

PLANNING REF : 261182
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 12A South Drive
: Reading
: RG4 6GB
SUBMITTED BY : Mr T Butt
DATE SUBMITTED : 12/08/2026

COMMENTS:

Planning Application: 261182
Site: 12 South Drive, Sonning, RG4 6GB

OBJECTION - PROPOSED REAR WALK-ON TERRACE AND INADEQUATE PRIVACY SCREEN

I am writing further to my previous objection to Planning Application 261182 concerning the proposed development at 12 South Drive, Sonning.

I have reviewed the revised plans submitted in July 2026. While I note that the revised drawings now show a 1.7m-high privacy screen to the proposed first-floor walk-on terrace, I remain strongly opposed to the terrace and do not consider the proposed screen to provide an adequate solution to the fundamental privacy and overlooking problems identified in my original objection.

I am the occupier of 12A South Drive, which is the property immediately to the right of the application property when viewed from South Drive. My property and garden are therefore directly exposed to the proposed terrace.

1. The proposed terrace would introduce a new and unacceptable level of overlooking

The fundamental concern remains the creation of an elevated, accessible outdoor platform at first-floor level.

The plans identify the feature as a "Walk-On Terrace", rather than simply a roof or inaccessible area. This distinction is important because the terrace will create a usable elevated external space from which occupants and visitors will have views towards neighbouring properties and gardens.

This is materially different from the existing relationship between the properties.

At present, the rear gardens are experienced principally from ground level and existing boundary treatments provide a reasonable degree of separation and privacy. The proposed terrace would place people significantly above the existing garden level and create a new elevated vantage point from which the private garden and potentially the rear and side-facing areas of 12A could be viewed.

This would result not simply in a theoretical possibility of overlooking, but in a real and persistent perception of being overlooked whenever the terrace is occupied.

This is particularly concerning because the terrace is located towards the rear of the property, where residents of neighbouring properties reasonably expect a higher degree of privacy.

2. The proposed 1.7m screen does not adequately resolve the problem

I acknowledge that the revised plans now propose a 1.7m-high privacy screen. However, I do not consider this sufficient to overcome the impact of the terrace.

The issue is not simply whether a person standing immediately adjacent to the screen can see directly over it. The Council must consider the overall relationship between the elevated terrace and the neighbouring property, including oblique views, views around the ends of the screen, the elevated position of users and the resulting perception of being overlooked.

The proposed screen is also positioned on the terrace itself. It therefore does not remove the elevated platform or prevent the use of the terrace as a viewing position. It merely seeks to restrict some direct views.

As the adjoining neighbour to the right of the property, my concern is particularly acute because the proposed terrace and its associated activity would be experienced from the side/rear relationship between the two properties. A person using the terrace would remain visibly elevated above the neighbouring garden, creating an intrusive sense of overlooking even where a direct line of sight is partially screened.

The Council's own Borough Design Guide recognises that privacy is not limited to preventing a direct line of sight. It states that the relationship between existing properties and new development can be particularly sensitive where living accommodation is located at an upper level and that additional distance or design features may be necessary to minimise harm caused by perceptions of loss of privacy.

In my view, this is precisely the situation presented by this proposal.

3. The Council's Design Guide requires greater consideration of privacy at the rear of properties

The Wokingham Borough Design Guide states that:

reasonable levels of privacy are required between new and existing properties;
the appropriate degree of privacy is greater on the private garden side than on the public street side;
developments should demonstrate that habitable rooms have adequate privacy in relation to neighbouring properties; and

where upper-floor accommodation creates a sensitive relationship with existing properties, additional distance or design measures may be required to minimise perceptions of loss of privacy.

The Design Guide also identifies 22 metres as the Council's generally accepted guideline for avoiding overlooking or material loss of privacy between rear elevations that directly face one another, whilst acknowledging that the appropriate relationship must be considered in the context of existing properties.

I recognise that the 22m guideline is not necessarily directly applicable to this particular side/rear relationship. However, it demonstrates the importance that Wokingham places on separation and privacy where private rear gardens are concerned.

The proposal should therefore be assessed against the actual relationship between 12 South Drive and 12A South Drive, rather than simply assuming that a 1.7m screen automatically resolves the overlooking issue.

4. The impact is particularly significant because the terrace is a new elevated viewing platform

My original objection explained that the terrace would effectively create a raised viewing platform overlooking neighbouring private areas. That concern remains unchanged by the revised drawings.

The revised proposal has not removed this fundamental impact.

Instead, the proposal has sought to mitigate it with a screen.

In my view, the correct planning question is therefore whether the terrace and screen combination, taken as a whole, provides an acceptable relationship with the neighbouring property.

I do not believe that it does.

A resident using a first-floor terrace will inevitably have a different visual relationship with the neighbouring garden from a resident standing at ground level. The increased height gives the user a wider field of view and changes the established sense of separation between the properties.

Even if some direct views are blocked by the screen, the presence of people using the terrace at first-floor level will create a continuing and materially increased sense of being observed.

5. The proposal conflicts with Wokingham's approach to neighbouring amenity

Wokingham Borough Council expressly identifies overlooking and loss of privacy as matters that it considers when assessing the impact of a neighbour's development.

The Borough Design Guide similarly requires development to safeguard reasonable levels of visual privacy and recognises that the relationships between existing properties and new development can be particularly sensitive.

The Council's emerging Local Plan Update also contains a specific safeguarding-amenity policy, Policy DH2, which identifies loss of privacy and overlooking, visual intrusion, dominance, undue sense of enclosure and harmful loss of outlook as impacts that development proposals should avoid or mitigate. Although the Local Plan Update remains under examination and is not yet the adopted plan, it is nevertheless a useful indication of the Council's current approach to residential amenity.

The proposed terrace gives rise to precisely these concerns.

6. National planning policy supports protection of existing residential amenity

The National Planning Policy Framework requires planning policies and decisions to ensure that development is well designed and provides a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. Paragraph 135 of the NPPF specifically requires development to function well, be appropriately designed and promote health and well-being through a high standard of amenity.

The NPPF also makes clear that applicants should provide sufficient information to demonstrate how proposals meet design expectations and should work with those affected by development to evolve designs that take account of their views.

In this case, the introduction of a first-floor walk-on terrace creates a materially different relationship with the adjoining property. I therefore ask the Council to give significant weight to the effect on the existing residential amenity of 12A South Drive.

7. The screen should not be treated as an automatic solution

I respectfully ask that the Council does not simply accept the proposed 1.7m screen as sufficient mitigation without assessing:

the actual height of the terrace above the neighbouring garden;

the relative ground levels between the two properties;

the position and extent of the screen;

views around the ends of the screen;

oblique views from the terrace towards 12A;

views from seated and standing positions on the terrace;

the effect of people moving around and using the terrace;

the resulting perception of being overlooked; and

the cumulative effect of the terrace, associated upper-floor accommodation and other proposed openings/balconies.

The submitted drawings should demonstrate these relationships clearly enough for both the Council and affected neighbours to understand the actual privacy impact.

8. The preferable solution is removal of the walk-on terrace

In my view, the most effective and proportionate way of addressing the privacy concern is to remove the proposed walk-on terrace altogether.

This would avoid creating the elevated viewing platform that is the source of the problem.

If the Council is nevertheless minded to permit some form of terrace, I request that the Council requires a substantially more

effective privacy solution, supported by accurate drawings and sightline information demonstrating that there would be no unacceptable overlooking or perception of overlooking from the terrace.

Any permission should also ensure that the area cannot subsequently be altered or extended in a way that increases its use as an elevated external viewing area.

Conclusion

I appreciate that the applicants wish to improve their property and I do not object to reasonable development in principle. However, the proposed rear walk-on terrace represents a significant change to the relationship between the properties and would introduce a level of overlooking and visual intrusion that does not currently exist.

The addition of a 1.7m privacy screen does not, in my view, adequately resolve the problem. The issue is the elevated position and use of the terrace itself and the resulting perception that the private garden and property of 12A South Drive are being overlooked.

The proposal should therefore be assessed against the Council's established requirements for protecting neighbouring privacy and amenity, including the Wokingham Borough Design Guide's guidance on privacy, overlooking and sensitive relationships involving upper-floor accommodation.

I respectfully request that Wokingham Borough Council refuse the proposed walk-on terrace in its current form, or require its removal/re-design so that the development does not result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, overlooking, visual intrusion or perception of being overlooked.

If the Council is minded to retain the terrace, I request that accurate cross-sectional drawings, sightline assessments and detailed information regarding the proposed privacy screen are provided and assessed before any decision is made.

Yours faithfully,

Mr and Mrs Butt
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