

PLANNING REF : 243125
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 3 Remenham Row
: Wargrave Road, Henley-On-Thames, Oxfordshire
: RG9 2LQ
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Janet Snell
DATE SUBMITTED : 29/01/2025

COMMENTS:

I wish to strongly object to the proposed redevelopment at Thamesfield Retirement Village.

I live at number 3 Remenham Row, which is directly opposite the proposed site. This is a unique situation in that immediately outside the front of my home there is no road, just communal grounds including a gravel walkway and flower beds that run alongside the boundary wall which separates us from Thamesfield. This results in a distance from number 3 Remenham Row to the boundary wall of only 16.6 metres. At present there is a single storey building on the Thamesfield site that is visible directly from my home. We can just see the top of the single storey building above the boundary wall. The proposal is to replace this with a bulky three story building with large windows and balconies. I fail to understand how anyone can begin to think that this is acceptable! Residents will be able to look directly into my lounge, bedroom and bathroom. At present no resident of Thamesfield can directly see into my property, so this is a major concern and will result in an unacceptable level of overlooking from the balconies and large windows, which will massively affect our privacy and harm the quality of our lives. Our main bedroom and bathroom (we are not allowed to have obscure glass in our bathrooms) would be unusable during the day unless a blind was pulled down and we would have to install sheer curtains in the lounge to protect our privacy.

Although representatives of Retirement Villages Group (RVG) have mly stated that the proposed building would be set further back from the boundary wall, this is not true at the point of where the building would be positioned opposite number 3 Remenham Row and it would indeed be closer to the boundary wall than the existing single storey building by five metres. RVG have admitted that at this point there is insufficient space to plant any trees between the proposed building and the boundary wall. The artists impressions are indeed very misleading, showing walkways and vegetation, which is a complete nonsense at the point where the proposed building would sit directly facing my property.

Considering the huge mass of the proposed building and the extreme height of 10.86 meters at its highest point, this will lead to unacceptable loss of light, privacy and view. Not to mention the shadow which this will cause. I will no longer be able to look out of my lounge and see any sky. Noise and light pollution is also a major concern with people having balconies directly overlooking Remenham Row. In the plans, reference is made to 'views of the river' from the new apartments, even though they would face directly towards Remenham Row, and at a 90 degree angle to the river.

The design of the proposed building using red brick and grey ceramic cladding is totally out of character with Remenham Row and the

existing buildings at Thamesfield. At the point at which the proposed new building adjoins the original white Thamesfield building it will clearly be visible from the river and the opposite river bank, being higher and of very different materials. The materials proposed and the height of the structure will stand out against the white building. The nature of the design of the building makes it incompatible with other buildings within Henley.

RVG have stated that they are proposing to use red brick to blend in with the homes in Remenham Row, which is complete nonsense. Our small development will be completely dwarfed/overshadowed by such a massive building and when looking out from my home it will look like a mass of red brick. This will be an eyesore, which will spoil the views for both residents of Henley and the many visitors that visit the town throughout the year. We live in a Conservation Area and the bulk and massing of this proposal will have a huge negative impact on the visual harmony of our community.

This new development would also have a significant impact on the value of our homes, not only while the building was being constructed, but afterwards as it will totally dominate the landscape seen from our properties.

RVG have shown an absolute lack of respect for its immediate neighbour (Remenham Row) and clearly only thinking of profits.

Thamesfield occupies a very large site and there is plenty of room to position extra units to the south of the plot. This would then have no impact on Remenham Row and would not be visible from the Henley side of the river. There are gardens and a croquet lawn to the south of the site. Despite what Thamesfield say the croquet lawn is underused and indeed the residents of Remenham Row were asked to play in order to make up the numbers. On this occasion there were two residents from Thamesfield and five from Remenham Row. So this surely shows that this is underutilised. If the answer to this is that the croquet lawn and gardens flood, I know for a fact that the current buildings also flood.

I refer to the Statement of Community Engagement item 1.7. The residents of Remenham Row only found out about the "Public Consultation Meeting" a couple of days before the meeting through someone who lives in Thamesfield who thought we already knew about the meeting. Not one of the 12 properties received notification of the meeting. We were informed that this was because the company who delivered the leaflets could not gain access because of the electric gates. The person responsible for the delivery only had to press any of the door bells at the gate and they would have found someone who could have let them in. If Community Engagement was so important to RVG, they should have checked that its closest neighbours had received notification in advance of the event. RVG said that they had emailed Cognatum, our management company. However, what they failed to do was check that they were using the correct email address. Due to this Cognatum never received it. I would have thought that with something so important RVG would have taken the time to contact Cognatum by telephone to find out who their letter should have been addressed to, but again this was not carried out.

I was horrified when I attended the meeting to see the artist's impressions and the detrimental effect this would have. I asked one of the members of staff who were there to discuss the proposals if they would come with me to see where I lived and show them the impact this would have. This was refused and I was told to request this in my feedback form, which I duly did. No one had the courtesy to contact me to arrange such a visit.

A representative from RVG attended the Remenham Parish Council Meeting on the 9th December 2024 to make a presentation. The Chairman of the Parish Council Meeting commented that there had never been such a high level of attendance at one of their meetings, which was due to the level of local concern. The presenter struggled to get his PowerPoint presentation to work and the meeting was delayed by 30 minutes. We had been asked to submit questions to Remenham Parish Council a week before the meeting to give RVG enough time to gather the relevant information and looked forward to hearing the answers. However, the presenter said that he had no knowledge of such questions, even though they had been sent to RVG. Again, another complete lack of thought and respect for the residents of Remenham Row! We eventually received the answers about a week later. It is interesting to note that RVG had submitted the planning application three days before attending the Remenham Parish Council Meeting!!

We emailed RVG on the 15th December 2024 to ask for an artist's impression of the proposed building from the perspective of numbers 1 - 5 Remenham Row and after chasing we received a reply on the 24th January as follows "We are unable to provide additional artist's impressions from the perspective of Remenham Row".

I fail to understand why RVG need to expand Thamesfield when they are struggling to fill the existing vacant properties. There clearly is not a need for more dwellings of such nature. Firstly, their existing refurbished properties were put on the market, but failed to sell, so they then changed their strategy to the rental market. At present there are seven properties unoccupied and being advertised. There are several retirement complexes and nursing homes within Henley and the surrounding area. Albert Court, a McCarthy Stone retirement development within Henley, was opened in 2018 and they have not yet managed to rent/sell all of their units. More retirement homes are being built in Shiplake (Audley) and Nettlebed (Beechcroft) and Henley does not need any more retirement properties, it is low cost housing that is needed for those trying to buy their first homes.

Remenham Row is a small, tranquil, beautiful retirement development with 12 properties, eight small cottages and four apartments. We were so happy to move here just over a year ago knowing nothing of these plans. Now our lives have been turned upside down and I cannot express sufficiently enough how concerned we are all feeling.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge Wokingham Borough Council to visit Remenham Row to see for themselves the huge impact this proposal would have on this small peaceful development. Please also carefully consider the significant concerns surrounding the building's incongruity with Henley's historic landscape.

