

Conservation comments	
Reference number	20/119777
Address	208 Albyn road
Proposal	Mansard roof
Conservation Officer	Joanna Ecclestone
Date	04/02/2021

Significance

The character and appearance of the Brookmill Conservation Area is made up of modest, 2-storey houses, originally for working and lower middle classes, built mainly between 1850 and 1890. Houses are usually grouped in short terraces of two, four, six or eight in which the single house forms a unit within the larger entity of the street. Despite some differences in elevational treatment of the terraces, the character of the area is one of great architectural unity with the occasional accent at a street corner.

The houses are constructed from yellow stock brick under its original slate 'London' or 'butterfly' roof with flank walls and chimney stacks. The butterfly roof is very typical of this terrace and was used extensively in the 19th century on terraced houses which can be found throughout this conservation area. The roof is concealed behind the front façade by a continuous parapet with stucco cornice, obscuring the pitches and gutter, with only chimney stacks and pots visible above the corniced parapets. Views from public vantage points on return streets across rear gardens also allow views of the rear elevations and London roofs, where the repeated 'V' roof shape is visible and forms a characteristic and attractive pattern. Rainwater goods discharge to the rear of the properties and the group has paired, two storey outriggers.

The intended consistent architectural features and hidden roofline to the terraces creates strong group value, and forms part of an architectural composition within this group of buildings, the local street scene and the wider conservation area.

208 Albyn Road is on the e-w oriented leg of Albyn Road at the southern end of the CA which was constructed later than the northern end. It is the lower end of a group of four that step down the hill two by two. It has the characteristic form and roofscape that are typical of and characteristic to the Brookmill Conservation Area and as such is a NDHA. The middle two of this group however have mansard roof extensions that were permitted in 2009 (204) and 2011 (206).

Impact

Mansard roof extensions interrupt the existing roofline of the terrace and detract significantly from the uniform character of the streets. They are architecturally and historically unacceptable as they fail to preserve the essential uniformity of the character and appearance of the CA, and the hidden roofscape.

This proposal would cause a moderate to high degree of harm (in the range of less than substantial in NPPF terms) to the character and appearance of the CA.

- The addition of a mansard would create an incongruous and architecturally incorrect

addition to the streetscape, severely eroding the coherent original design.

- The mansard itself is poorly designed, with no parapet gutter, the dormer pitch rising direct from the front parapet wall; and a high party wall extending the end elevation vertically;
- No indication is given of where rainwater pipes are routed to and so it is unclear if additional harm to the front would be resultant from additional down pipes which are historically routed to the rear.

It must be seen in the context of 4 mansards that have been granted permission on this stretch of Albyn Road.

204 - 09/073203, granted permission by Committee, overturning Officer recommendation to refuse. Officer noted *'while the Council remains supportive of sustainable development and sensitive to the housing needs and aspirations of families in Lewisham, it must be noted that these matters do not override the statutory duty placed on the Council to only approve development which preserves or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area'*.

206 – 11/077036. Delegated decision; officer report stated *'There would normally be a strong objection to the proposed mansard roof extension on conservation grounds. Notwithstanding the existence of four recently completed mansard extensions just east [sic] of the site and a further single mansard extension at No204 (adjacent), and an extant permission at No 152 and No 164 the terrace to which the application relates exemplifies a largely complete original design with the existing roofline only interrupted by the mansard extension at No204. Despite the retained front parapets, the recently erected mansards at 140 to 146 Albyn Road are nonetheless clearly visible from street level, particularly from the pavement on the other side of the road and in long views along Albyn Road. They interrupt the existing roofline of the terrace and detract significantly from the uniform character of the terraces along the street. It would normally be considered that the introduction of a further mansard at 206 Albyn Road would have the same harmful effect, introducing another incongruous feature into the roofscape. The roofline pattern and rhythm of the very typical and characteristic London roofs and their V-shaped rear walls would be clumsily interrupted by the proposed mansard roof extension. The extension would constitute a dominant and bulky addition and the proposal would normally be considered detrimental to the character of the building and to the uniformity of roof form in the terrace and the wider conservation area.In summary, despite mansard roof extensions (and the design of those built to date) raising significant conservation concerns in this location, it is recommended that in this case the proposed development be accepted given its immediate context of approved extensions in Albyn Road within the Brookmill Road Conservation Area.'*

208 - 13/082547 (now out of time) – Officer report repeats the statement above, with the addition of the permission at no. 206.

210 – 20/117231 Conservation objection – Officer's report stated *'Officers, having regard to the statutory duties in respect of conservation areas in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the relevant paragraphs in the NPPF in relation to conserving the historic environment are satisfied that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Brookmill Road Conservation Area'*.

Additional recent guidance published since those first three previous decision is Historic England's Conserving Georgian and Victorian Terraced Houses (July 2020). This comments on roof alterations (page 15), and notes the significance of the visual subordination of roofscapes (hidden behind parapets), and raises issues to be considered – 3) enhancing consistency and 4) avoiding increasing the prominence of the roof on the front elevation. This proposal would not

comply with this guidance. (This supercedes now-archived advice on Mansards which also advised against addition of mansards on uniform terraces with hidden roofscapes)

SPD Alterations and Extensions April 2019 was adopted after the first three permissions. Para 5.12.4 Guidance on mansards in Conservation Areas states that *Where a sympathetic, traditional style mansard has been established as an accepted and prevailing characteristic within the street then future traditional style mansard proposals will be considered.* Mansard roof extensions can rarely be *acceptable or sympathetic* in this conservation area as they are fundamentally an inappropriate alteration to this building typology. They will only ever be acceptable where they *genuinely* create beneficial consistency in a streetscape that is otherwise *dominated* by mansard alterations. That was not the case for the latest permission at no. 210 which was on a group of 4 houses unified by a hidden roofscape, where all the original roofs survived. Prior to that permission the original roofscape still remains on 85% of the houses in the street (or if permitted schemes are also included – could have survived on 74%).

The presence of other mansards on the same street does not, in my opinion, provide justification for additional harm. It will not *enhance consistency*: the majority of the roofscape in this street is still as original and policy and guidance requires that this is preserved as it is a highly significant element of character and appearance which has been protected by CA designation. The cumulative impact of additional mansard roofs will be such that the character and appearance of the street and the CA will be increasingly and irretrievably harmed.

Given the recent permission at no. 210 adjacent against conservation advice, no. 208 becomes a site where adding a mansard will result in consistency across 4 adjacent houses (although not unfortunately a terraced group of 4). This results in a degree of ‘consistency of harm’, as it will smooth out the gap-toothed appearance that would otherwise have been created. However, the cumulative harm caused by loss of the historic roof form and impact on the original roofscape of the CA remains and, as precedent is being used to justify more loss of the historic roofscape, permitting this proposal is only likely to contribute to the loss of future historic roofscapes, contrary to DM 36 B4b.

There is no public benefit proposed that would outweigh the harm caused to the designated heritage asset, the Brookmill CA.

Justification

Additional habitable space

Policy

Section 72 of the Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

NPPF Para 130 - Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

NPPF Para. 193 - requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets and notes that significance can be harmed or lost through unsympathetic development.

NPPF 194 – Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.

NPPF 196 – Less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use

NPPF 197 – Effect of proposal on non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account; a balanced judgement should have regard to scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

NPPF 200 - Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

London Plan Policy HC1Heritage Conservation and growth.

CS15 - Design

CS 16 - Heritage

DM36

DM37

Recommendation

Refuse - contrary to NPPF, DM36, Alts and Extns SPD and HE guidance

Potential revisions/amendments

Revisions to the design will not outweigh the degree of harm that the proposal would cause or cause me to amend my in-principle objection.

If this does get approved due to the precedent already established on this site and elsewhere, rainwater goods must run to the rear, the mansard must be set back from parapet wall, slate must be natural, party wall must be lowered to the minimum allowable by building control, floor to ceiling height must be lowered to the minimum allowable to reference the hierarchy of floor heights.



View from east end – no. 208 on left.