and No Gain?' by Circular Ecology 2014 and 'Whole Life Analysis of Timber, Modified Timber and Aluminium Clad Timber Windows' by the Institute of Building and Urban Design at Heriot-Watt University 2013 as provided at appendices F-H of the Council's Statement of Case.

⁶ Appeal decision APP/X5210/W/24/3349805.

⁷ As indicated in the wording of Policy CC1 with 'and' linking criterion a-e with f.

⁸ Appeal decisions APP/X5210/C/22/3305743 and APP/X5210/W/22/3302064.

than the decision notice and plans which explains the reasons that the Council came to these decisions. Be that as it may, aluminium is a different material to uPVC such that the proposals are not like for like. The decisions were also made prior to the adoption of the HICPG and CPGD. This does not affect my findings.

24. A petition has been submitted in support of this proposal including signatories from different houses within the housing estate. Support does not indicate a lack of harm and I am not satisfied based on the evidence presented, that the benefits of improved thermal insulation, safety and noise reduction could not be achieved by alternative materials. Neither has it been demonstrated that ongoing maintenance or other alterations such as secondary glazing could not provide similar benefits to the residents. This attracts limited weight.

Conclusion

25. The proposed development would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with it. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

M Clowes

INSPECTOR