



Head of Development Control,
Wokingham Borough Council
(by email only)

2nd October 2025

AM2 Ref: J123

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Application 243125 @ Thamesfield, Wargrave Road, Henley-on-Thames

I write on behalf of all of the current neighbouring residents at Remenham Row (numbers 1-9 and 11), following amendments that have been made to the above application. This letter follows a previous one on behalf of the residents dated 30th January 2025 which raised significant concerns and requested that the application be refused for a number of reasons.

Sadly, the very minor amendments undertaken by the Applicants will have no notable impact upon the scheme and as a result the initial objections raised are still very much in place. It is not intended to repeat all the points previously made in this letter. They remain entirely valid and cross reference should still be made to the letter of 30th January 2025.

Before addressing some of the specific points, I would question if a new planning application should have been submitted by the Applicants (rather than the continuation of the existing) given that the application site area has now increased beyond that initially submitted. I have been required (on behalf of Applicants) to do just that by other authorities in a similar scenario to avoid any risk of judicial review.

The Applicant's supporting letter suggests that the design changes will reduce potential impact on neighbouring properties and will now read as a 2.5 storey rather than 3 storey building. Review of the amended plans demonstrates that this quite clearly will not be the case.

For clarification, the footprint of the vast majority of the proposed 3 storey extension has not been amended from that previously proposed, and the height of the proposed building will remain as it was previously. It is acknowledged that an alternative upper storey design now introduces substantial dormer features, but this will make no difference upon the overall scale and impact of the scheme, as is apparent in the comparative north elevations as shown below.



Initial Proposed Elevation facing Remenham Row Properties



Current Proposed Elevation facing Remenham Row Properties

The Applicant's own elevation drawings above highlight firstly that there is very minimal difference in impact and appearance, and secondly how ridiculous it is to suggest that the proposed elevation will not appear as 3 storeys, when it will tower above the existing two storey established building to the left.

The suggestion by the Applicant that overlooking will now be acceptable following the removal of some balconies is also very strongly contended. The above proposed elevation includes full height windows, many of which are the only window serving the main living area of the proposed flats, and as highlighted in the DAS, offer the main outlook serving those flats. These will look directly towards the front elevations of the existing Remenham Row properties.

Having previously highlighted the severe conflict with the Council's own guidelines on the separation of buildings to enable sufficient amenity levels in the initial objection, it had been expected that the updated DAS would respond on the matter. It does not. It simply includes at page 35 an extract from the Design Guide SPD that sets out what the separation distances need to be but then makes no reference to compliance or otherwise with such distances. Maybe this is not surprising given that the proposed extension fails to provide anything close to the separation distance that the guidelines require.

A 3 storey flat development (which as explained above, is quite clearly what is proposed in this instance) is required to deliver 30m separation between back to back elevations. Whilst recognizing that the Remenham Row elevation in question is the front elevation, this is far from a normal front elevation – it provides a largely private area with no public highway in between, that is not overlooked, and the houses have been designed accordingly. It is considered the most appropriate distance to maintain privacy and limit the sense of enclosure – which is what the guidelines aim to achieve.

Against the 30m separation requirement, the proposed extension achieves a separation distance of approximately 20m. If measuring off the Applicant's Proposed Site Plan, and

using the assigned Scale Bar, it suggests a separation of approximately 8m. This is presumably a mistake and brings into question how accurate the plans actually are.

Even allowing for a 20m separation, this is not in slight conflict with the Council's Design Guide; it is in major conflict, representing only two thirds of the distance that the guidelines require. It follows that there will be inadequate privacy levels and an unacceptable sense of enclosure to the Remenham Row properties if the proposed development is introduced. This significant adverse impact is made worse by the fact that the proposed flats have their only and main outlooks, through full-height windows, facing directly towards the Remenham Row properties.

Turning to daylight and sunlight levels it is noted that the Applicants have submitted an updated Daylight & Sunlight report dated 1st September. Once again this report confirms that the proposed scheme is substandard when the impact on many of the surrounding windows are assessed. When referring to the impact upon Thamesfield apartments, the Statement itself comments that *'...the nationally applicable BRE Guidelines are not met in relation to daylight upon nine windows...'*. This is not a scheme that just fails to achieve the guidelines – it fails across 9 windows!

One of the clearest indications of the unacceptable arrangement can be seen in proposed Section A-A on page 38 of the DAS. This shows how the 25 degree guideline to assess the impact upon the main living room windows of existing Thamesfield apartments, is clearly not met.

For a scheme to have a significant detrimental effect upon such a high number of habitable windows clearly indicates that this is not a good design. It will result in unacceptable impacts upon the living conditions of many of the residents at Thamesfield, albeit those residents may be unable or feel unwilling to flag such concerns given their relationship with the Applicant. What is clear and flagged up by the Applicant's own Sunlight & Daylight report, is that the development will not adhere with the relevant guidelines that are in place to protect resident's amenity levels.

The adverse impact on daylight and sunlight levels is not restricted to Thamesfield residents. As would be expected if you propose to replace a single storey structure with a three storey one, the front rooms of many of the Remenham Row properties will lose daylight and sunlight levels if the scheme goes ahead. The Applicant's report recognizes that the level of adverse impact upon No.2 Remenham Row will exceed the BRE guidelines.

The Applicant's Daylight & Sunlight Report suggests a flexible approach should be taken to the application of standards and guidelines. It is acknowledged that the NPPF does refer to flexibility sometimes being appropriate, but the wording of the NPPF is very relevant on the matter. It advises at paragraph 130(c) that;

'...authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies or guidance relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would otherwise inhibit making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards).'

In this case, the application of standards would not inhibit making efficient use of a site, it would simply require an alternative design that gives greater consideration to its impact upon existing nearby habitable rooms. And the resulting scheme in this instance quite clearly does not provide acceptable living standards for the reasons set out above. As a result, there is not considered to be justification for the many and significant breaches of the daylight and sunlight guidance that currently exist.

Turning to the proposed revised second floor arrangement, this now depends upon substantial dormer windows. The Design Guide refers to the need for dormer windows to be set back from the eaves line and sides of the roof. Whilst acknowledging that the dormers have been set back slightly from the eaves and sides, they still represent the vast majority of the second-floor elevation and appear as a very dominant, top-heavy feature.

As is apparent from View 2 of the AVR submission by the Applicant, the appearance of the three-storey extension, including the large dormer windows, will be very apparent from public view when the trees are not in leaf. It will add an alien feature to the local built environment, which will be very obvious to the residents of Remenham Row, and will also be apparent to those passing by vehicle or foot along White Hill and/or Wargrave Road. It will detract from the character of the area accordingly.

Policy CP3 of the Council's Core Strategy sets out a number of general principles for development, including the following;

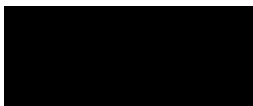
'Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

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'

For the reasons set out above, the proposed development will have a significant detrimental impact upon the amenities of adjoining land users. It has also been shown to be of an inappropriate layout, built form and height, and is not appropriate to the character of the area. The proposed scheme is therefore in significant conflict with Policy CP3 and should be refused accordingly. As explained within the letter dated 30th January 2025, there are no reasons to reach a decision that is not consistent with development plan policy in this instance.

It is therefore respectfully requested that the Council refuse the current application. Whilst the Applicants have proposed minor amendments to the scheme these do not resolve any of the concerns previously raised.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Andy Meader.

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Director

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