

**Summary Proof of Evidence of Joanna Ecclestone BA Hons, Dip TP, MSc  
Appeal by Kitewood Estates Ltd**

**Site Address: 21- 57 Willow Way, London, SE26 4QP**

**PINS Reference: APP/C5690/W/23/3321935**

**Council reference: 22/129789**

**Date of Public Inquiry: 31 October - 7 November 2023**

## **1.0 Summary**

1.0.1 My name is Joanna Ecclestone and I am the Senior Conservation and Design Officer at Lewisham Council. My evidence focuses on Reason for Refusal 4.

### **1.0.2 Assessment of significance**

The buildings on the appeal site itself are of no architectural significance. The site has some historic significance as falling within an area of early C19th suburban development, much still surviving in the vicinity.

1.0.3 The character of the wider area is analysed in the Lewisham Characterisation Study 2019. This document identifies three neighbourhoods surrounding the appeal site, Forest Hill, Sydenham Hill and Sydenham; the appeal site falls in the latter. A key theme which emerges in all three neighbourhoods is the strong sense of woodland character, which reflects the historic development of this area from the historic Great North Wood, through incremental clearing and encroachment, to the current situation of pockets of ancient woodland in a strongly tree-ed urban environment.

1.0.4 A number of heritage assets surround the site. These are of high significance (designated heritage assets) and some-moderate significance (non-designated heritage assets). Their significance (as they relate to the appeal site) lies in:

Sydenham Park CA:

- Architectural prestige and visual dominance of the planned layout, comprising closely spaced detached and paired Italianate villas on Sydenham Park, large gardens to front and rear, and a historic relationship with lower, architecturally subordinate housing on Willow Way to the north.
- Many mature large canopied trees in front gardens of villas
- Glimpse views between each pair of villas on the north side of the road to vegetation and mature large canopy trees in rear gardens, as well as views of tree canopy beyond the Appeal site
- Strong sense of enclosure and lack of visually competing development in its setting created by the tree and vegetation screen and low scale of buildings to the north
- The CA's setting also contributes to significance as a result of the low rise development being minimally visible and referring to the scale of the earlier two storey houses that were contemporary with the Villa development and which reflected the hierarchy between the two streets.

#### Sydenham Hill/Kirkdale CA

- Topography which affords long views to the south and out of London
- Semi rural wooded character to much of the CA and its setting; dense vegetation, soft landscaping and many mature large canopy trees.
- Diversity and fine grain of built form
- Positive contributors including the locally listed nos 57 Kirkdale (on the corner of Charlcote Road and adjoining 2 Charlcote Road) and 61 Kirkdale (not locally listed)
- Its setting also contributes to significance as a result of the long views, wooded character and fine grain of development which provides a complementary townscape.

#### High Street Buildings (134-146) Kirkdale

- Its ebullient architecture
- its contribution to Kirkdale's history of development from a route over Sydenham Common to a Victorian High Street

#### 124-128 Kirkdale

- its early C19th physical fabric and domestic architecture
- its historic value as physical evidence of the early phase of development of Kirkdale as a residential suburb.
- The setting of both groups of listed buildings also contribute to the listed buildings' significance, and comprise Kirkdale, the historic residential developments surrounding it and areas that have seen more change through time including Willow Way. The surrounding residential area is characterised broadly by substantial, high status houses (e.g. SPCA and Jews Walk CA), intermixed with areas of more modest housing (e.g. Halifax Street CA), permeated by the verdant character of public and private spaces visible in the foreground, through gaps in development and over the tops of buildings.

#### Kirkdale ASLC

- its collection of buildings which reveal the historic development of the street and the topography which allows it to be seen in a wider historic context;
- its part in the Victorian suburban development of this part of London which is reflected in the designations of several CAs in its immediate setting with which it is directly related historically and through visual interrelationships.
- Its setting also contributes to significance and includes the CAs to the south (Cobbs Corner), west (Jews Walk and Halifax Street), north (Sydenham Hill/Kirkdale, and east (Sydenham Park). Its contribution is

by virtue of the interrelated and contemporary emergence of both buildings in the setting and the ASLC, and the essentially interconnected nature of the residential housing and the commercial premises which served those areas.

#### Bricklayers Arms LLB

- well detailed elevations in rusticated red brick and stucco, including generous fenestration on two street facing elevations;
- its footprint and orientation to both roads either side of the junction.;
- the current incarnation of a drinking establishment that has been on this site since 1834, contemporary with the early suburban development.
- The name directly indicates one of the key trades that would likely have visited this PH during the early C19th and later as housing development in the area boomed.
- Its setting is the residential neighbourhood within which it sits and which it historically served, better revealing the building's original and current function and role in the neighbourhood.

### **1.1 Impact of proposed development on the significance of the heritage assets**

1.1.1 The proposals cause a degree of harm to the significance of key surrounding heritage assets which varies between low to moderate (less than substantial) due to the scale, bulk, massing and footprint of the proposed building, and the lack of trees and vegetation.

1.1.2 I assess the harm to Heritage Assets as follows:

#### Sydenham Park CA

- The development would be visible in the gaps between the villas and would be appreciated as rising above the roofs of Sydenham Park villas, failing to refer to the villas' primary architectural status, or the secondary nature of Willow Way and its historic pattern of development
- The visible height and close proximity would erode the sense of visual separation between the CA and built form in its setting.
- The combination of height, colouration and elevational detailing in the backdrop of the villas would hinder the ability to clearly appreciate the building envelope of the villas,
- The continuous form of the layout of the massing would not respond to or complement the fine grain and pattern of development in the CA.
- Its scale would obscure glimpse views of tree canopy in the setting beyond the appeal site and the lack of intervening landscaping to

screen or soften the relationship would erode the green and tree-ed character of the CA and the wider area.

#### Sydenham Hill/Kirkdale CA

- A characteristic view (between two buildings which make a positive contribution, one of which is a locally listed building) in the south west corner of the CA across the lower lying land will be largely terminated by the proposed development; instead the mass of the proposed building will be visible rising up to a height comparable with the horizon. This would fail to respond positively to the intervening urban form in terms of grain, scale or roofscape, and will erode the quality of the setting.

#### Listed Buildings at High Street Buildings (134-146) and 124-128 Kirkdale

- The proposed development would not respond to the history, or to the existing scale, grain or massing of its immediate area, and would erode of the character of the historic townscape which contributes to the listed buildings' setting
- The height of the proposed development would be at odds with the existing intimate and secondary character of Willow Way, and would erode the hierarchy of streets, losing the distinction between it and the principal retail street of Kirkdale, resulting in a more homogenous character to the listed buildings' setting
- The lack of new trees or soft landscaping proposed on Willow Way does not take the opportunity to reinforce the sylvan character that exists locally or make the connection to the historic West Wood/Sydenham Common which was a key element in the area's history and in the listed buildings' historic setting.

#### Kirkdale ASLC

- Erosion of the character of the historic townscape which contributes to its setting and which allows the historic development of the place to be read.
- The height of the proposed development would be at odds with the existing intimate and secondary character of Willow Way, and would erode the hierarchy of streets, losing the distinction between it and the principal retail street of Kirkdale, resulting in a more homogenous character.
- The lack of new trees or soft landscaping proposed on Willow Way fails to take the opportunity to reinforce the sylvan character that exists locally, as identified in the Characterisation Study or make the

connection to the historic West Wood/Sydenham Common which was a key element in the ASLCs history

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- The proposal will result in a diminution of the locally listed building's historic and architectural significance as a PH, as well as an erosion of its current role as a locally important and minor landmark in the townscape.

1.1.3 The harm to the designated heritage assets - which are of high significance as by virtue of their designated status - is not considered to be clearly or convincingly justified in line with NPPF. Alternative options which would avoid or minimise the harm, or mitigate it, have not been tested or presented for consideration.

1.1.4 There is a low degree of harm to non-designated heritage assets which are of some-moderate heritage significance. This has been taken into account by my colleague Ms Gkiza in her balancing of harm to heritage assets against public benefits.

#### **1.2 Public benefit**

1.2.1 No heritage benefits are identified. A full assessment of the balance between harm to heritage assets and public benefits is made in my colleague Ms Gkiza's statement.

#### **1.3 Conclusion**

1.3.1 The significance of the DHAs and NDHAs near the appeal site, and the contribution that their settings make to their significance have not been thoroughly or adequately understood by the appellant. The extent to which the proposal impacts on this significance, therefore, has been not recognised or understated. Options to avoid or minimise this harm exist, but these have not been presented by the appellant, and neither have proposals that would mitigate the harm. The harm to DHAs is not considered to be clearly or convincingly justified. No heritage benefits exist and the public benefits more broadly are not considered to outweigh the harm, as set out in my colleague Ms Gkiza's proof. The proposal is therefore not in line with legislation, policy or guidance.