

Head of Planning Services
Elmbridge Borough Council
Civic Centre, High Street
Esher, Surrey, KT10 9SD

Portmore Park & District Residents Association
3 Clinton Close
Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 8NU
11 December 2020

Dear Head of Planning Services

Re: 2020/2821 - Warehouse, Thames Street, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 8JG

I am writing on behalf of the Committee of Portmore Park & District Residents Association to object to this application.

2020/2821 is described as an "Application to vary a condition", and a "Minor material amendment to planning permission 2015/4593".

Yet it proposes very significant changes, which are poorly documented and unclearly shown.

Habitable rooms of neighbouring properties in Montrose Walk and Portmore Park Road are extremely close to the warehouse building, and changes in design may have major impact on their privacy and amenity.

Neighbours are particularly concerned that this application would create the potential for recreational use of the rear flat roof of the warehouse development, with very severe impact on privacy for neighbours. They are also concerned about possible unconsented changes to the rear of the building impacting the amenity of neighbouring properties.

1/ The 2020/2821 'Existing' plans appear at odds with existing reality and consent, especially in relation to the rear of the building. It is unclear how they relate to 2015/4593 (permitted on appeal) and 2016/1439 (refused for overbearing impact and loss of light for neighbours).

Demonstrably accurate 'Existing' plans are needed, plus accurate analysis of how the current situation relates to consented development, to enable fair consideration of this application.

2/ The flat roof

The application proposes the creation of a more horizontal flat roof by reducing the pitch of the existing rear mono pitch roof. The first floor glazed and louvred maintenance access door, if retained, would give easy access onto this roof.

The proposals thus appear to be creating a roof balcony or roof terrace area, with potential for informal recreational use, which would very severely impact neighbouring privacy.

3/ Access to roof (potential balcony or roof terrace)

Application 2020/2821 seems to propose conflicting objectives, in relation to roof access: does it propose one access door or two?

i/ The application form states: *"Replacing the roof access existing doorway through the rear glazed panels with a roof access hatch as detailed for ongoing maintenance."* The words 'Replacing the roof access existing doorway' seem to imply *removal* of the first floor glazed roof access door.

ii/ The proposed plans appear to show *retention* of that first floor glazed door with upward louvres, and *in addition* the creation of a separate new roof access hatch.

We are concerned that this proposed reconfiguration of the rear roof risks invading the privacy of neighbours, by facilitating potential recreational use of the first floor maintenance access door (if retained), as access to a balcony or roof terrace area.

- The creation of a first floor rear access door (formerly a window) was retrospectively permitted in 2014/2929 "Retention of first floor external door to provide roof access". It was considered unlikely to cause privacy issues for neighbours, because the main building had at the time of the decision been converted to a single height internally: *"there is no existing first floor level, and the opening is situated at some extensive height above the floor level, with access to same only being possible by means of an internal ladder. It is therefore not considered that the proposed retrospectively applied for opening, which is proposed to be covered by a timber door, would give rise to any overlooking or invasion of privacy of the surrounding residential homes or properties"*.
- A revised first floor rear maintenance access door, glazed and with upward facing louvres, was subsequently permitted on Appeal to 2015/0453, again on the basis that it was a door half way up the wall in *"a full-height single space in use for the storage of building equipment and materials"*. The Inspector ruled that *"The use of the door opening at the first floor level within the rear west elevation shall be limited to access for maintenance purposes of the external faces/ finishes of the building only"*.
- The Planning Inspector's intent was clear in explicitly prohibiting opening glazed windows less than 1.7 metres above floor level: *"The windows on the rear west elevation of the development shall be fitted with obscured glazing and upright louvres, and no part of those windows that are less than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed shall be capable of being opened"*. *"The development hereby permitted shall have no windows or other openings (other than those shown on the approved plans) inserted into the side and rear elevations"*.
- We understand that reconfiguration of the internal space back into multiple internal floors is in progress, making this 'maintenance door' a practical first floor door for potential recreational access to a roof terrace or balcony.
- The 2020/2821 'Existing' plans show a glazed first floor door giving access to a section of roof with a rooflight.
- The 2020/2821 'Proposed' plans show this glazed first floor door now giving access to a solid section of more nearly horizontal roof.
- Since the proposed new roof design also includes a new roof maintenance access hatch for access from the ground floor, the first floor glazed and louvred door now appears redundant for maintenance purposes.

We trust that Elmbridge BC Planning will defer consideration of this application until clearer plans are submitted which show unambiguously: a/ what has been consented, b/ the true current existing situation of the site, and c/ what is really proposed.

We also trust that any future consent will protect neighbours' privacy, will apply the Inspector's Appeal decision on windows and openings, will strictly prevent any recreational use of a flat roof as a roof terrace or balcony, will prevent misuse of any maintenance access door, and will conserve the amenity of neighbours' gardens.

Yours sincerely

Miles Macleod
Chair, Portmore Park & District Residents Association