



Ruhit Rehman,
The Planning Inspectorate,
c/o QUADIENT,
69 Buckingham Avenue,
Slough, SL1 4PN.

07.07.26

AM2P Ref: J.123
PINS Ref: APP/6011062

Dear Case Officer,

Re: Appeal 6011062 @ Thamesfield Retirement Village, Remenham

I write on behalf of local residents at numbers 1-11 Remenham Row, in order to object to the above development, previously refused by Wokingham Borough Council.

This objection follows objections made on behalf of the local residents to the original and amended planning application (dated 30/01/25 and 02/10/25). It is understood that the Inspector will have seen and considered such previous objections, and as a result the content of them is not intended to be repeated here. Instead, specific response is given to the Appellant's Statement.

The below comments focus upon the direct and significant impact of the proposed works upon the amenity levels of neighbouring properties. However, it should be noted that the residents are also fully behind the objection made on behalf of Remenham Parish Council which relates to other reasons why the appeal proposal should not be allowed.

The relevant Reason for Refusal regarding the issue of impact upon amenity is No.1 on the Council's Decision Notice. This is addressed by the Appellant at section 6.2 of their Appeal Statement.

At 6.2.1 of the Statement, the Appellants comment that the Council don't provide any specific paragraph of the NPPF that refers to the matter despite referencing Section 12 in the reason for refusal. The Appellants make reference to paragraph 135 (c) in their Statement, but fail to mention criterion (f) of the same paragraph, which advises that planning decisions should ensure that developments;

'create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience'. (my underlining)

As a result, the requirement quite clearly set out by the NPPF is that the existing residents at Remenham Row should be able to enjoy a high standard of amenity once the proposed development is introduced. For reasons explained in previous objections and below, it is strongly considered that this will not be possible due to the poorly considered design that has been put forward in this case.

At 6.2.8 the Appellants refer to the Council's Core Strategy Policy CP3, suggesting that this 'does not require the preservation of existing views or the avoidance of all changes to outlook'. I would completely agree. Policy CP3 does not require everything to remain exactly as it is. But it does very clearly require that if planning permission is to be granted there should not be detrimental impact upon adjoining land users. It specifically states;

'Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life' (my underlining)

The adjoining residents are not making the case that there should be no change, as the Appellant appears to imply. Their case is that the specific change that will result in this instance will have a detrimental impact upon their amenity levels. That in itself is reason for there to be conflict with Policy CP3. Albeit for reasons set out, such impact will not just be detrimental, but severely detrimental.

The Appellant's comment at 6.2.8 that the proposal has mitigated its impact through layout is highly questioned. It is the very inconsiderate layout of the proposed scheme that has resulted in an unacceptable relationship with adjoining properties. At no point during the Application or Appeal process has the Appellant indicated why an alternative layout has not been taken forward. And in this instance there is a considerable site area across which to propose an alternative layout. The decision to locate the new development tight against the boundary with Remenham Row will clearly have financial benefits for the Appellant, but an appropriate layout requires much more than being the best economic solution for the developer.

At 6.2.9 the Appellants refer to the new building being introduced to a developed part of the site, *'rather than the introduction of development into an open or undeveloped area'*. Whilst this is the case in terms of built footprint, it does of course ignore the fact that the development proposed is three storey, replacing the existing single storey. This part of the site is currently 'open' above single storey development. It will not be if the appeal is allowed. And that is one of the fundamental concerns – the replacement of single storey development with three storey development and the significant detrimental impact upon amenity of neighbouring residents that will result.

At 6.2.10 the Appellants suggest that the Council's concern over privacy and overlooking is overstated and not supported by the evidence. They suggest the 'diagonal' relationship is appropriate. For clarification, the neighbouring properties will definitely not feel that they are experiencing a 'diagonal' relationship. Whilst the relationship between Remenham Row and the three-storey new building may not be absolutely parallel, it is pretty close to it.

The very relevant point is that first and second floor full-height windows will face directly towards the front elevation of the Remenham Row properties, windows within it and amenity areas to the front of it. Windows within the front elevation of Remenham Row include living room windows, bedroom windows and clear bathroom windows – introduced as such, rather than obscurely glazed, due to the siting of Remenham Row when built not resulting in any concerns about the bathrooms being overlooked. Reference by the Appellants to a 'diagonal relationship' implies acute views between the

buildings and is very misleading. Direct views will result and will offer the opportunity to view directly between the living rooms and bedrooms of the proposed first and second floor properties and the living rooms, bedrooms and bathroom windows of Remenham Row. And these will be the only outlooks from the proposed flats.

The suggestion at 6.2.10 by the Appellant that proposed '*separation distances and building orientation are typical of developed village environments*' is strongly disputed. For reasons set out in this and previous objections, such a layout is far from typical, due to the inappropriateness of it.

Reference is made by the Appellant to the proposed extension being set back from the building line of the retirement village. For clarification, any such setback does not allow for any effective planting between the proposed extension and the appeal site boundary with Remenham Row. It is clear that there is no opportunity to introduce planting for screening within the appeal site. Any efforts to do so on the Remenham Row side of the boundary would need to be of such a scale to cause loss of light/outlook to the properties on either side. The inability to introduce appropriate planting for screening within or beyond the site, highlights the inappropriateness of the proposed layout.

At 6.2.11 the Appellant addresses separation distances, with reference to the BDG. They comment that balconies were removed and replaced with Juliette balconies during the application process. Such an amendment does of course conflict with their own underlying case that the separation distances exceed those required by the BDG. Why remove a balcony if there is no danger of it resulting in an unacceptable impact – as the Appellants suggest is the case.

At 6.2.15 the Appellants suggest that the scheme will result in a front-to-front relationship with Remenham Row, and hence a 15m separation distance is required. Their justification for this is that the Remenham Row properties include a front door in the relevant elevation.

It is clearly acknowledged that the facing Remenham Row properties contain a front door in the relevant elevation. However, it is relevant to consider why the BDG proposes a separation distance of 30m for back-to-back relationships and only 15m for front-to-front. It is inevitably because typically such front elevations will be open to public view, with pedestrians and vehicles regularly passing in close proximity to, as opposed to rear-to-rear elevations being private. As a result, greater sensitivity (increased distance) typically applies to the rear-to-rear relationship.

As the Inspector will be aware when they visit the Remenham Row properties, they do not possess a typical relationship. This was highlighted by the fact that the Council's Case Officer who prepared the Committee Report, did not visit the Remenham Row properties before preparing the Report – despite the issue of impact of the proposal upon such properties being highlighted consistently by the neighbouring residents. The reason that the Case Officer gave for not visiting the Remenham Row properties was that the gate was shut and he couldn't gain access. As an aside, the neighbours would have happily allowed him access had he requested it, but he did not do so.

The relevant point of the above is that Remenham Row is not publicly accessible. It was deliberately designed in such a manner, to ensure that the retirement properties maintained a strong degree of security for residents. As a result, the only people passing the front of the Remenham Row properties, are the other residents of, or invited visitors to, the few properties of Remenham Row within that terrace. Not surprisingly therefore, it provides an environment far more like a private area than a public one. By

contrast the rear gardens of Remenham Row are one large communal area, shared as an amenity area by all the residents of Remenham Row. This is presumably why the Remenham Row properties within the terrace were designed with their living room and main associated window facing the front largely private area, and the kitchen outlook facing the rear communal area.

The introduction of a 15m separation between the Remenham Row dwellings and proposed 3 storey development, as the Appellant suggests would be supported by the BDG, would quite clearly have a substantial, detrimental and unacceptable impact upon the amenity levels of the Remenham Row residents given the site specific circumstances. This has effectively been acknowledged by the Appellants themselves given that they chose to remove balconies because of the adverse impact they would have, even though such balconies were beyond 15m from the Remenham Row properties.

It is clear that the application of a 15m separation distance between properties in this location is inappropriate and does not allow for the site specific circumstances. Such a separation would result in unacceptable levels of amenity, which is precisely what the BDG separation distances are intended to avoid. It is therefore strongly contended that the 30m separation distance should be applied in this instance, and when it is the proposal fails to adhere with this by a significant amount.

At 6.2.16 the Appellant comments that if the Inspector is in agreement that the 30m separation distance should apply, then whilst the appeal scheme will fail to achieve the necessary separation distances, this will only result in a 'minor level of harm'. Such a position is strongly disputed for a number of reasons;

The Appellants might have had justification to make such a case if the separation was 29.5m as opposed to the 30m required, or some other minimal difference. But that is clearly not the situation here. A separation distance of approximately 20m will result. Only two thirds of the necessary separation is achieved. Failing the required separation by 10m is not going to have a minor impact.

Similarly, if those windows and openings that failed to satisfy the separation distance were of little relevance in terms of overlooking then a case might be made that despite conflict with the guidelines, the impact on the privacy/overlooking aspect of amenity for the Remenham Row residents is not going to be significantly harmed. But this is clearly not the case. The proposed elevation in question contains full-height windows serving habitable rooms that provide the only outlook for the residents of the proposed flats. The residents only option when looking out of their flats will be to face the front elevation of the Remenham Row properties – only 20m away. Such an arrangement is not going to cause minor harm.

And as has already been touched upon, a substandard separation distance may sometimes be mitigated if there is significant established or proposed planting to help screen overlooking between windows. This is not the case in this instance. The Appellants acknowledge that there is not sufficient space to introduce any such planting between the proposed extension and the boundary of the appeal site. It should not fall upon neighbours to have to introduce such planting that effectively screens out any overlooking, and in this case there is simply not sufficient space to do so. If planting was introduced on the Remenham Row side of the boundary, to a height that effectively prevented overlooking from the proposed first floor windows, it would mean that outlook and light afforded to properties on both sides of the boundary would be reduced to an unacceptable level. It is acknowledged that some small trees are currently in place on the Remenham Row side of the boundary. As will be apparent from a site visit, these

are not (and will never be) of sufficient size to prevent overlooking from the proposed development.

It should also be noted that harm is not caused only to the amenity of the residents of Remenham Row. There are a number of apartments at Thamesfield itself that will suffer a dramatic reduction in light and outlook, as acknowledged by the Appellants own supporting documents. Residents at Thamesfield are clearly in an awkward position with regards an ability to object to the proposed scheme. But the impact of the scheme upon a number of the units should be taken fully into account, whether or not objection has specifically been raised by the occupants. It is clear that unacceptable levels of living accommodation will result for some existing residents at Thamesfield if the proposed development goes ahead, detailed reasons for which have been set out in previous objection letters to the application so are not repeated here.

Objections made have demonstrated why the level of harm to amenity that will result is not minor, as the Appellants suggest. Residents of both Remenham Row and Thamesfield will be severely affected by the proposal for much of every day. It is not a passing concern that can be avoided. For reasons set out in this and other objections submitted through the application process, the harm in this respect will be significant.

This objection has focused upon the harm caused to the amenity of neighbouring residents and as a result the clear conflict with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy. It is recognised that the Inspector will need to weigh this harm alongside and against other matters. Such matters are addressed by other objectors, most notably the Parish Council. When taken together they are considered to result in strong justification for the appeal to be dismissed.

For the reasons set out above, the impact on neighbouring residents is considered to be of great importance when determining the appeal. It is therefore requested that the Planning Inspector visits the Remenham Row properties to best understand the likely impact, when undertaking their site visit. Please contact me, or the neighbours directly, in order to arrange access to the relevant properties. One of the neighbours has been happy to pass his contact details on for your use, as follows;

(redacted from this version)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Meader'.

Andy Meader BSc Hons Dip TP MRTPI

Director

andy.meader@am2planning.co.uk