

London Borough of Redbridge, Town Hall PO Box 2 Ilford IG1 1DD

Proof of Evidence

Urban Design Julia Williams
Officer

Direct Line: 020 8708 2013
Fax: 020 8708 2062
LPA Ref: 3398/08
PINS Ref: APP/W5780/A/09/2119252
E-mail: julia.williams@redbridge.gov.uk
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Section 78 of the Town And Country Planning Act 1990

Town and Country Planning Appeals (Determination by Inspectors) (Inquiries Procedure) (England) Rules 2000 (SI 2000/1625)

Appeal against Refusal Notice dated 28th July 2009

Proof of Evidence of Julia Williams BArch (Hons) PGDip Urban Planning and Design

APPEAL BY: Telford Homes PLC

LOCATION: Chepstow, Leicester Road, London, E11 2DW

PROPOSAL: Development of 24 dwellings comprising of 6 x 4 bedroom, two storey semi-detached houses and 3 x three storey apartment blocks (Referred to as blocks A, B and C) totalling 16 x 3 and 2 x 2 bedroom flats together with associated car parking and landscaping (MAJOR APPLICATION).

Julia Williams will say:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 I hold a Postgraduate Diploma in Urban Planning and Design from the University of Melbourne, Australia. In addition, I am a qualified architect with an Honours degree in Architecture from Deakin University, Australia. I have over seven years professional experience working as an Urban Designer in the public and private sectors, just over four of which have been with the London Borough of Redbridge. Prior to my time in urban design, I spent over seven years in private practice in the capacity of Project Architect. During this time, I focused mainly on small to medium scale residential projects, and provided the full range of professional services from schematic design to project completion. I am recognised as a registered architect in Australia, which is equivalent to RIBA Part 3.
- 1.2 I am familiar with the subject site, having seen various proposals for the site over the past few years. Whilst I have not personally made formal comments on the proposals that are the subject of these concurrent appeals, I have been involved in round-table office discussions as part of the Conservation and Urban Design team when these schemes were originally being evaluated. I rely upon the Council's files and records for the period preceding my involvement.
- 1.3 My evidence addresses that part of the Council's refusal notice dated 28th July 2009 which is concerned with the suitability of the design of the proposal in the context of the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area. My evidence principally concentrates on blocks B and C located on Nutter Lane, but I have also been asked to comment on the design of block A to the corner of Leicester Road and Gloucester Road.
- 1.4 My evidence will inevitably overlap with the Proof submitted by my colleague Simon Algar on the critique of the proposed scheme as it relates to conservation issues.
- 1.5 My evidence will be set out as follows: -

2. Description of the appeal site and environs

3. Site context
4. Description of the proposed development
5. Relevant policies
6. Assessment of the proposed development and evidence in support of the decision to refuse permission
7. Summary and conclusion
8. List of appendices

2 Description of the appeal site and environs

- 2.1 The appeal site is located in the south east of the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area, which was designated in 2009. The irregularly shaped site covers an area of 0.473 hectares, and was formerly occupied by a 1920's detached dwelling named 'Chepstow', now demolished. Within the site there are a number of mature trees, some protected by a Tree Preservation Order. These individual specimens and groups of trees provide visual amenity for the site, and an established setting for new development. A high timber fence currently surrounds much of the site.
- 2.2 The immediate surrounding area is residential, comprising primarily detached and semi-detached housing from the 1900's to the 1930's, set within generous plots, with some examples of more recent development also. Gloucester Road features a uniform streetscape of inter-war semi-detached houses. Leicester Road and Nutter Lane feature a greater mix of dwelling types and styles, including detached houses, terraces, bungalows and a recent three-storey block of flats located opposite the subject site. Adjacent to the site on Nutter Lane are a row of locally listed terraced Arts and Crafts style cottages, known as Roding Cottages. Further west along Nutter Lane is a Grade II listed house, known as Applegarth. There is a sense of spaciousness and greenery in this part of Nutter

Lane, created by the bungalows which are lower in height than all others in the vicinity and by both Nutter Lane Sports Ground, and the well treed appeal site.

3 Site context

3.1 Urban Form

3.1.1 The appeal site is located in a conservation area comprising a number of architectural styles.

3.1.2 Leicester Road, in the vicinity of the appeal site, could be seen as an interface between the older development of The Grove Estate, and the subsequent development of the Counties Estate. In addition, the vicinity of the site is at the confluence of two differing urban characters, one with a rural feel, the other more formalised and suburban. Both these interfaces are noted on the Character Areas Plan.

3.1.3 Nutter Lane, to the south, was established by the medieval period, and preserves some of Wanstead's former rural character. It was noted in a Character Appraisal of The Grove Park and Counties Estates, produced by The Conservation Studio (hereafter referred to as the Character Appraisal), that "the historic route of Nutter Lane forms a rapid transition from the busy urban highway of Eastern Avenue to a more tranquil rural feel. Due to its gently sinuous curve, the rural feel of particular houses including Applegarth and Roding Cottages, the broad area of green open spaces of Nutter Field and particular groups of trees." "The well maintained public open spaces of the Nutter Lane Recreation Ground contribute to the rural feel of the winding path of Nutter Lane, and to the settings of both Applegarth and Roding Cottages."

3.2 Character areas and built form

3.2.1 The Character Appraisal identified six character areas within its wider study area. The appeal site is contained within Character Area 3, defined as 'Nutter Lane and the Nutter Recreation Ground'. This area is noted as having a more rural feel, with the style of buildings showing considerable variety. The large 18th century Grade II listed Applegarth

residence; the locally listed Arts and Crafts style Roding Cottages; and the 1930's bungalow on the corner of Nutter Lane and Leicester Road, are highlighted as notable buildings within this area.

- 3.2.2 The building line is noted as less formalised on Nutter Lane, contributing to the rural feel of this area, with irregularly sized plot widths, more varied spacing between buildings and buildings set at obtuse angles to the street frontage.
- 3.2.3 Although there is considerable variety in this area, there is an overall identifiable suburban residential character. That of a two storey, pitched roof dwelling, orientated to the street, behind a front garden of varying depth.
- 3.2.4 Of all considerations, the setting of the Arts and Crafts style Roding Cottages is one of the most prominent issues when assessing the design of blocks B and C. The Character Appraisal notes that the "range of 4 cottages are well recognised locally as providing a good representation of the Arts and Crafts movement and include two jettied central bays, steeply pitched roofs of clay tiles with several tall chimney stacks at the gable ends, in the centre of the roof crest and to the rear of the roof and, apparently structural, exposed timber framework on the exposed gables of the two central bays." The Character Appraisal recommends that "it would be advisable that any potential new developments nearby should not aim to copy its style or detailing, but should rather be of an unobtrusive scale and provide a sympathetic use of materials and landscaping to avoid impacts on its setting."

3.3 *Site interfaces*

- 3.3.1 The appeal site is bounded to the north-west, by Gloucester Road; to the south-west, by Leicester Road; to the south-east, by Nutter Lane; and to the north-east, by the side boundaries of residential properties fronting Gloucester Road, and Nutter Lane (Roding Cottages, locally listed Arts and Crafts style cottages).

3.4 *Aspect and views*

- 3.4.1 The southern corner of the appeal site, at the junction of Nutter Lane and Leicester Road, terminates a view line along Nutter Lane bearing northwards, before it bends to the north-east. As a consequence, this is a highly visible corner.
- 3.4.2 The south-western boundary of the site, along Leicester Road, terminates a view line along The Avenue, in the position previously occupied by the dwelling 'Chepstow'.
- 3.4.3 Long range views of the site are obtainable across Nutter Sports Ground, from Preston Drive. From this position, the roofscape of Nutter Lane is an important element.
- 3.4.4 From the appeal site there is an attractive south-east aspect over the green open space of Nutter Sports Ground, which faces the site on the opposite side of Nutter Lane.

4 **Description of the proposed development**

- 4.1 Blocks B and C both would be a 3 storey block of flats, containing 2 flats per floor, and a total of 6 flats each. They would be flat roofed and their front facades draw from the Art Deco style, particularly in the verticality of the curved stairwell, and the lift shaft.

4.2 *Building footprints*

- 4.2.1 Blocks B and C would both face onto Nutter Lane. Block B would be located almost in parallel to the adjoining Leicester Road. The footprint of block C would be rotated relative to block B, allowing it to respond to the orientation of the adjoining Roding Cottages, and the curve of Nutter Lane at this point. This rotation of block C would create a splayed space between the two blocks, and would permit the flank walls of either, or both, to be visible as they converge away from the road. At their closest point, they would be 1.5m apart. The submitted Nutter Lane Streetscene drawing does not accurately illustrate this.
- 4.2.2 The proposed locations of the footprints of block B and C are determined, in part, by existing site constraints. Block B would be located adjacent to the large Cedar tree, which

is protected by a Tree Preservation Order, and the proposed position of the building footprint allows space for its retention. Block C would be set back slightly to permit the retention of a Swamp Cypress tree, also protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

4.3 *Proximity to Roding Cottages*

4.3.1 Block C would be located approximately 2m from the side site boundary, at its front corner. The Roding Cottages are located approximately 9.9m from the side site boundary at the same point. The overall distance between would be 11.9m, with this adjoining site providing the majority of the spacing between the Cottages and block C.

4.4 *Floor plans*

4.4.1 The floor plans would comprise of a pair of three bedroom flats per floor, arranged behind a communal stairwell and lift. This floor plan is replicated over three floors, with the living rooms of the top floor flats set in slightly to create modest terraces.

4.4.2 The floor plans would be 13.25m deep, rising to 16m deep at the curved front staircase and lift shaft projection. They would be 16.25m wide to the front, rising to 16.9m towards the rear. The recessed top floor plan would be 11.5m deep, and 15.15m wide, rising to 15.7m wide towards the rear.

4.5 *General form and materials*

4.5.1 The overall form of the blocks would be generally square, this is due to the replicated floor plans over each level, and the flat roofs. Façades would be finished in face brickwork to the ground and first floor, with white render to the top floor, stairwell and lift shaft, and to narrow panels on the side elevations. The overall height of the blocks would be approximately 9m to the flat roof, rising to 9.9m at the lift shaft overrun. The tops of the flat roofs appear to be slightly taller than the ridge of the adjacent Roding Cottages.

4.6 *Street elevations*

4.6.1 Blocks B and C both would face and would be accessed from Nutter Lane, with the visually prominent curved and rendered communal stairwells denoting the entry points. Balconies and terraces would be provided to first and second floor living rooms, and have a pleasant aspect overlooking Nutter Lane Sports Ground.

4.7 *Side elevations*

4.7.1 All side elevations would follow the same composition of face brickwork with render generally above, and simple window styles. The composition is unchanged, whether it be the south elevation of Block B, partially visible through the trees from Nutter Lane; or the north elevation of block B and south elevation of block C, which would simply face each other at an angle, at close range.

4.8 *Private amenity space*

4.8.1 As noted above, balconies or terraces would be provided to living rooms above ground floor level. Juliet balconies would be provided to all double bedrooms at first and second floor levels, and would overlook the communal amenity space to the rear of blocks B and C.

4.9 *Communal amenity space and parking*

4.9.1 Communal amenity space would be provided to the rear of blocks B and C. Twelve car parking spaces would be provided to the south west of the blocks, on site of original Chepstow house. The car parking spaces would be accessed on foot via the pedestrian link within the site, and by vehicle from Leicester Road. Cycle parking for 18 would be located in a shelter within this car parking area.

5 Relevant policies

5.1 The policies outlined below are considered relevant to this appeal

5.1.1 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

5.1.1.1 PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development, sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. In addressing design, it states that design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted. Key objectives for design should include ensuring that developments respond to their local context and create or reinforce local distinctiveness.

5.1.2 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment

5.1.2.1 PPS 5 Planning for the Historic Environment, sets out the Government's national policies on the conservation of the built environment. In particular, Policy HE7.5 advises that authorities should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. The consideration of design should include scale, height, massing, alignment, materials and use.

5.1.3 London Borough of Redbridge Core Strategy Development Plan Document SP3: Built Environment

5.1.3.1 Strategic Policy 3: Built Environment, is an overarching policy covering seven aspects of design. Of these, three are most relevant to this appeal, namely that the Council will ensure that the Borough's built environment will be of a high quality that serves the long term needs of all residents by:

Preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas

Preserving the architectural or historic interest of Listed Buildings and their setting

Requiring all new buildings to be designed to a high standard

5.1.4 London Borough of Redbridge Borough Wide Primary Policies Development Plan Document E3 - Conservation of the Built Heritage

5.1.4.1 Policy E3 - Conservation of the Built Heritage, relates specifically to heritage assets such as conservation areas and locally listed buildings. In regard to conservation areas, it advises that development proposals must preserve or enhance the character of the area. In regard to locally listed buildings, it advises that development proposals must preserve the building or its setting, or any features of value that it possesses.

*5.1.5 London Borough of Redbridge Borough Wide Primary Policies Development Plan Document
BD1 - All Development*

5.1.5.1 Policy BD1 - All Development, is a general design policy containing thirteen principles against which development proposals are assessed, as considered appropriate for the type of scheme. The first six are most relevant to the Council's decision to refuse planning permission. Namely that a development must:

Be compatible with and contribute to the distinctive character and amenity of the area in which it is located

Be of a building style, massing, scale, density and design appropriate to the locality

Realise the potential of the land

Contribute to local architecture and design quality

Protect or enhance the effects on valuable habitats and species

Ensure that landscaping is an integral element in layout design, taking account of existing physical features (eg. trees, hedgerows, walls etc). Where appropriate trees and shrubs should augment the amenity and appearance of the site

6 Assessment of the proposed development and evidence in support of the decision to refuse permission

6.1 The stated reason for refusal is that the proposed development, particularly blocks B and C, is out of keeping with the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area; and that blocks B and C present an incoherent appearance to Nutter Lane; and are incongruous with the Arts and Crafts style cottages. The character of Wanstead Grove Conservation Area fails to be preserved or enhanced, which leads to the proposal being contrary to Policies E3 and BD1.

6.2 Siting and angle of building footprints

6.2.1 The footprints of blocks B and C are located at a splayed angle to each other. These 'internal' flank walls of Blocks B and C will be evident from Nutter Lane, as they converge leading away from the street. This will tend to make the volumes of blocks B and C read more as a single block. At their closest point they are only approximately 1.5m apart, and this proximity, in conjunction with their three storey height, will increase their apparent bulk. This is not correctly illustrated on the submitted Nutter Lane Streetscene drawing. A sense of spaciousness is preferred on Nutter Lane to reflect its rural past.

6.2.2 Whilst there is a precedent for building footprint locations along Nutter Lane to display some degree of variation, and they can be set at obtuse angles to the street frontage, the narrow separation between blocks B and C makes this siting inappropriate here, and is out of keeping with this part of Wanstead Grove Conservation Area.

6.3 Flat roof form

6.3.1 The flat roof form is not typical of the area, and there are no examples to be found in the vicinity of the subject site. The pitched roof, both in hipped and gable form, is a readily identifiable character of the area, and the circumstances of the site and its proposed development do not warrant a departure from this prevailing form. The reduced height of this proposal, as compared to the single block of flats on the previous appeal scheme 1, will assist it to fit into the roofscape panorama when viewed from Preston Drive.

However, the flat roof form would not blend harmoniously, as a proportion of roofing material is evident to each existing building from this view point.

6.4 *Scale*

6.4.1 The difference in scale between the proposed three storeys of block B, and the adjacent bungalow on corner of Nutter Lane and Leicester Road would be quite apparent in the longer range views obtained from Preston Drive, and the flat roof form with its lack of visible roofing material would serve to emphasise this contrast. It is out of keeping with the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area, and contributes to the perceived incoherent appearance to Nutter Lane.

6.4.2 Blocks B and C measure approximately 9m from ground level to roof top, and are slightly taller than the ridge of the adjacent Roding Cottages. Compared to the single block of flats A in the previous appeal scheme 1, the scale of these blocks is more appropriate, however the bulk of the flat roof form, with its eaves overhang, impacts upon the setting of the adjacent Roding Cottages. Although Roding Cottages are a similar height, the steeply sloping nature of their roof reduces their bulk, as it tapers away from the eaves. The Character Appraisal advises that new development nearby should be of an unobtrusive scale, and provide a sympathetic use of materials and landscaping to avoid impacts on its setting. The flat roof form would be incongruous next to Roding Cottages' distinctly steep pitched roof. Block C would tend to dominate the Cottages in the streetscape due to its additional mass at 2nd floor level, contributing to the perceived incongruous relationship. This impact is not fully apparent when viewed in a 'flat' elevation, however a 3D streetscape perspective along Nutter Lane would help to illustrate the relationship between the upper levels of the two buildings.

6.5 *Duplication of form*

6.5.1 As previously noted, the styles of building in the area show considerable variety, and there is no precedent for the replication of two sizeable freestanding houses on Nutter Lane. This duplication of form in blocks B and C also detracts from the unplanned rural feel identified on Nutter Lane, and is out of keeping with this part of Wanstead Grove Conservation Area. A distinct, but complementary, design approach is preferred.

6.6 *Similar design approach for all side elevations*

- 6.6.1 The south elevation of block B and north elevation of block C follow the same composition of face brickwork and render, and simple window styles as the north elevation of block B and south elevation of block C, which simply face each other at an angle, at close range. As evidenced on the Site Analysis plan, the south corner of the site terminates a view line in the neighbourhood, it contains a sizeable mature Cedar tree, adjacent to which block B is located. Accompanying documents to this planning application note the large Cedar tree to 'mask' and 'screen' the south elevation of block B. This design approach infers that the composition of this façade is of little consequence, as it will not readily be viewed. The space provided to retain this tree could be enhanced by a more considered façade design that responds to and helps define the space, treating it as a design opportunity.
- 6.6.2 The north elevation of block C will be seen as a backdrop to oblique views of Roding Cottages from Nutter Lane. Its quality will impact on the setting of the adjacent locally listed cottages.

6.7 *Facade detailing*

- 6.7.1 The level of façade detailing indicated, brickwork detailing and fenestration style for example, provides little visual interest. This is particularly so for the side elevations. The Inspector's report indicated that design detailing which reflects the best elements of buildings nearby could help ameliorate differences between the existing Roding Cottages and the proposed development (paragraph 21). The proposal appropriately utilises a combination of face brickwork and render finishes, as is typical of the area, however there are number of other details to surrounding houses, such as window sills and lintels; window surrounds; quoins; oriel windows; canopies over doors; dormer windows and chimneys. Not all of these details are appropriate for the proposed development, however it is an indicator of the greater degree of visual richness that exists in the area.
- 6.7.2 There is little precedent for balconies to street facades. This feature highlights the proposal as a different building typology to the predominant single dwelling types

evident in the vicinity. Whilst the aspect to Nutter Lane Sports Ground should be capitalised upon for future residents, inset type balconies, within the external envelope, may have been a more appropriate approach to help the proposal be in keeping with the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area.

6.8 *Roof Form of Block A*

6.8.1 Block A located at the corner of Leicester Road and Gloucester Road is a full 3 storey building where it turns the corner and then reduces to 2.5 storeys high on Gloucester and Leicester Roads. The roof form in Gloucester Road is an asymmetrical pitch with traditional style dormers. The roof form in Leicester Road is a mansard roof with projecting dormers. In my opinion, this variation in roof form results in a complex external appearance to the building by creating very different elevations to one building. Furthermore, the mansard roof feature itself is not a recognised architectural feature of the character of Wanstead Grove Conservation Area. The proposed block A would introduce the alien mansard roof form at a prominent corner location within the Conservation Area, thereby harming the character and appearance of the Wanstead Grove Conservation Area.

7 Summary and conclusion

- 7.1 In general, blocks B and C are out of keeping with Wanstead Grove Conservation Area; would present an incoherent appearance to Nutter Lane; and would be incongruous with the adjacent Arts and Crafts style Roding Cottages. This incoherent appearance is created by a combination of the siting of the footprints of blocks B and C; the flat roof form; the duplication of form for both blocks; and façade design and level of detailing proposed.
- 7.2 It is my opinion, for the reasons outlined above, that proposed blocks B and C conflict with the policies identified in the Council's Local Development Framework. Namely they fail to preserve or enhance the character of the conservation area; to preserve the setting of the locally listed building; to generally be compatible with and contribute to the

distinctive character and amenity of the area; be of a building style, massing, scale and design appropriate to the locality; and contribute to local architecture and design quality.

8 List of all appendices provided by the London Borough of Redbridge

LBR1 Photograph of view across appeal site towards Roding Cottages

LBR2 Photograph of Nutter Lane street frontage (from Recreation Ground)

LBR3 Annotated aerial photograph of appeal site and surroundings

LBR4 Copies of joint consultation responses from Conservation Officer and Urban Design Team

LBR5 Introduction and conclusion from Counties Residents Association document (April 2007)

LBR6 Template of petition from residents groups campaigning for conservation area status

LBR7 Copy of final draft version of Conservation Area Appraisal document

LBR8 Copy of report to committee recommending designation of conservation area

LBR9 Pages 15-17 of Conservation Area Appraisal document with colour emphasis to historical maps

LBR10 Copies of relevant Local Development Framework policies

LBR11 Site Analysis

LBR12 Character Areas Plan

LBR13 Copy of previous appeal decision relating to the appeal site

LBR14 Copy of local list description for Roding Cottages, Nutter Lane

LBR15 Copy of aerial photograph from Counties Residents Association showing the extent of the 'Counties Estate'