

PLANNING REF : 261836
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Cuckoos'
: 15 Old Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire
: RG4 6SZ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Simon Darvall
DATE SUBMITTED : 04/09/2026

COMMENTS:

Objection to Planning Application Reference: 261836
Full application for demolition of the existing residential dwelling and replacement with a detached residential dwelling.
We live at 15 Old Bath Road, Sonning, immediately adjacent to the application site.

Firstly, we have no objection in principle to the replacement dwelling. We recognise that there is an extant planning permission (Ref: 242720) for redevelopment of the site and have therefore focused our comments on the changes now proposed compared with the previously approved scheme, and in particular whether those changes result in any additional impact on the amenity and privacy of our property. Our principal concern relates to the proposed removal of established trees (particularly T07, T08, and G04) along the boundary with our property, together with the first floor external area adjoining 'Bed 4'.

The previously approved scheme did not extend as far into this part of the site, retained these established boundary trees and located a first floor balcony more centrally within the rear elevation. By contrast, the revised scheme extends further down the site into the area where the established boundary trees are currently located, and this appears to necessitate their removal. The elevations also appear to show a glass-balustraded first floor external area close to our boundary which appears capable of being used as a balcony, despite not being explicitly labelled as such on the floor plan. The full-height glazed openings and provision of a balustrade also appear to facilitate access to and use of this area.

Our concern is twofold. First, the removal of the established boundary trees would itself materially reduce the existing screening between the properties and open up greater views towards our home and garden, including a swimming pool near the boundary. Second, if the first floor external area is capable of use as a balcony or external amenity space, this would further increase the potential for overlooking and consequent loss of privacy.

The issue is not simply the loss of established boundary trees in isolation, but the overall change in the relationship created by the revised layout. The development extends further into this part of the site, removes established screening and introduces a potentially accessible elevated area. We ask that these changes are assessed together when considering the impact on the privacy and residential amenity of our property.

We consider this raises concerns under Core Strategy Policy CP3, which seeks to protect the amenity and quality of life of adjoining occupiers. It also does not accord with the principles of Section 4.7 of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (R15 and R16), which recognises the importance of privacy to the rear of homes and that relationships involving balconies and existing neighbouring properties can be particularly sensitive. The proposed tree removal also engages Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, which seeks to protect and retain existing mature trees as

part of the design of development.

The previously approved scheme provides a useful benchmark and demonstrates that a substantial replacement dwelling can be accommodated on the site without giving rise to the same degree of tree loss, overlooking and consequent loss of privacy to our home and garden. This supports our view that the additional impacts arising from the revised layout are capable of being addressed through design changes.

We therefore ask Officers to conclude that, unless these privacy and amenity impacts are satisfactorily addressed through appropriate changes to the scheme, the proposal should not be approved in its current form. We would encourage Officers to seek amendments to the proposal before determination so that these impacts are properly mitigated.

Our preference would be for the scheme to be redesigned in the first instance so that the established boundary trees are retained and potential overlooking is reduced through the layout and design itself, rather than relying on mitigation to make the relationship acceptable.

If the external first floor area close to our boundary is retained but is not intended to function as a balcony or external amenity space, we ask that this is made unambiguous on amended drawings. In particular, there should be no direct access from 'Bed 4', and the area should be clearly identified as a non-accessible roof, save for maintenance purposes. An appropriate condition should also prevent its future use as a balcony, terrace or other external amenity area.

Should Officers consider that such a use restriction could not be effectively secured and enforced, this feature should be removed or redesigned accordingly. However, preventing balcony use would not in itself fully address our concerns, because extending the development into this part of the site would still require the removal of established boundary trees, reduce screening and increase intervisibility between the properties under the proposed layout. As a fallback, if Officers nevertheless consider both the removal of the boundary trees arising from the proposed layout and use of the external area as a balcony acceptable, we ask that permanent privacy screening is provided to prevent direct and angled views into our house and garden. This is likely to require screening of at least 1.8m on the side facing our boundary and extending around the adjoining edge where necessary. We are also concerned that screening of this scale could itself appear visually intrusive, which reinforces our preference for the privacy issue to be addressed through the layout and design of the scheme itself.

While replacement landscaping may also assist, we do not consider it should be relied upon as the primary means of addressing the privacy impact. New planting would take time to establish sufficiently to replicate the screening presently provided by the existing trees, and its long-term retention and effectiveness within a private garden may be difficult to guarantee. For that reason, we consider the most

appropriate solution is to address the issue through the layout and design of the development itself.

In addition, whilst the side-facing windows appear to serve en-suites, we request that these windows facing towards our property are obscure glazed and restricted in their opening to prevent overlooking, with these measures secured by condition.

We would particularly welcome a site visit from the Case Officer, as

we consider that the relationship between the proposed development, the first floor external area, the trees proposed for removal, and our home and garden is best understood from our property. We would also be grateful to be consulted on any amendments relevant to these concerns, so that we have an opportunity to review and comment before the application is determined.

Accordingly, we object to the application in its current form and ask that it is not approved unless the identified privacy and amenity impacts are satisfactorily addressed through appropriate layout and design amendments before determination.