

The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future
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Please reply to:
Vivienne Lewis,



4th August 2020

Lambeth Planning
Development Management
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For the attention of Mr Simon Brooksbank

Planning@lambeth.gov.uk

66 Blenheim Gardens, SW2 ref 20/01346/ful, comments on Planning Statement submitted July 2020

I write on behalf of the Brixton Society.

We objected to the proposed development in May 2020 on the grounds that the proposed extension is contrary to

Lambeth Local Plan 2015 policy Q5 (local distinctiveness) which states that proposals should respond to the local context and historic character in terms of townscape/landscape character, and to

Lambeth Local Plan 2015 policy Q11 (building alterations and extensions) which states that roof additions will not be supported where they would harm the architectural integrity or the original building or its group.

Lambeth Building Alterations and Extensions SPD 2015 paragraph 4.28 which (referring to roof extensions to flat roofed properties) states that “straight up off the existing front and rear elevations is unlikely to achieve the subordination required by Policy Q11 (b)”

In July 2020 the applicants submitted a Planning Statement in which they attempt to address criticisms which have been made of the scheme on design grounds. We do not consider that this Statement fully addresses these criticisms, and we believe that the application should be refused.

The main argument which the applicants put forward in the Planning Statement is that the proposed extension is compliant with policy Q11 as it will

- a. provide additional living space,
- b. the impact on the terrace will not be significant
- c. and there are precedents for similar extensions to terraced buildings in other parts of the borough and so it would be unreasonable for this application to be refused.

We would argue against these points as follows

- a. housing need - while it is true that the Lambeth Plan supports the principle of optimising the borough's housing stock by allowing extensions, the Plan makes it clear that this must be balanced against other considerations. Policy Q11 requires us to consider the impact on the other buildings in the terrace, and Policy Q5 requires us to consider the impact on the surrounding townscape. In the present case, while the development would create two additional bedrooms and a second bathroom for the applicants, we would argue that the harm that would be caused to the local townscape outweighs this.
- b. local impact - by adding a storey to a property in the middle of a terrace of six two-storey houses, the proposed extension would dominate the terrace of properties of which it forms a part. More significantly, it would create a precedent for further roof extensions to properties on the Blenheim Gardens Estate which includes 42 terraces of two storey houses identical to the one which includes 66 Blenheim Gardens. No property on the estate of approximately 400 homes currently has a roof extension. While the Blenheim Gardens Estate is not a conservation area, it is widely regarded as an example of good design – for example, just after it was built in 1974 it was highly commended in the Good Design in Housing Awards (annual award established by the Ministry of Housing), and more recently was praised in the English Heritage publication *Housing in Lambeth* by Elaine Harwood and Gerard Franklin (a book about post war public housing in Lambeth, to which the authors pay tribute). The risk is that this development would open the way to a series of unplanned and unco-ordinated extensions across the Blenheim Gardens Estate. The effect would be to undermine the historic landscape and architectural integrity of an estate described as “a wonderfully preserved example of London’s 1960s style high density low rise public housing”.
- c. Precedents – the three examples listed in the appendix to the Planning Statement are very different in character from Blenheim Gardens, as they involve extensions to buildings within terraces where there are range of different property styles, in one case a street of 19th century terraced houses some flat fronted and some with bay windows, while the others appear to be extensions to blocks of two storey mid 20th century flats facing terraces of Victorian houses. There is no comparison with the proposal here to add a roof extension to a single property in the middle of a well regarded council estate where it forms part of a terrace of six identical properties, facing another six properties across a pedestrian walkway and which in turn is part of a village of 42 identical terraces on either side of gardens .

The Planning Statement also refers to the Lambeth Building Alterations and Extensions SPD, stating that the proposed extension is compliant because it is set back at the front and the rear (the Statement says it is set back from the front and rear boundaries, but we assume this a mistake and they mean from the boundary of the host building). We disagree with this claim, as the the proposed extension would extend vertically more or less vertically above the front and rear elevations of the existing property, with a 60 cm recess from the front and rear elevations, and thus would form a dominating feature in views of the terrace from both the front and rear.

We strongly oppose to the development proposals and request that the application is refused.

Vivienne Lewis

For the Brixton Society