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Proof of Evidence

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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 20th January 2010

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 and part 2.5 storey apartment blocks (Referred to as blocks A, B and C) totalling 16 x 3 bedroom flats 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 20th January 2010 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 rise 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 This 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 2.5 storey block of flats, containing 2 flats per floor, and a total of 6 flats each. They would have pitched roofs and their front facades draw from the Arts and Crafts style, as exhibited in the adjacent Roding Cottages

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, and block C would be located parallel to it, at a distance of 3.2m. This parallel relationship is an improvement to the previous scheme.
- 4.2.2 The 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 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. Compared to the previous Art Deco-inspired scheme, block B is set further forward towards the street.

4.3 *Proximity to Roding Cottages*

4.3.1 Block C would be located approximately 3.9m from the side site boundary, at its front corner reducing to 1.1m at its rear corner. The Roding Cottages are located approximately 9.9m from the side site boundary at the same point. The overall distance between the Cottages and front corner of block C would be 13.1m, with this adjoining site providing the majority of the spacing.

4.4 *Floor plans*

4.4.1 The floor plans would comprise of a pair of three bedroom flats per floor, arranged around a communal stairwell and lift. This floor plan is replicated over two floors, with the upper floors, whilst still providing the same amount of accommodation, arranged a little differently.

4.4.2 Block B would measure 12.2m deep, rising to 14.9m deep with the front square bays, and would be 15.8m wide. Block C would measure 12.2m deep, rising to 13.4m deep with front central projections, and would be 15.8m wide.

4.5 *General form and materials*

4.5.1 The overall form of the blocks draws on the Arts and Crafts style, as exhibited by the adjacent Roding Cottages. Both blocks would rise to 9.6m high to the ridge of the gable end main roof, which is slightly taller than the adjacent cottages. Facades would be finished with face brickwork, and applied timber frame ornament to gable forms and dormer windows. Roof forms would be a complex combination of gable forms, with dormer windows and a central flat section.

4.6 *Street elevations*

4.6.1 Blocks B and C would both face and would be accessed from Nutter Lane, via entrances of domestic scale. Block B would have a central entrance point, with two projecting gable roofed bays either side. Block C also would have a central entrance point, but with two centralised projecting gable roofed bays. Balconies would be provided to first floor living rooms, and have a pleasant aspect overlooking Nutter Lane Sports Ground.

4.7 *Side elevations*

4.7.1 The 'internal' side elevations are would be simple compositions of unadorned face brickwork. The 'external' side elevations would provide more visual interest and articulation, with slightly projecting gable roofed bays, and a combination of face brickwork and applied timber frame ornament.

4.8 *Private amenity space*

4.8.1 As noted above, balconies would be provided to living rooms at first floor level.

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 settings
- 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 *Visual impact on Roding Cottages*

6.2.1 The design of Blocks B and C is clearly based on the design of Roding Cottages. In my opinion, however, they are a poor imitation. By virtue of their proximity, they would detract significantly from the contribution which the Cottages make to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These Arts and Crafts style cottages are unique to the local area, as evidenced by their locally listed status.

6.2.2 Block B is located further towards the street than the previously submitted scheme, and is located further forward than the building line of the Roding Cottages

6.2.3 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." This preferred approach has not been followed in this instance.

6.3 *Complexity of roof form*

6.3.1 The pitched roof form is a positive development from the flat roof of the previously submitted scheme. The pitched roofs may help blocks B and C blend better into the roofscape panorama when viewed from Preston Drive, as a proportion of roofing material is evident to each existing building from this view point. However, when viewed from the side, the proposed roof forms are complex, exacerbating the bulk of the scheme, and harming the setting of Roding Cottages.

6.4 *Similarity of form*

6.4.1 As previously noted, the styles of building in the area show considerable variety, and there is no precedent of two sizeable, similarly designed, freestanding houses on Nutter Lane. Furthermore, the design of Block A is also clearly influenced by the design of the Arts and Crafts Cottages. In my opinion, not only would that block also be a poor imitation but the combination of the three blocks together, in close proximity to the

cottages, would create the impression of an estate form of development, which would be completely inappropriate on this site.

6.4.2 This similarity of form between all three blocks would detract also 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.

6.5 *Roof Form of Block A*

6.5.1 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, the development, particularly blocks B and C, is out of keeping with Wanstead Grove Conservation Area; and would be harmful to the character of the locally listed Arts and Crafts Cottages. This harm is created by a combination of the façade detailing proposed, the siting of the footprint of block B; the similarity of form for all three blocks; and the proposed roof form.

7.2 It is my opinion, for the reasons outlined above, that proposed development conflicts with the policies identified in the Council's Local Development Framework. Namely by failing 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'