

Planning Reference: 261262

Application: 9 Arthur Road, Wokingham

Further Comments on Applicant's Response

Dear Planning Officer,

Having reviewed both the submitted application drawings and the applicant's recent response, we remain concerned that it does not adequately address the principal planning issues raised in our original objection. The proposal would replace the existing garage with a substantially more dominant built form along the shared boundary, resulting in an increased sense of enclosure and visual impact.

We have addressed a number of factual inaccuracies for completeness.

Existing built form

The submitted drawings identify our garage as a "neighbour extension". This is factually incorrect. The structure adjoining the shared boundary is the original garage serving 7 Arthur Road and is not an extension and can be seen in other properties in Arthur Road built at the same time. The existing plans and elevations should accurately describe and illustrate the site to ensure the proposal is assessed against the correct existing context and the true relationship between the two properties. Should these inaccuracies influence how the proposal is understood and assessed it is appropriate that they are corrected.

This does not alter what we consider to be the principal planning issue: the increased height, massing and proximity of the proposed boundary structure, and its resulting impact on outlook, sense of enclosure and the relationship between the neighbouring properties.

Impact on Residential Amenity

The applicant's response does not alter our concern that their proposal would introduce an approximately nine metre long wall of increased height immediately adjacent to the shared garden boundary.



The height of the proposed development is detailed in the application as 3 metres / 1 brick level below the existing parapet wall. The red line shown starts at the height of 1 brick level below the parapet wall and continues along showing where the proposed build would stand.

The assessment appears to conflate three separate elements: the height of our existing garage, the height of our garage parapet wall and the height of the proposed boundary wall. These are distinct features with different finished heights, yet the report refers to the proposed development as being "raised slightly" without clearly distinguishing between them. As a result, the applicant understates the visual change because it compares different elements rather than like for like existing and proposed conditions. The subjective conclusion that the proposal is only "raised slightly" is therefore not supported by an accurate comparison of the existing and proposed built form or by the effect on the apparent scale and sense of enclosure created by the development.

The assessment should instead consider the actual increase in wall height relative to the existing boundary condition, together with the overall perceived height, massing and sense of enclosure created by the completed development when viewed from our garden. Our concern is therefore not simply the numerical increase in height, but the cumulative effect of the increased wall height, its uninterrupted length and its

proximity to the shared boundary, all of which contribute to a significantly greater sense of enclosure than exists at present.

This would also materially alter the outlook from 2 (of 4) of our living room windows. Rather than overlooking an open side boundary, we would face a brick wall, creating an oppressive sense of enclosure and an overbearing visual presence. This would significantly diminish the quality of outlook enjoyed from our main living accommodation and would therefore conflict with Core Strategy Policy CP3 and the Borough Design Guide's objective of protecting neighbouring residential amenity.

Street scene

We are also concerned that the proposal results in a cramped relationship between the buildings. Although a nominal gap is retained, an approximate 50 mm separation does not provide a meaningful visual break and does little to preserve the spacious, detached character that is typical of Arthur Road.

- Arthur Road appears to have a rhythm of detached houses.
- The openness between houses contributes to that character.
- The proposal erodes that spacing.

We therefore consider that the proposal would have an adverse effect not only on us but also on the character and appearance of the street scene. Given that both houses are detached and the size of the plot surrounding it, we are puzzled as to why the applicant has chosen to propose a build along the shared border in such close proximity to our garden/residence. While the applicant is entitled to choose how they extend their property, the current proposal places the full length of the extension immediately adjacent to our shared boundary, despite there being alternative opportunities elsewhere on the plot to accommodate additional living space.

Mature Trees

The three Silver Birch trees adjacent to the boundary are long established specimens within our garden (the house is named after them). To correct the statement that these were planted by us, these trees were planted by the previous owner and well established when we purchased the property, we estimate they are 20+ years old given the trunk diameter of the largest. Given their proximity to the proposed demolition and new construction, we remain concerned that the application contains insufficient information to demonstrate that their root systems will not be adversely affected during either demolition or construction.

Whilst we acknowledge that the Local Planning Authority will determine whether additional arboricultural information is required, we respectfully ask that the Council

satisfies itself that the potential negative short and long term effects of the proposed build on these mature trees has been properly assessed before determining the application.

Tree Management

Whilst tree management has been discussed extensively, we do not understand how this relates to the application. Because it has been raised we feel the need to address this as follows:

- Following recent discussions with the applicant, a qualified tree surgeon attended on the 22nd June to further reduce the height of the Silver Birch trees and remove the lower branches. This does not appear to be reflected in the photos or information provided by the applicant and received by planning dated 9th July.
- We previously confirmed in conversation with the applicant that should any branches overhang the boundary, the applicants are entitled to trim them back to the boundary in accordance with their legal rights, with any arisings returned to our garden.
- In addition, the recently planted trees within our garden were intentionally positioned further into our garden to provide some privacy from properties to the rear in Caroline Drive and to minimise any future overhang towards the shared boundary.
- We cannot identify any damage caused to the applicant's garage roof, see below.



Conclusion

We remain supportive of our neighbours' wish to extend and improve their home. However, having considered both the submitted application and the applicant's response to our original comments, we do not believe the principal planning concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

1 In our view, the proposal would replace the existing boundary arrangement with a substantially taller and more visually dominant built form extending for approximately 10 metres along the shared boundary. The cumulative effect of its increased height, uninterrupted length and immediate proximity to our property would result in a materially greater sense of enclosure, a more oppressive outlook from both our garden and living room windows, and harm to the residential amenity that Core Strategy Policy CP3 and the Borough Design Guide seek to protect.

2 We also remain concerned that insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the adjacent mature Silver Birch trees can be adequately protected throughout demolition and construction, and we respectfully request that

the Local Planning Authority is satisfied on this matter before determining the application.

3 We ask the Council to give careful weight to the proposal's impact on neighbouring amenity, the character of the street scene and the potential implications for the adjacent mature trees when determining this application. If the Planning Officer concludes that these impacts cannot be satisfactorily mitigated, we respectfully submit that the proposal, in its current form, conflicts with the relevant development plan policies and should either be amended or refused.

Thank you for considering these additional comments.

Yours faithfully,

Mr and Mrs Liddle
7 Arthur Road