

PLANNING REF : 243125
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 23 Hill Lands
: Wargrave, Reading, Berkshire
: RG10 8JY
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Nicholas Bromley Johnson
DATE SUBMITTED : 11/02/2025

COMMENTS:

I am a regular visitor to Remenham where my parents live. We were all horrified by Retirement Villages Group's proposed three-storey development at Thamesfield Retirement Village. As the son of Remenham Row residents, I feel it is in my interest to object strongly to the proposed development.

Firstly, the windows and balconies on the three-storey design proposed, face directly towards Remenham Row. They would look straight into or overlook the windows of the fronts of houses 1-5 Remenham Row. These windows are for bathrooms; bedrooms and living rooms and this would be an intolerable intrusion into the privacy of the Remenham Row residents. It would also affect other residents who use the communal grounds at Remenham Row. The privacy of these communal nities would be greatly compromised by the balconies and windows of the proposed building.

The bulk of the proposed building is far greater in mass to the building that is currently there. The impact of such a building development in what is a Conservation Area, would neither enhance or protect the character of the area from the perspective of the Berkshire side of the river or from the Oxfordshire side of Henley-on Thames. The red brick and grey ceramic cladding is not in keeping with any of the surrounding architecture and would be unattractive to look at from Remenham Row, from the waterway or from the other side of the river.

There is a problem regarding the separation distance between the proposed plans and the front of the houses 1-5 Remenham Row. The Council's Design Guide stipulates that, for schemes that introduce development over two storey in height, the required separation distance is 30m. The separation distance between the existing housing at Remenham Row and the proposed scheme of a three storey structure with windows and balconies overlooking Remenham Row, is only 20m.

A three storey building, built well within the Council's guide on minimum separation distances would have a negative impact on the amount of daylight that the Remenham Row properties 1-5 would receive. This would significantly reduce the amount of daylight and direct sunlight that these properties currently enjoy and would also shade out areas of the private and communal gardens, not previously in shade, to the detriment of the plants in those borders and the amenity of those that enjoy using the gardens for recreation.

The application by RVG for a three storey building in a Conservation Area is a major application and should be scrutinised closely for the impact it will have. The bulk and mass of the building it proposes to replace is larger by orders of magnitude. Consideration should be made also for how this will appear from the historic town across the river and the view from the footpath, the waterway and the buildings looking across the river towards the Berkshire side.

It will not sit quietly in its place as the scale is out of proportion with the surrounding buildings. The chosen building materials are not in keeping with any of the proximal buildings.

The need for such an increase in provision of accommodation at Thamesfield Retirement Village and its surrounding area is not established. There are many apartments currently vacant at Thamesfield, so it is not necessary to build more accommodation where there is a current lack of demand. Even if there was need for more accommodation of this nature, it does not justify building inappropriately to satisfy the demand. More suitable buildings in more suitable sites, should be found. The proposal has not taken into consideration the impact it would have on the Conservation Area or its most proximal neighbours.

When conducting its planning consultation, RVG did very little to engage or consult the residents of Remenham Row. There was a consultation meeting held on 16th October 2024 at Thamesfield by RVG. None of the Remenham Row residents were made aware of this meeting by RVG, but found out only two days before the event when the news was mentioned in passing, by chance by a Thamesfield resident. It might have been accidental that the notices were not posted to Remenham Row, but it does not look good for RVG and more could have been done to inform and consult in the early stages. RVG failed to follow the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to its early stage consultation with the local community.

I therefore strongly object to the planning application, 243125, by Retirement Villages Group.