

POST SITE VISIT REPRESENTATION
PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND BASELINE EVIDENCE

APPLICATION REF: DC/26/0980

SITE ADDRESS: Blenheim Rise, Lower Street, Pulborough.

Thank you for visiting the site on Friday 28 August in connection with the above planning application.

I have now considered the proposal in greater detail and have taken professional advice. The concerns set out below are referenced against the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), the Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan, and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to ensure that the material planning considerations arising from the proposal are clearly identified and recorded as part of the application.

In light of these considerations, I respectfully request that planning permission be refused for the following reasons:

1. Loss of Privacy
2. Height and Topography
3. Scale and Overdevelopment
4. Noise and Disturbance
5. Inadequate Screening

1. Impact on Residential Amenity: Loss of Privacy & Direct Overlooking

Relevant policies: HDPF Policy 33 - Development Principles
 HDPF Policy 32 - The Quality of New Development
 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Para 135(f)

This application has been submitted with little or no consideration for the impact of the development of neighbouring properties in terms of privacy and direct overlooking. This concern is particularly relevant in two key areas:

1. The raised platform

The finished level of the proposed platform is of critical concern due to the significant difference in ground levels between the two properties. This is particularly relevant as my property sits lower than the application site. The concern is not simply that a raised deck will be visible from my property, but that people standing on it will have an elevated line of sight, creating direct and intrusive views into my private garden and three of my bedroom windows.

From the bedroom window, the existing fence is approximately 5 feet high with 2 feet of trellis above it. The proposed raised platform would bring users to a much higher viewing position well above this boundary line. Due to these level differences, there is very little opportunity for any effective boundary screening that would not itself become unacceptably overbearing and intrusive.

2. The raised walkway

As currently proposed, the submitted plan shows steps leading along my boundary line to a raised walkway at the highest level of the garden. This is shown to be the sole access to the raised platform

This presents a critical design flaw and a severe, continuous privacy impact as all foot traffic will be forced along this high level. Most critically, as people walk down from the raised platform, they will be walking directly towards my boundary creating a direct, intrusive and uninterrupted line of sight towards my bedroom windows.

This severe and constant privacy impact is clearly evidenced by the photograph below taken from my bedroom window on the day of the site visit.



It is unclear why the applicant chose to construct the pathway at this level without first considering the impact it would have on neighbouring properties. There is no physical site constraint forcing access to be positioned at height along my boundary as, lower, far less intrusive levels of the garden could easily have been utilized.

2. Existing Site Context and Historical Baseline

Relevant policies HDPF Policy 25 – The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
HDPF Policy 33 – Development Principles

The archived sales listing confirms that the property was sold to the current owners on 23 November 2020.

<https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/rh20-2aa.html>

On the Market has pictures of the garden at that time:

<https://media.onthemarket.com/properties/8951786/1325137416/document-0.pdf>

The historical baseline photos confirm three key facts:

Original Boundary Screening: A dense conifer hedge previously provided continuous natural visual screening along the shared boundary.

Original Earthworks & Topography: The original upper garden feature was a single shed set flush with natural ground level, accessed by standard ground-level steps.

Original Soft Landscaping: The garden originally featured natural grass lawn and low retaining steps rather than continuous elevated hard terracing.

3. Height, Ground Levels & Alteration of the Natural Topography

Relevant policies: HDPF Policy 25 – The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
HDPF Policy 33 – Development Principles
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The site is naturally sloping, but the works have substantially changed the original topography by creating flatter, stepped levels.

The work has fundamentally altered the natural sloping landform of the garden, resulting in unnaturally elevated platforms and retaining structures which materially alter the character and appearance of the immediate boundary and adversely affect the relationship with the neighbouring property. The proposed composite decking adjacent to the boundary will only intensify this problem and the proposal gives no indication of the proposed height in this area.

The historical photographs showing the garden before the current works may be particularly useful here in establishing the original landform.

Photograph 1

Pre-development baseline view showing the original sloping lawn, planted boundaries and soft landscaping.



Photograph 2

View demonstrating the original natural slope of the garden, stepped access, and established landscaping around the summerhouse



Photograph 3

View from the upper boundary demonstrating the original topography of the garden, looking towards the house.



4. Scale, Massing & Plot Overdevelopment (Loss of Soft Landscaping)

Relevant policies: HDPF Policy 32 – The Quality of New Development
HDPF Policy 33 – Development Principles
Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan Policy 15 - Design
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – well-designed places and development

The cumulative impact of the existing and proposed terraces, raised platforms, composite decking, elevated walkways, steps, summerhouse and other hard landscaping should be assessed as a whole rather than in isolation

The garden was previously characterised by predominantly soft landscaping and planting. The hard landscaping and engineering works have substantially altered this character, resulting in an increasingly hard-landscaped and engineered environment that is out of keeping with its residential and landscape setting. The overall scale and intensity of this development is entirely inappropriate for this garden setting.

Taken together, this extensive volume of hard engineering represents an unneighbourly overdevelopment of a residential garden setting. Instead of respecting the established landscape and contours of the site, the proposal introduces an intensely built environment that dominates the plot and creates an overbearing sense of enclosure along the shared boundary.

Crucially, the proposal fails to adequately consider the impact on neighbouring properties, particularly regarding loss of privacy, visual intrusion and the increased sense of enclosure created by the platform and walkway positioned so close to my boundary.

A key conflict with Policy 33 is the scheme's failure to respond naturally to the existing landform. Rather than working with the natural slope – such as excavating down into the ground to contain structure heights – the development relies entirely on raised platform levels and elevated walkways constructed at high level and directly against the fence line.

Taken as a whole, the overall scale, massing and total absence of soft landscape mitigation result in an unacceptable overdevelopment of the garden, placing the scheme in direct conflict with HDPF Policies 32 and 33 and Pulborough NP Policy 15.

5. Noise & Everyday Boundary Disturbance

Relevant policies: HDPF Policy 24 - Environmental Protection (noise)
HDPF Policy 33 - Development Principles (neighbouring amenity)

The elevated recreational and seating areas, together with associated access routes and foot traffic, are located close to the boundary. Their elevated position brings everyday activity closer to the level of neighbouring bedroom windows with the potential for ordinary conversation, footfall and recreational noise to be more readily audible, particularly when windows are open.

The concern is not with ordinary residential activity itself, but with the cumulative effect of the elevated levels, proximity to the boundary and recreational use. Together, these factors have the potential to increase noise and disturbance and affect the reasonable enjoyment of the neighbouring property.

This intensification of noise at an elevated height and close proximity fails to safeguard residential amenity, placing the scheme in conflict with HDPF policies 24 and 33.

6. Loss of Existing Screening & Inadequate Landscape Buffer

Relevant policies: HDPF Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
HDPF Policy 32 – The Quality of New Development
HDPF Policy 33 – Development Principles
Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan Policy 15 - Design
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

When the owners moved into the property, they cut down the established conifer hedge that previously provided essential dense visual screening between the two properties. In the years since, this screening has never been replaced. The removal of this established screening is an important part of the site's existing baseline context and should be taken into account when assessing the impact of the current proposal.

The current boundary along my garden line consists of a 5' fence with a 2' trellis above. This existing boundary treatment is entirely inadequate to screen the proposed development. A fence of this height offers no effective visual or acoustic protection against elevated composite decking, steps and raised walkways that elevate users directly above fence height.

While the applicant's drawings indicate a proposed 2 metre screen along the boundary, this only provides screening for activity at ground level. To effectively block sightlines created by the raised platform, decking and steps, any solid boundary screen would need to be substantially higher, resulting in an excessive and visually overbearing boundary structure.

Because a tall physical fence is unviable, the proposed composite decking would create a further usable area immediately adjacent to the boundary with potential for additional seating or amenity use. This would bring activity – including people sitting and talking – into close proximity to the neighbouring property with no spatial buffer or suitable screening between the two properties.

The absence of effective screening is particularly significant given the elevated nature of the proposed deck and access walkway. The existing boundary treatment is not capable of providing effective screening at these higher levels, meaning that the privacy relationship between the two properties is materially altered by the proposed development. By covering this entire boundary zone in solid composite decking and steps, there is no bare earth left to allow for a planting and landscaping scheme that would be needed to mitigate the impact of the development.

Replacing historic natural screening with elevated hard engineering directly against the shared boundary fails to retain or enhance green infrastructure and fails to safeguard neighbour amenity. Consequently, the proposal directly contravenes HDPF Policies 31, 32 and 33, Pulborough Neighbourhood Plan Policy 15 and the principles of the NPPF.

7. Conclusion and Suggested Planning Conditions

I am advised that this application is in direct contravention of planning guidelines in respect of density, massing, disturbance, and loss of privacy, and there is no question that this application should be refused in its current form.

Should the Council wish to consider an amended scheme at a future date, the following measures would help address the impacts identified:

1. Reduction of Decking and Structure Levels: The overall height and finished floor level of the raised deck and summerhouse would need to be significantly reduced by cutting the development into the natural slope of the landscape. Lowering the profile into natural ground levels is essential to mitigate overbearing visual massing and prevent unacceptable high-level overlooking.

2. Re-siting of Access Walkway: The elevated access walkway should be relocated away from the shared boundary to an internal location on the site. Removing elevated foot traffic directly adjacent to the boundary line is essential to safeguard the privacy of neighbouring garden areas and bedroom windows.

3. Replacement of Composite Decking with Soft Landscaping: The continuous hard-surfaced composite decking along the shared boundary should be omitted and replaced with an in-ground soft-landscaping buffer. Retaining natural earth for substantial planting—comprising appropriate trees, shrubs, and greenery—would restore the essential landscape buffer. The detailed choice and layout of this boundary planting could be agreed in conjunction with the neighbouring property owner to ensure an effective, mutually acceptable privacy screen.

4. Enhanced Screening along the Platform: The low balustrade currently shown on the platform elevation is insufficient to safeguard neighbour privacy. Appropriate high-level obscure screening, integrated with natural planting, would be required along the elevation facing adjacent properties to prevent overlooking and mitigate the change in privacy relationship created by the elevated development.

5. Control of External Lighting and Acoustic Impact: To protect neighbouring amenity at elevated levels, strict conditions should be attached to restrict high-level external lighting (preventing light spill) and to prohibit fixed outdoor sound systems, avoiding unreasonable noise disruption.

I respectfully request that these matters are taken into account when determining the application. I would be happy to provide any further clarification or photographic evidence if required.