

HGY/2022/4319 & HGY/2022/4320

Drapers Almshouses Edmansons Close, Bruce Grove, Tottenham, London, N17 6XD

Drapers Almshouses, 1-61 Edmansons Close, its associated chapel and Lodge House form a group and are grade II listed buildings. The site lies within the Bruce Castle and All Hallows Conservation Area and to the rear is the grade II listed Tottenham Magistrates Court.

The Almshouses are a group of five buildings centred around three sides of a central green with two short wings along the street. The chapel forms the centre facing onto the middle of green, with the lodge house set slightly apart from the main group to the south-west along Edmonson Close. The Almshouses date from 1868-9 and were designed by Herbert Williams for the Drapers Company which replaced three of their original lost almshouses.

The almshouses are two storeys designed in High Victorian Gothic style with polychromatic brickwork. The main buildings are formed of London Stock brick with red and black brick dressings and detailing and some stonework. The front facades have highly detailed gabled dormers and porches. The uniformity of the buildings and their consistently high-quality detailing. The chapel is taller and has a stone portico with gothic arched window which sits under an angled fleche which gives the communal building prominence. To the rear, the elevations are simpler with no ornamentation as these would not be seen by the public or visitors, but these retain their original openings and windows. The external appearance of the Almshouses, their composition, design and consistency and retention of original features contribute to their aesthetic value.

Internally the buildings have been significantly altered, with significant floor plan alterations occurring in the mid-late C20 when the cottages were altered into their current layout.

The composition and design of the buildings also contribute to the buildings illustrative historic value as a type of almshouses associated with Victorian philanthropy. The prominent chapel, plan form and architectural detailing are important characteristics of almshouses and, in addition to their architectural interest, also demonstrate historic qualities, such as the projection of piety and corporate status. The historic association with the Drapers Company, and with the company's Herbert Williams who also designed the Drapers Court and the Drapers' College (later High Cross School) in Tottenham High Road also contributes to the building's significance.

The almshouses also have communal value as they are almshouses and an element of community and social value associated with this use, there is also a chapel which has served in part as a community centre.

The Bruce Castle and All Hallows Conservation Area is defined by its historic buildings and their relationship to their respective historically significant open spaces, contrasting the surrounding later residential development. Alongside Bruce Castle and All Hallows Church, The Drapers Almshouses form one of the three important historic open spaces which survive in the Conservation Area, with the Almshouses forming an important landmark. The group of buildings form an important part of the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area and positively contribute to its significance.

The other heritage asset which the development site lies within its setting is the adjacent grade II Listed Tottenham Magistrates Court. The building is a well surviving suburban police court from 1937, associated with the noted W.T.Curtis. The buildings interest

primarily lies within its architectural design; however, it also has links to the Almshouses as it was built on the site of a girl's orphanage formerly supported by the Drapers Company.

Heritage statement & missing information

There are missing elevations and plans for the bin store and cycle store. The East or West elevations for the pavilions do not match the floor plans – the windows to the stairwell are inconsistent.

The plans submitted do not show the location of the ASHPs or PV panels and it is unclear if they will sit beneath the parapets on the proposed flat blocks.

There is no condition survey for the existing buildings and no information on the proposed refurbishment. A condition survey was required as part of the submission in previous pre-application advice. It is noted that the structural survey does not appear to accord with the proposed plans as it mentions removing the mezzanine floor to the chapel. Without a condition survey, this aspect of the proposals cannot be assessed, even if the scope of refurbishment could be conditioned.

There has evidently been a lot of work on the proposed works and an assessment of the existing buildings but not all of this information appears to have been included into the final heritage statement. The statement submitted does not read as a stand-alone document and appears to have some parts missing. It is noted that paragraphs 4.22 and 4.23 both refer to figures 3.6-3.9 but the document only goes up to figure 3.5.

The document is a statement of significance and discusses the values of the building and how it contributes to the significance of the building, although it does not discuss any illustrative historic value. There is also an impact assessment, but some areas of the proposed works are not discussed fully or discussed at an appropriate depth. The alterations to the listed almshouses cannot rely on the assessment carried out under the 2016 listed building consent application when the proposed alterations are different and more extensive, and the 2016 scheme was never implemented. There are also additional external alterations which appear include the loss of original windows. The heritage statement does not discuss the significance of the features to the rear of the building, including if the doors and windows are original, nor the impact if the proposed works to these elevations beyond the extensions proposed to 6 units. These works, and their impact on the significance of the listed building need to be more fully discussed.

It is also noted that there is no impact assessment on the conservation area, or for the magistrate's court but both are identified as heritage assets which are affected by the proposed works.

Proposed 'Pavilions' & Flat Block

The scale and massing of the proposed pavilions and the new flat block have been refined and demonstrated that they would not have an overbearing impact on the Almshouses. The pavilion flat blocks whilst visible from within the square, have been set back so they would not be prominent features and the flat block's size has been reduced so that it is not visible above the ridgeline of the Almshouses.

The design of the proposed flat blocks has taken a contemporary approach, which while allowing the buildings to be read as modern interventions is a slight missed opportunity. The design of the buildings, the main flat block in particular still appears slightly monolithic and

there is little visual reference to the surrounding almshouses. However, the blocks are not overbearing, and material and detail quality can be ensured through condition.

Demolition of 1970s infill and new block`

The 1970s infill block is not considered positively contribute to the significance of the listed building, the mansard roof and loss of separation between lodge and almshouses detract from the original composition. Its demolition in principle is generally considered to have a beneficial impact as it would restore the composition of the almshouses. However, there is no information on the condition of the former gable ends which would be uncovered as part of the works.

Ideally, even a rough idea of the condition of the gable ends should have been assessed to understand how viable it would be to restore them to their original form so the level of impact, could be better assessed. However, as the principle of demolition would restore the original composition of the building and would be beneficial this could be overcome through the imposition of conditions condition. A condition assessment, method statement for the proposed works and details for the proposed external materials and finishes for these gable ends could be ensured through condition.

The new replacement building is set perpendicular to the road and the almshouse wing and lodge house. This orientation allows a better appreciation of the original composition of the almshouses than the existing 1970s block and includes gaps to either side. The building itself is designed as a modern interpretation of the original cottages, reflecting their lean-to form, with some decorative brickwork. Ensuring the quality of the proposed materials and detailed design will be important for ensuring the high-quality design of this element, and how it sits within the wider composition of the almshouses.

Chapel

The works proposed to the chapel include the demolition of the rear single storey additions, the replacement in part with a disabled WC and a new staircase to the mezzanine. The replacement of the existing single storey buildings, and their replacement with a much smaller building housing a WC is considered to have a minor beneficial impact in the significance of the listed building as it would reveal slightly more of the Chapels exterior.

Internally the works included in the plans appear relatively minimal, the installation of a new staircase would not cause harm to the significance if the listed building, subject to detailed design.

Alterations to Existing Almshouses and Lodge House

As the almshouses were heavily altered internally in the 1970s, the plan form of the buildings has been disrupted, from cottages into flats. This means that many of the internal alterations proposed would affect more modern fabric. Some of the proposals, blocks 1 and 5 and the lodge house, would restore the original cottage footprint, the rest of the proposals include incorporating 2 original units into one house. Whilst the proposals would involve a considerable amount of demolition, including the likely original wall to the rear lean-to overall given that the original floor plan has been lost this is likely to cause a limited amount of harm to the significance of the listed buildings. Details of the structural interventions could be ensured through condition.

However, the proposed external alterations do not just affect modern fabric and would have a greater impact on the significance of the listed building affecting its architectural and historic interest.

The proposed extensions have been reduced to only be on 6 units, located on the units the closest to the chapel on block three and considerably reduced in size. The gabled design would occupy the full width of one original cottage, half of the new unit. The ridge height is lower than the existing ridge, so the extensions would not be visible from the central green in association with the principal elevation of the building. The loss of the appreciation of the original form of the building would cause some harm to the significance of the listed building, however the rest of the building as a group maintains its form and uniformity which would help limit this aspect of the impact. Nonetheless, the proposed extensions would result in the loss of the original rear walls of the building at both ground and first floor level. The proposed extensions would cause some harm to the significance of the listed building, through the loss of the original rear walls of the building, and the appreciation of the original built form of the building.

However, the proposed alterations to the rest of rear elevations of the existing almshouses are quite substantial. Most of the ground floor of the rear elevations are proposed to be demolished including the original sash windows, and the doors. While the rear elevations are not as decorated as the front elevations, this does not mean that they do not contribute to the significance of the listed building. The contrast between the elevations which are visible to the public and visitors and are highly decorative compared to those which are only seen by the residents of the almshouses and less ornate, is an important part of the buildings illustrative historic value. It helps demonstrate how status and philanthropy of this Victorian period influenced this kind of architecture. Additionally, the design proposed rear elevations would be relatively ubiquitous and have little relation to the buildings original design as a whole.

The wholesale loss of the original sash windows to the rear elevation, and the rhythm of the openings and their replacement with a poorer quality elevational design would be considered to cause harm to the significance of the listed building though the loss of the original features of the building, and the erosion of the design intent and how this contributes to the listed buildings illustrative historic value. There is no submitted information in the heritage statement relating to these proposals, including in the impact assessment, and there does not appear to be any justification for this aspect of the proposed works.

Servicing, Retrofitting & Renewables

There is little information on the proposed servicing, retrofitting and refurbishment of the existing almshouses or chapel. Given the current condition of the interior and location of services it is considered likely that most of the servicing would not interfere with original fabric. A contingency condition and one for external services, i.e. vents and flues, can be ensured through condition.

The refurbishment of the almshouses and the chapel is acceptable in principle; however the extent and nature of the proposed works is unclear. There is no condition survey which would be required before the scope of works could be determined and as discussed above this should be provided as part of the application. However, the details for the proposed refurbishment could be resolved through the imposition of conditions.

The only retrofitting discussed in the heritage statement is the installation of secondary glazing to the front elevation sash windows. The details provided of the secondary glazing detail are acceptable as they are positioned close to the existing window, do not introduce any new sight lines, and would not be located on any internal reveal details, or involve boxing out. Any other secondary glazing can also be ensured through condition.

The sustainability statement includes the provision of ASHPs to the new buildings, on the roof of the flat blocks, and in the grounds of the replacement house for the former 1970s infill. However, these have not been shown on the proposed plans, either siting or location. This is similar to the proposed PV panels to the roof of the flat block. Generally, it should be confirmed that these, and any associated screening, will be able to be accommodated within the existing roof height, and not project above the parapet. This is particularly important on the main flat block as its height was negotiated to be kept underneath the ridgeline of the almshouses in important views. For the proposed house to the front of the site, information on the location and screening of the ASHP could be ensured through condition.

There is no information on the proposed lighting scheme, which could be ensured through condition.

Landscaping

There is no detailed set of landscaping plans included with the application, beyond those included in the design and access statement. The green needs to maintain its connection to all of the almshouses and the open atmosphere that it currently has - the open green to the front is an important open space, for the setting of the listed buildings, but also the wider conservation area.

The proposals indicatively shown raise some concern over the subdivision of the space, the closing off the green and more formalised car parking. Maintaining and formalising of provision of parking to the main central green is a significant missed opportunity and will help close off the green, making it a less welcoming space. As there are only indicative plans, a detailed plan should look to maintain the openness of the green, including how best to accommodate the car parking, whilst allowing visual and physical links from the almshouses to the central green.

The entrance to the new flat block needs to be defined properly to ensure a good relationship to the existing almshouses. Additionally as the proposals include subdividing and providing private gardens for each building, there is a risk that inappropriate boundary treatments could overwhelm the listed buildings, particularly at the rear.

Accordingly, given there are no proposed plans, beyond the design and access statement, further details on these elements are required through condition. This is important for ensuring the proposals have a neutral or beneficial impact on the significance of the almshouses, the Conservation Area, and potentially the Magistrates Court.

Overall

There is missing/inconsistent information provided on some aspects of the proposed scheme and these should be provided/amended as appropriate. Primarily the missing information in the heritage statement, the condition survey, the elevations for the bin/cycle store, the roof plant to the flat blocks (ASHPs & PV).

The impact on the Magistrates Court and the Bruce Castle and All Hallows Conservation Area will likely depend on the proposed landscaping scheme. There is scope for the proposals to have a neutral, or beneficial impact on these heritage assets provided the landscaping details, which should be subject to condition, are appropriate.

Whilst the new build flat blocks could be better designed, their scale and massing is appropriate in the context of the listed building, they are not dominant or prominent additions. These would be considered to have a neutral impact the significance of the listed building.

The demolition of the 1970s infill and replacement with a new house in a contemporary approach to the existing almshouses represents a beneficial change as it would enhance the appreciation of the original composition. Depending on the condition of the existing gable ends there is scope to enhance the appreciation of the design of the almshouses by restoring this decorate gable end, however not enough information has been provided to ascertain this.

The proposed works to the existing almshouses to amalgamate the existing units, revise the internal layouts and provide extensions to units, would cause some less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building, primarily through the loss of the buildings' original fabric, and impairing an appreciation of the buildings original form. However, this should be considered in the context of the continuing use of the building and the harm weighed against any public benefits this would provide. Improving the accommodation provided, including the extensions to get a better mix of units, could be considered part of this.

Conversely, the alterations to the rear elevations, including the loss of the original openings and the sash windows, do not form part of the works required to create larger units, nor those required for the continuing use of the building. These alterations would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed buildings through the loss of the buildings' original features and the erosion of the buildings architectural and illustrative historic interest. This aspect of the proposed works is not adequately discussed in the submitted heritage statement.

As the proposals stand, cumulatively the proposed works to the almshouses would be considered to cause less than substantial harm to the significance of both the Almshouses and the Lodge House through the loss of the buildings' original features and the erosion of their architectural and illustrative historic interest. Whilst several aspects of the proposed works are for ensuring the continued use of the building, thorough the provision of a better mix of units and accommodation standards, the aspect of the works which, arguably, causes the greatest level of harm is also the part which is not required to achieve this aim and benefit.

As the Drapers Almshouses, including the separately listed lodge house, are designated heritage assets great weight should be given to their conservation, and any harm caused to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification and should be weighed against public (not private) benefits. Accordingly, based on the proposals as they stand and in the context of the missing information and the impact of the proposed unjustified external alterations to the almshouses, Conservation does not support this proposal.

