

PLANNING REF : 252725
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 20 Martineau Lane
: Hurst, Reading, Berks
: RG10 0SF
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Sue Murgatroyd
DATE SUBMITTED : 02/12/2025

COMMENTS:

Objection to Planning Application 252725 PP/14438049 (18 Martineau Lane, Hurst)

We, the residents of number 20 Martineau Lane, strongly object to the proposed two-storey side extension, single-storey rear extension, and associated works at 18 Martineau Lane. Our concerns are based on established Wokingham Borough Council planning policy and guidance, and they detail how this development would cause severe, unacceptable harm to our home, our privacy, and the character of our neighbourhood.

Our objections follow, ordered from the most significant grounds for refusal.

1. Unacceptable Overbearing Scale and Severe Loss of Light

The proposed two-storey side extension is highly intrusive. Its sheer height, massing, and close proximity to our shared boundary would make it severely overbearing, fundamentally enclosing the outlook from our home and garden. Council policy explicitly protects neighbours from this harm. Developments should only be permitted that do not result in an overbearing impact on neighbouring properties, an unacceptable loss of light or overlooking of a private dwelling or garden area, or otherwise significantly diminish the amenities of neighbouring properties. (Core Strategy Policy CP3, Borough Design Guide (BDG) policy R23).

We have serious concerns that the new structure will lead to an unacceptable loss of daylight and sunlight to the principal living spaces of our home at Number 20, and that the core design of the development is not sympathetic to the area or subservient to the existing property.

Overbearing Massing: The extension replaces a modest, single-storey garage with a full two-storey wing, representing a dramatic and oppressive increase in bulk and height along our boundary. This dominant scale would be acutely detrimental to our amenity, sense of enclosure, contravening the spirit of the Borough's Residential Design guidance. The BDG specifies that extensions must be "clearly subservient to the form and scale of the original building in most situations" and relate well to neighbouring properties (BDG Policy R23). We believe this proposed development does not comply with this guidance.

Impact on Primary Rooms (Loss of daylight): The scale and positioning of the extension are likely to cause a significant shadowing effect on our ground floor, directly affecting the light received by our kitchen, family room at the rear and front living room windows. The Council's Borough Design Guide sets out specific tests, such as the 25-degree rule, to prevent an "unacceptable loss of daylight." The bulk of this extension will almost certainly fall above this limiting line, failing this crucial policy test. We believe this likely failure contradicts BDG policy R18.

Right to Light Assessment: We have lived in our house for 23 years, and have enjoyed access to daylight and sunlight as a vital part of

a healthy environment. We have seen no evidence that prior consideration to our loss of light has been made by the architects in this planning application. Our right to this daylight and sunlight, and loss of sky view, has not been integrated into the design (BRE guidelines 2022).

2. Overlooking and Material Loss of Privacy

The two-storey extension introduces a significant new source of surveillance and overlooking that will breach reasonable privacy levels for our private rear garden and patio area.

Intensified Surveillance: The First Floor Plan confirms the creation of a new bedroom window in the proposed two-storey side extension. This window is positioned to look directly down onto a critical area of our garden and patio at Number 20 that currently is not

overlooked. We believe this to be in conflict with BDG policy R15.

Breach of Privacy Standards: Approving a new first-floor window overlooking a neighbouring garden area especially when not designed with obscure glazing or high sill height for mitigation would allow a significant and unacceptable loss of privacy. We believe this also contravenes policy R15 of the BDG.

3. Threat to Protected Species (Bats)

The proposal involves the demolition of the existing detached garage and porch, structures that may provide potential roosting opportunities. The porch particularly, has not been upgraded in the last few years with UPVC, and still has the original wooden fascias and soffits, which make ideal nesting sites. Local planning rules and national law require a formal ecological assessment before demolition or significant roof alterations, as bats are a European Protected Species. Wokingham Borough Council 'planning constraint checker map' is coloured pink for 18 Martineau Lane, indicating bat roost habitat suitability. Therefore, this planning application should have been submitted with a bat survey, and as it has not, we believe it should automatically be refused. As we understand, the survey will have to be carried out in spring and summer months.

Evidence of Bat Presence: We can confirm that bats are regularly seen by neighbours, particularly in the vicinity of Number 20, during the summer months. This is strong evidence that the site and surrounding area are actively used for foraging or potential roosting.

Inadequate Assessment: The applicant has submitted a letter claiming a "Bat Assessment", which is based solely on external photographs (not including the porch) and the applicant's own confirmation that they have seen "no evidence of bats". This is not a formal Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) conducted by a qualified ecologist. The determination that bat presence is "unlikely" is based on non-expert, anecdotal, and visual information.

Statutory Non-Compliance: The Planning Officer cannot lawfully grant permission without sufficient technical information to prove that

protected species will not be harmed. A reactionary approach to the presence of bats at the property is inadequate, and potentially may not be adhered to, risking harm to a protected species. This contravenes CP7 of the Core Strategy.

4. Highway Safety, Loss of Footway Character, and Removal of

Greenery The plans indicate the creation of a third parking space, requiring the driveway to be widened (referred to as P3 on the Site Layout Plan). This alteration raises unaddressed issues regarding highway safety and the streetscape character.

Uncertainty over Dropped Kerb Works: A wider driveway to possibly accommodate three cars, we believe, will almost certainly necessitate extending the existing dropped kerb (vehicle crossover) onto

Martineau Lane. However, the application form explicitly states that no new or altered vehicle access is proposed. This contradiction is highly concerning, as it means the mandatory technical assessment by the Highways Authority has been bypassed. We are concerned that permission may be granted for the parking layout without checking whether the likely necessary but undeclared dropped kerb works meet safety standards (e.g., set-back distance from junctions).

Loss of Hedges and Frontage Character: To achieve the necessary widening for three spaces, the applicant is highly likely to have to remove or significantly reduce the existing 30 years old beech hedge at the front of the property. The application form states that no hedges will be removed, but this contradicts the physical reality of widening the frontage to accommodate the increased hardstanding. This removal would fundamentally degrade the local streetscape, conflicting with the Hurst Village Design Statement (PDS) Guidance 11.5, which states that the "rural nature of the Parish dictates that soft

boundary treatment is usually the most desirable, particularly the area fronting a road". It also contradicts BDG policy R12, eroding the current boundary edge, and setting a precedent in the road for the sacrifice of soft boundaries for hard surfaces and parking.

Impact on green backdrop: Borough Design Guide (BDG Policy R23 / Section 4.11) explicitly states that where gaps between buildings allow "views to a green backdrop that contributes to the established, positive, character of the area, alterations or extensions should not close off such views". The proposed development would result in a loss of this established 'soft edge' and green backdrop from Martineau

Lane. We believe this results in an unacceptable erosion of the village's visual amenity, contrary to both CP3 and the BDG.

5. Procedural and Data Integrity Concerns (CIL and Drainage)

The application fails to provide critical data required for the Council to fully assess the scheme's compliance with regulations and its potential impact.

Missing Scale Data (CIL Forms): The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Form 1 is designed to quantify the scale of the works (new build area minus demolition area). Crucially, the form leaves the key

calculation tables Section 6c (Proposed new Gross Internal Area) and Section 7b (Existing Buildings to be retained or demolished) pletely blank. While the applicant marked 'No' to exceeding 100 square metres (sqm), the lack of numerical data for the demolition of the garage and the area of the substantial new two-storey extension makes it impossible for the Council planning department to independently verify this claim or determine if a CIL charge is required. We are concerned that the scale of works might exceed the 100 sqm threshold, meaning the applicant has failed to provide required mandatory

information. A draft plan shown to us by our neighbours at number 18, suggests that the proposal may indeed exceed 100 sqm.

Missing Party Wall reference: There is no reference in the plans explicitly highlighting that a currently shared solid boundary wall construction, between No 18 and our property at No 20, will be demolished as part of the proposal.

Missing Distance: It is unclear from the proposed plans as to whether the development adheres to the BDG guidance for rear and

side extensions, which states "A gap should be retained between the building and the site boundary and this should be a minimum of 1m in width." Without precise measurements and details of the proximity of the edge of the extension to the boundary of the property, it is impossible to tell whether this guidance is adhered to in the plans. Consequently, we believe the plans in their current form should not be approved as a result.

Surface Water Drainage Strategy: The proposal involves an increase in impermeable hardstanding to accommodate the expanded driveway and three parking spaces. Despite this change, the application documents do not include a Surface Water Drainage Strategy, which is a mandatory requirement under the Wokingham Local Validation List when new hardstanding is introduced. We believe this omission fails to address the risk of increased surface water runoff and potential flooding issues, contrary to the requirements of the Local List.

6. Inappropriate Design, Character, and Detrimental Precedent

Finally, the proposed bulk and scale fundamentally fail to respect the modest character of Martineau Lane and Hurst village.

Failure of Subservient Design: While the applicant claims a "subservient design" with matching materials, this does not mitigate the overwhelming volume of the extension. Borough Design Guide Policy R23 clearly requires alterations and extensions to "be well designed; respond positively to the original building; contribute positively to the local character; and relate well to neighbouring properties". We believe replacing a small garage with a large, integrated two-storey mass creates a disproportionate, non-subservient dwelling that is out of character with the simple vernacular of the area, contrary to BDG Policy R23.

Harmful Precedent: Approving this scheme would set a potentially damaging precedent for over-development, encouraging the destruction of soft garden boundaries for parking and the construction of dominant, large-scale residential wings throughout the estate, incrementally eroding the village's appearance and identity (conflicting with Core Strategy Policy CP3).

In summary, we believe the proposal is both technically inadequate lacking necessary statutory information regarding highways, biodiversity, and drainage and substantively causing unacceptable harm through loss of light, overbearing massing, and intensified privacy loss. We strongly request that the Planning Officer refuses this application on all the grounds detailed above.