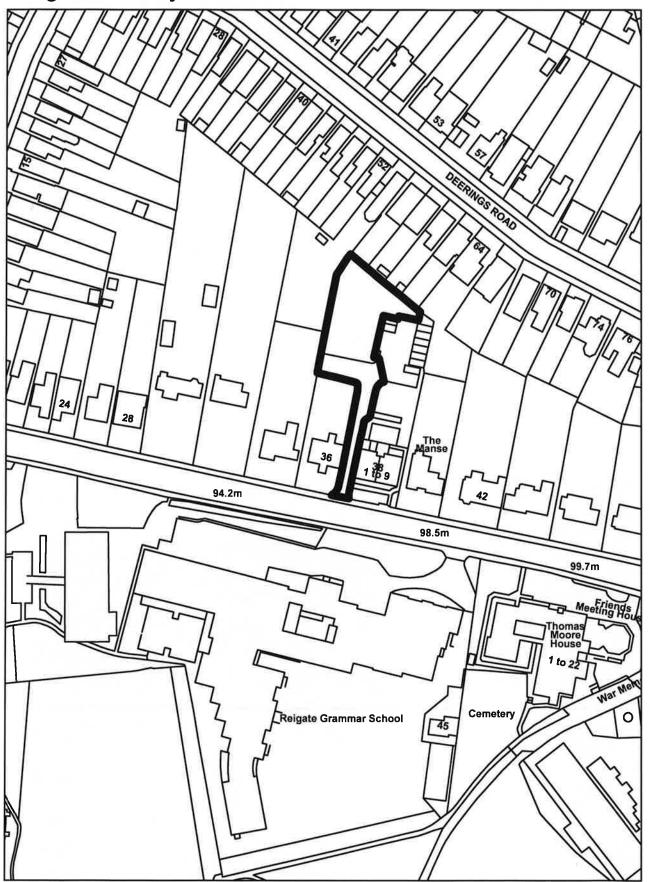
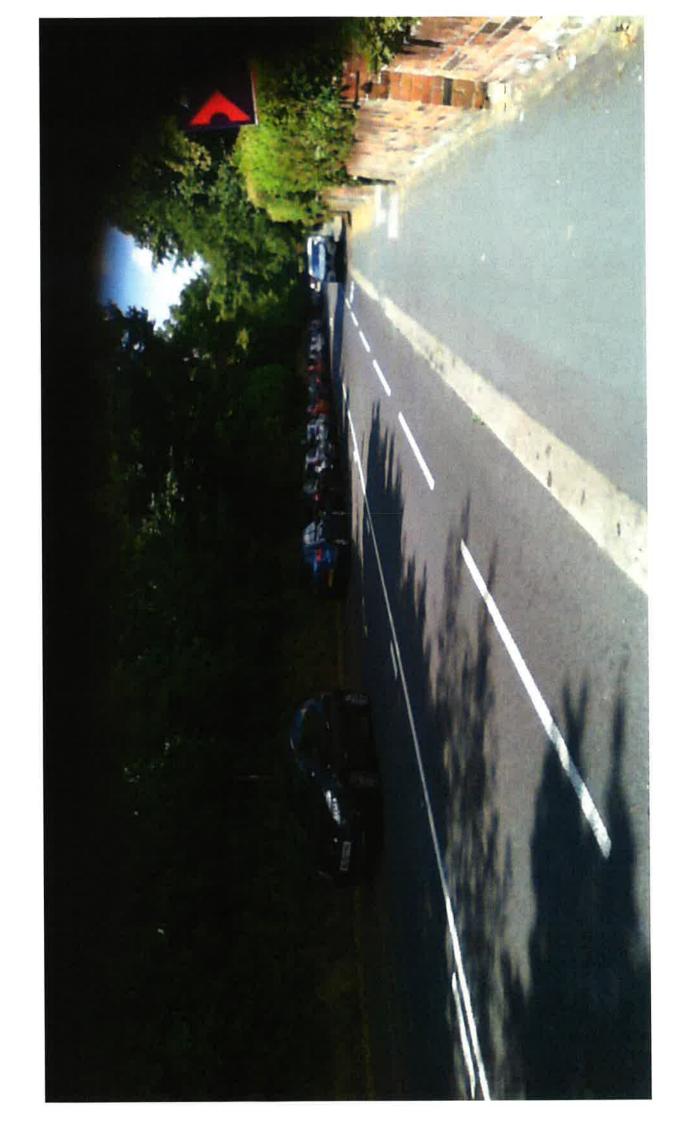
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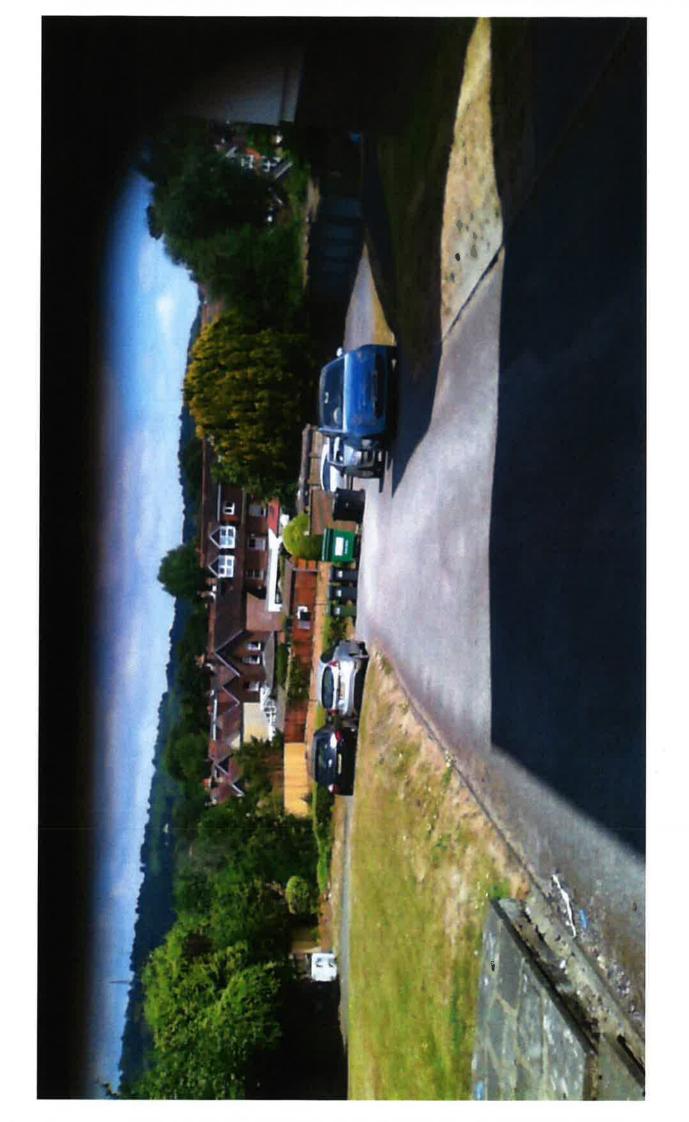


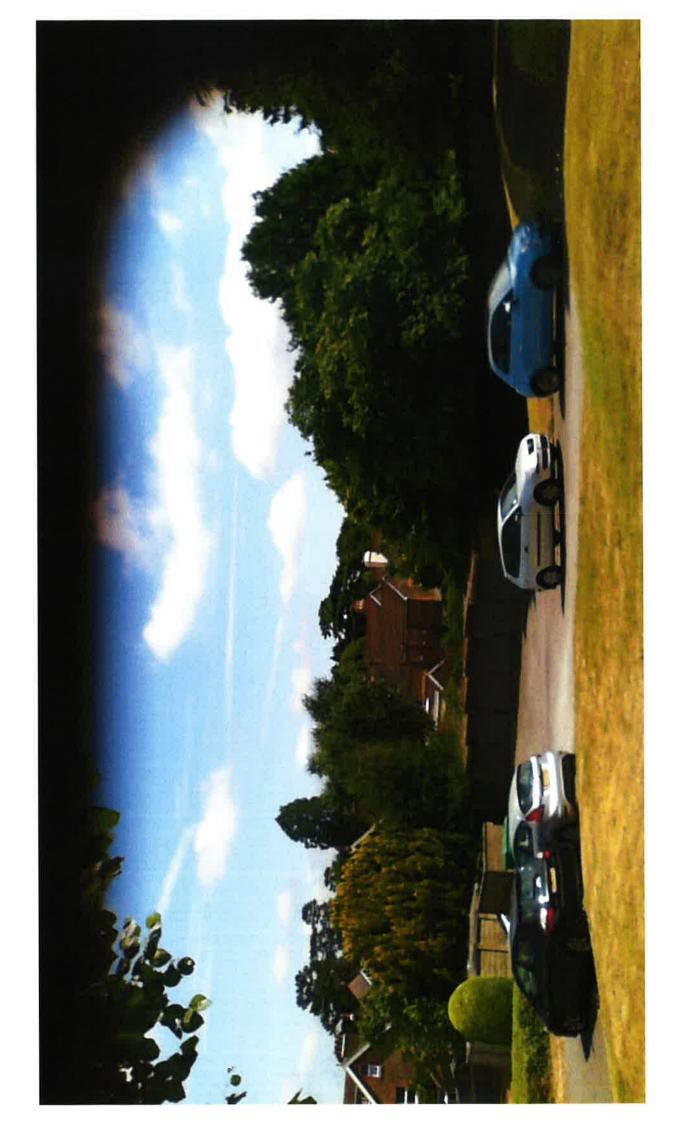
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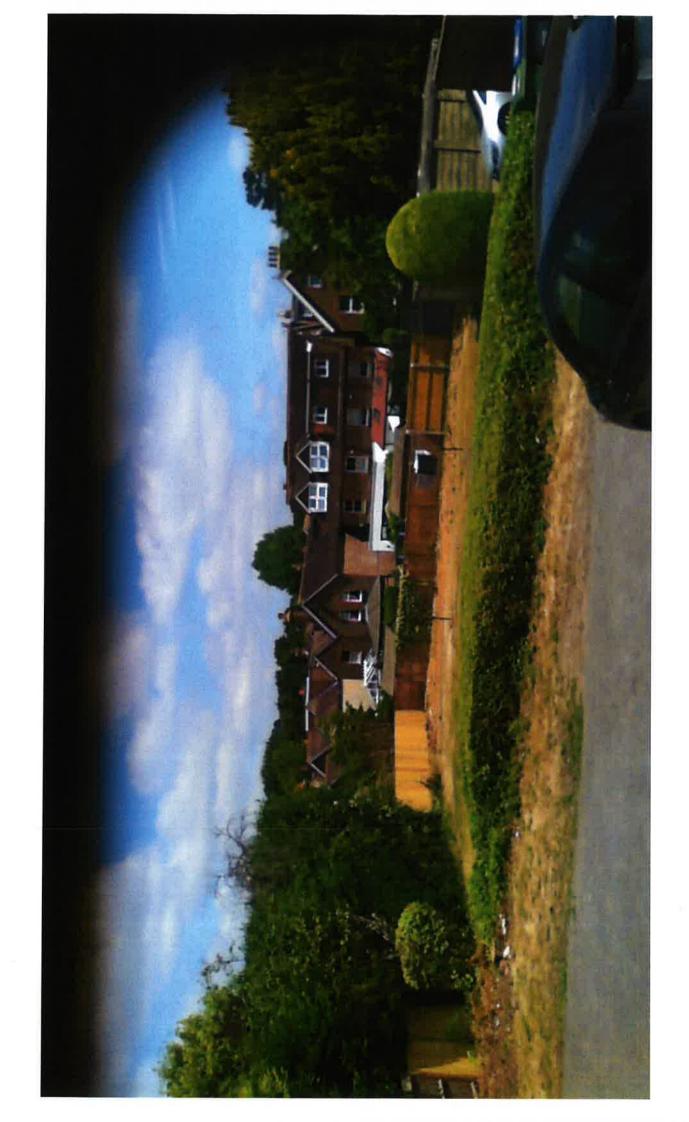


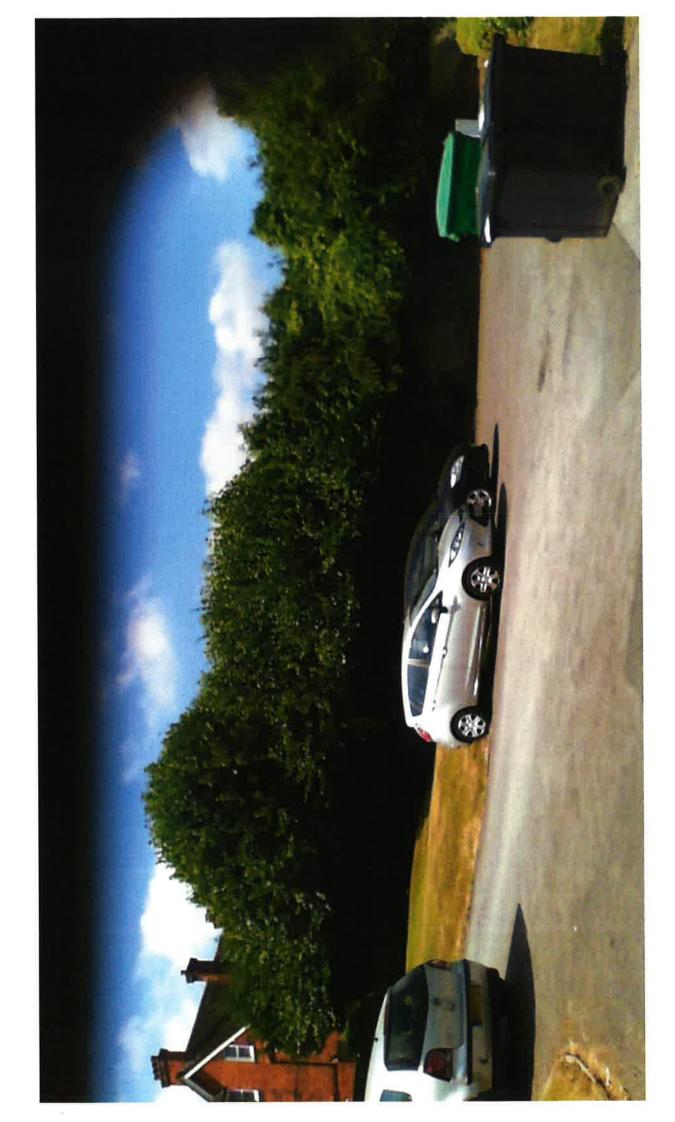


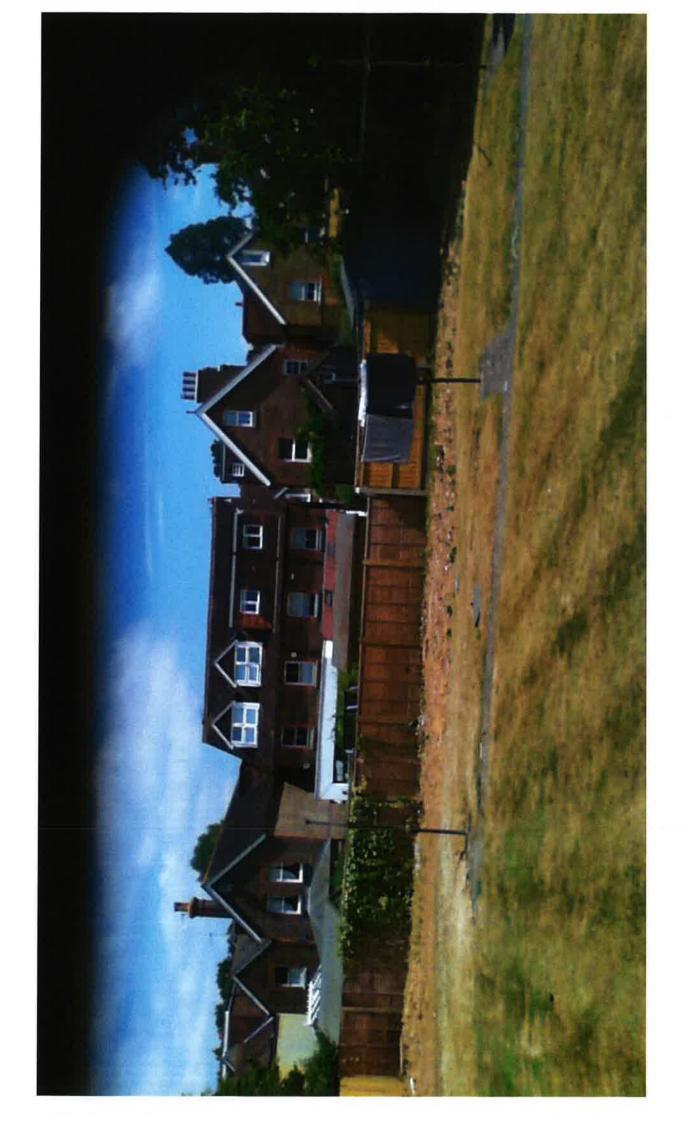


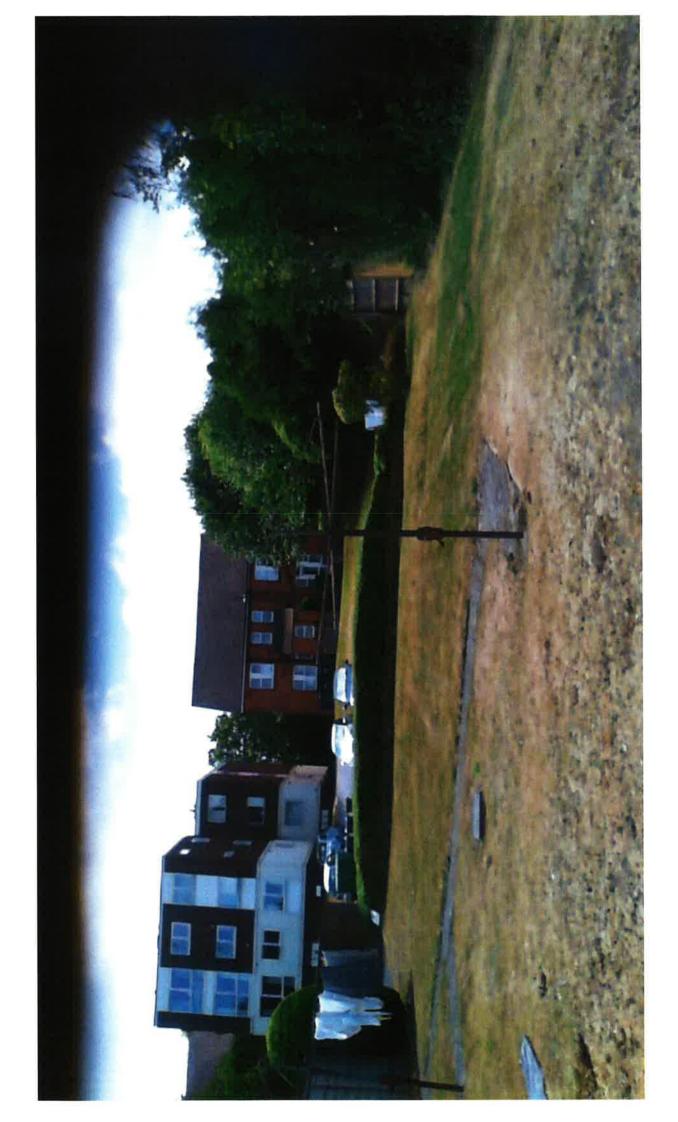


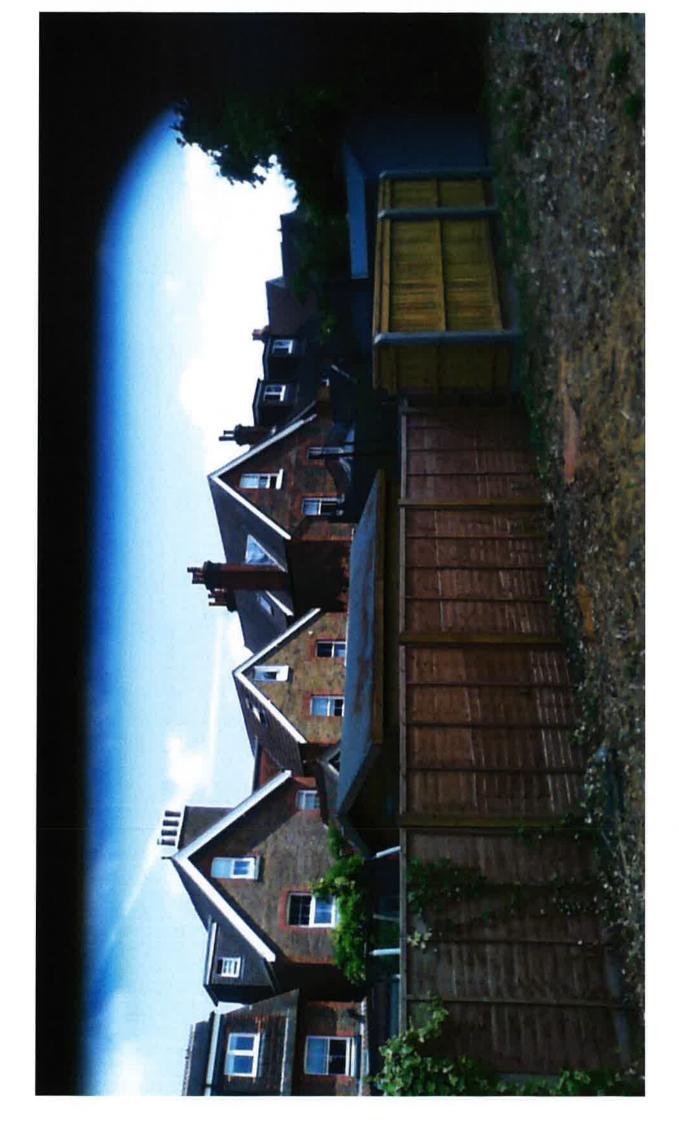






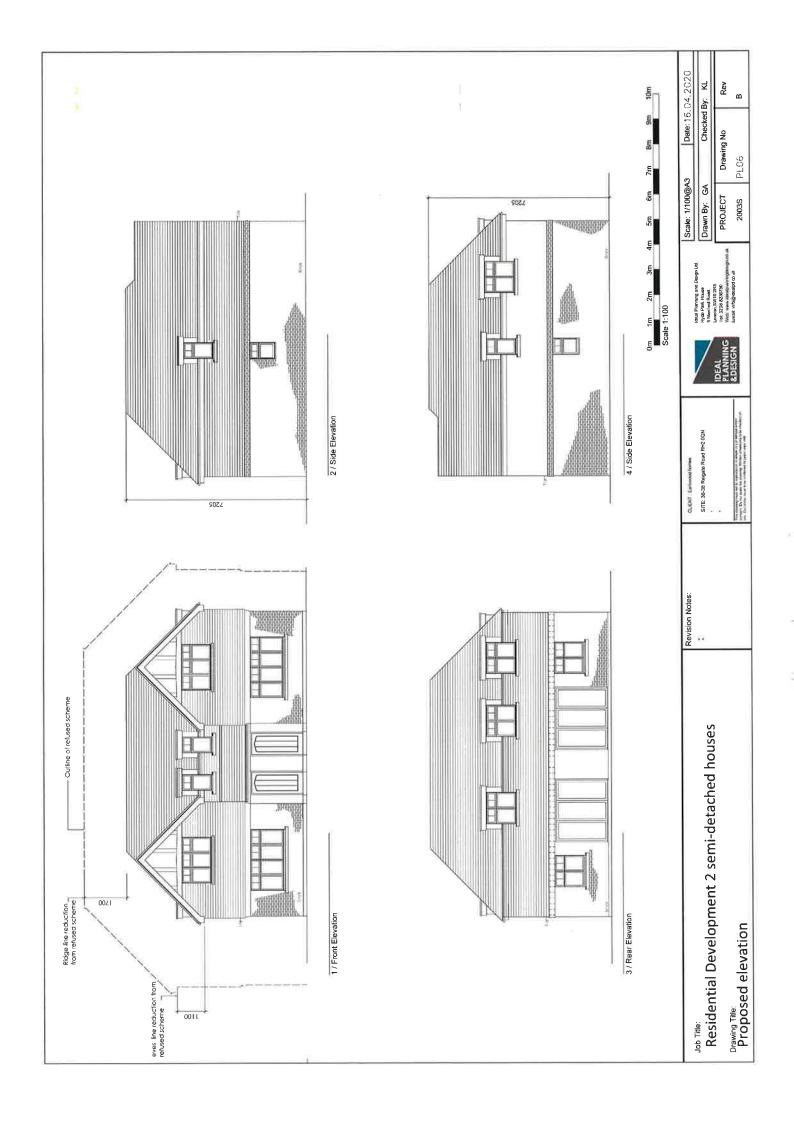


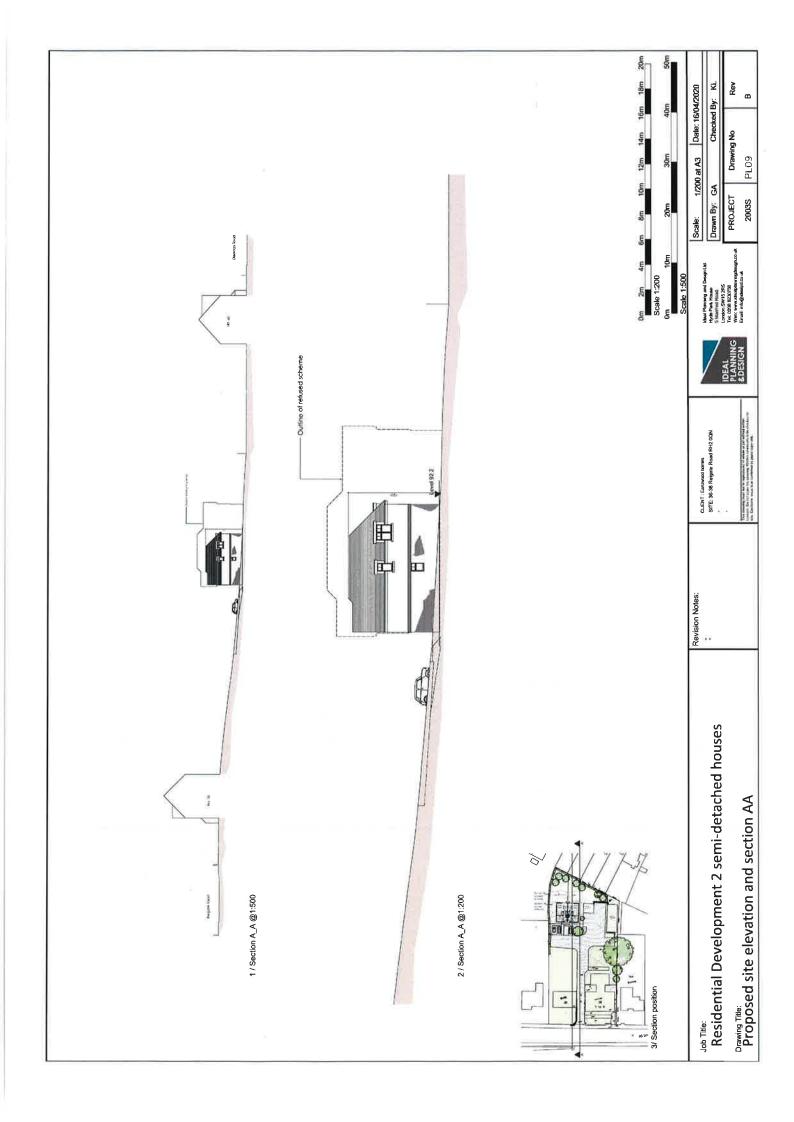


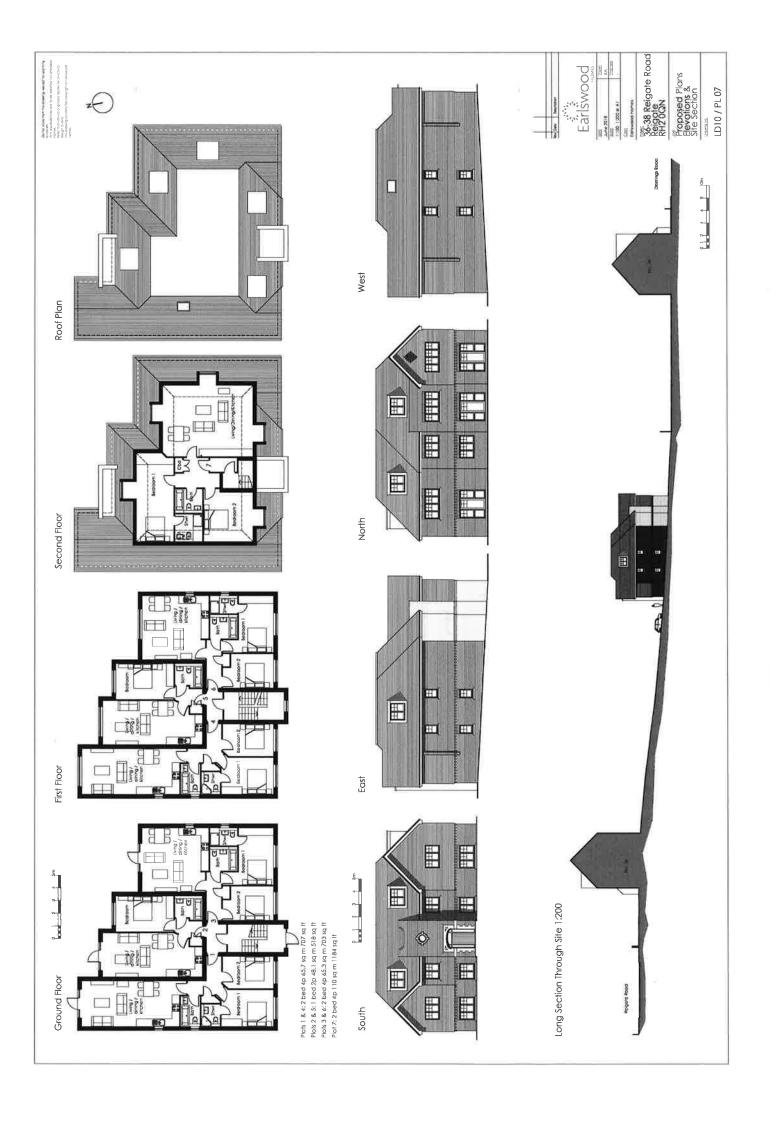






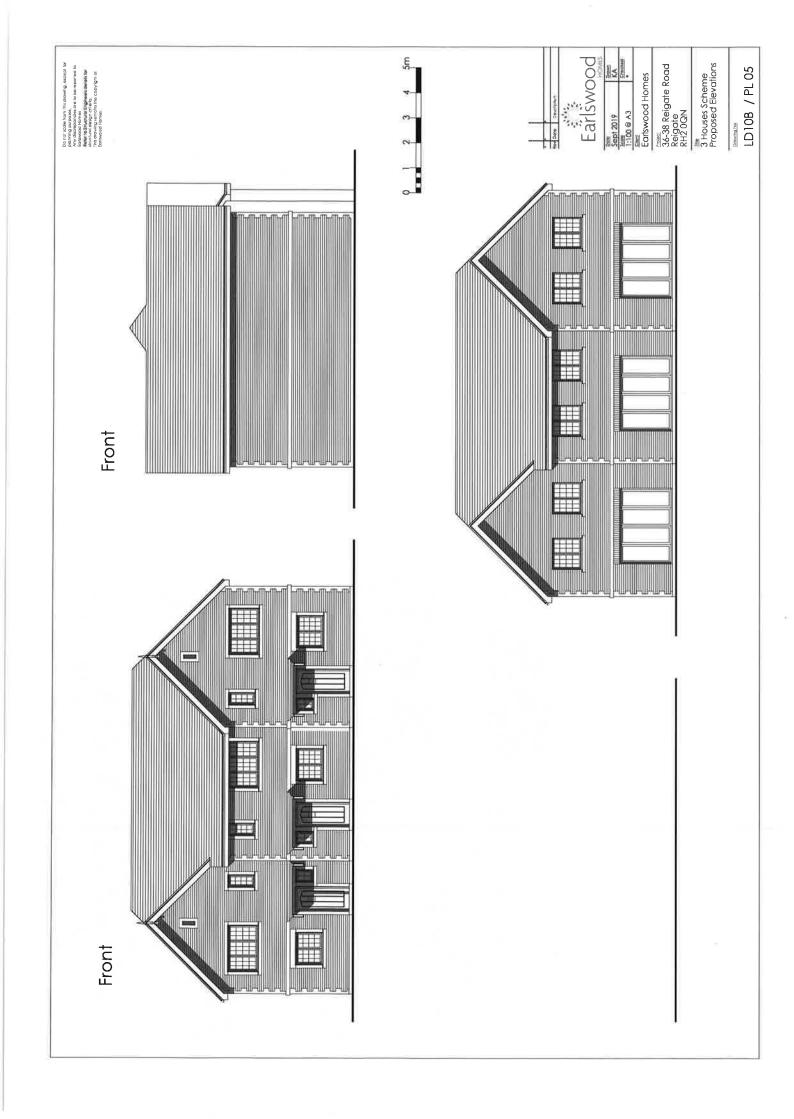




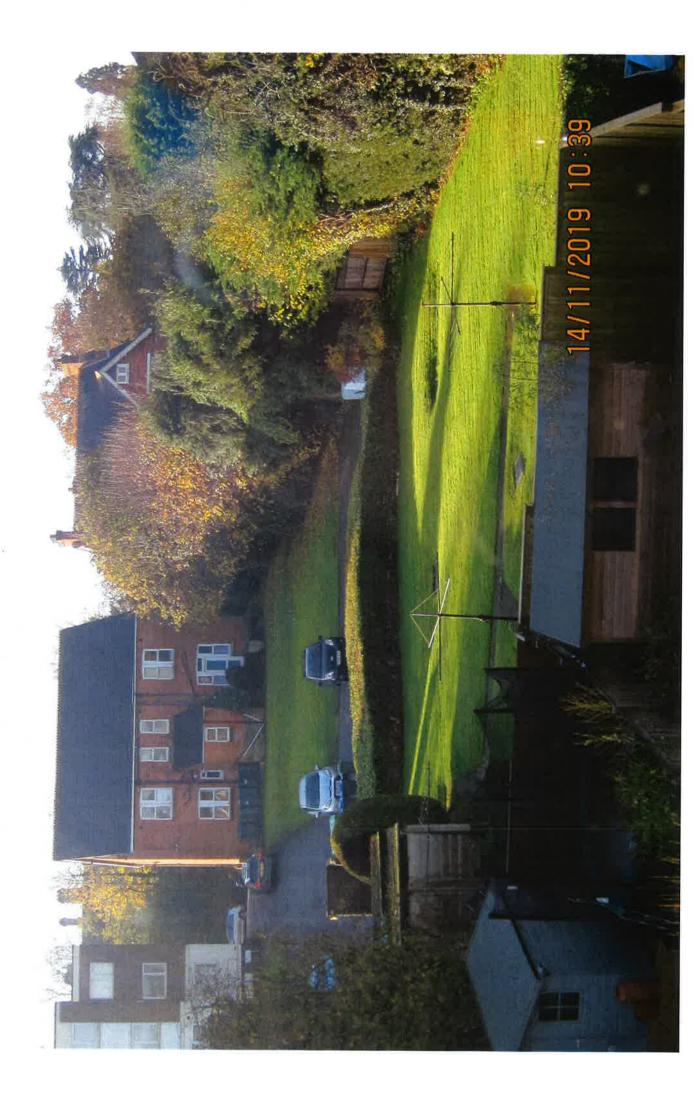














# **Appeal Decision**

Site visit made on 11 February 2019

## by Mark Reynolds BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019

# Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/18/3212950 36 Reigate Road, Reigate, RH2 OQN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Jason Vince of Earlswood Homes against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
- The application Ref 18/01384/F, dated 26 June 2018, was refused by notice dated 20 August 2018.
- The development proposed is construction of a block of seven apartments.

#### **Decision**

1. The appeal is dismissed.

#### Main Issues

- 2. The main issues in this case are;
  - the effect on the character and appearance of the area,
  - the effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of 54, 56, 58 and 60
    Deerings Road with particular regard to privacy and outlook,
  - the effect on highway safety with regard to the level of parking and refuse vehicle turning arrangements.

#### Reasons

#### Character and appearance

- 3. The appeal site sits behind No 36 Reigate Road, one of a row of large detached, predominantly two storey traditional properties which are relatively evenly spaced, set back from Reigate Road itself. An exception in terms of local architecture is the three storey flat-roofed purpose-built block of flats to the right-hand side of the site entrance.
- 4. In general, the more traditional properties on this side of the road have long rear gardens which slope down from Reigate Road to adjoin the smaller rear gardens of properties on Deerings Road. The access into the appeal site between Nos 36 and 38 (Knights Court) provides clear views down to an existing parking court and the grassed appeal site. Trees along the western boundary of the appeal site help to partially enclose the site visually. I also saw that what development there is to the rear of the frontage properties is typically limited to modest domestic-scale outbuildings. Although the access and parking areas at the rear of Nos 36 and 38 exist, thereby avoiding the

need to create them, these large areas of hardstanding are anomalous features within the area.

- 5. The location of the proposed apartment block to the rear of the existing properties would be in marked contrast to the prevailing pattern of development here, where buildings are arranged with frontage to the highway. Moreover, the development, which would be set over three storeys, would occupy virtually the full width of its plot and would have a deep plan form at odds with the traditional detached properties along Reigate Road and the smaller, albeit still substantial, properties in Deerings Road to the rear of the site. Whilst the block that comprises No 38 Reigate Road does have a large footprint, not only is that uncharacteristic of the area, but importantly, it comprises frontage, not backland development. Whilst policy Ho14 of the Reigate and Banstead Borough Local Plan 2005 (LP) advises that backland development may be acceptable, it is required to meet specified criteria aimed at protecting the character of the Borough and the living conditions of adjoining occupiers.
- 6. In its context, I am in no doubt that the overall scale and massing of the building proposed, with only a very modest communal garden area and with very limited space for meaningful landscaping, mean that it would be seen as visually cramped and would, in this backland location, be at noticeable odds with the existing undeveloped open green character of the appeal site and its immediate surroundings. I recognise that the proposed building has been designed to be articulated to seek to break up its mass, but that would not mitigate its overall size.
- 7. I consider that the largely undeveloped nature of neighbouring gardens would not mitigate the harm which would be caused by this proposal. Whilst making an efficient use of land, including by supporting flatted developments, is an aim of the development plan, the density of development proposed here would be in stark contrast to the large undeveloped garden settings which neighbouring buildings benefit from. Despite the fall in land levels, the development would be visible from Reigate Road through the generously wide access into the rear of the plot and from properties along the road. It would also be visible from neighbouring properties in Deerings Road. All in all, whilst I recognise that the appeal site is not visually prominent it is, nonetheless, a significant and integral part of the local scene from public and private vantage points.
- 8. The proposed apartment block would be positioned very close to the western side boundary of the development. The existing tree belt along this boundary contributes, in combination with trees at No 34, to the landscaped setting of the gardens which is part of the character of the area. I share the concerns of the Council that given this close relationship, and in the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, the development would be likely to result in the loss of these trees which contribute to the verdant character of the site.
- 9. Whilst as individual trees their value is not particularly high, as a group feature they do make a material contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The development proposed would not allow for any meaningful replanting along the western boundary. Should the trees be lost this would also open up the site to increased viewing from neighbouring properties, and once developed, exacerbate the stark appearance of a significantly sized building without an adequately landscaped setting. Were the appeal to succeed, a

suitably worded condition could secure some landscaping. However, the space available would materially limit its impact to the extent that it would not offset the harm. Moreover, any such planting along the boundary would, once mature, have the potential to adversely impact upon the living conditions of the future occupiers. I consider that inadequate evidence has been provided to allay the concerns raised regarding the impact on trees and the development is therefore contrary to LP policy Pc4.

10. I do not, in principle, object to the elevational treatment of the proposed building which does reference design cues along Reigate Road. This notwithstanding, the excessive nature of the scale and footprint of the proposed building and the limited spacing around it, combined with its backland location, mean that it would be uncharacteristic of the surrounding area. The development would fail to reinforce local distinctiveness, and be contrary to the requirements of policies, Ho9, Ho13 and Ho14 of the LP and the Reigate and Banstead Local Distinctiveness Design Guide.

The living conditions of occupiers on Deerings Road

- 11. The proposed apartment block is described as being positioned between 9-12m from the rear boundaries of the closest neighbours on Deerings Road. The building would have a number of living and bedroom spaces with windows facing towards these neighbours' gardens at first and second floor levels. The rearmost portions of these gardens appear to be in use, with trampolines, a seating area and areas of maintained lawns. These garden areas are currently not overlooked, given the significant separation distances between the properties on Reigate Road and Deerings Road, giving these spaces a private character.
- 12. I find the proposed apartment block would, due to its position, internal layout and introduction of windows at first and second floor level, result in overlooking of the rear gardens of Nos 54, 56, 58 and 60 Deerings Road, leading to a significant loss of privacy and harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of these neighbouring properties. However, given the stepped design of the rear elevation of the proposed apartment block, the above referenced separation distance, and the relatively generous length of rear gardens of the properties on Deerings Road, I consider that the development would not be seen as unduly overbearing and whilst the outlook for adjoining occupiers would change, there would be no material harm in this regard. This notwithstanding, I have identified serious harm to their living conditions and the development would be contrary to the terms of Ho9, Ho13 and Ho14 of the LP and the Reigate and Banstead Local Distinctiveness Design Guide.

# The effect on highway safety

13. The parking standards in the LP are expressed as maxima and the development of 7 spaces, I consider, is adequate to accommodate likely parking demand as a consequence of the proposed apartments, having particular regard to their size, accessibility to local services and facilities and good public transport connectivity. I recognise that the development could result in the displacement of some unmarked spaces at the rear of No 36 in order to facilitate vehicle manoeuvring which could, in turn, increase parking demand on Reigate Road. However, parking along the road is not restricted. Whilst I saw, during the site visit, that existing on-street parking blocked the cycle lane in places, that is a matter for enforcement by the relevant authority. Given the length of

road frontage, I am content that the limited potential for additional on-street parking that may be a consequence of the development proposed would not be materially harmful. In coming to that view, I am also mindful of the unchallenged evidence of the appellant regarding the limited accident record in the area.

14. The Council have raised concerns that refuse vehicles would be unable to turn within the development. The appeal proposals do not however alter the existing arrangement for vehicles turning within the site. The appellant notes that refuse vehicles currently enter the site to collect waste from Nos 36 and 38 and this arrangement would be unchanged by the appeal proposals. Overall, I find that the development would not be prejudicial to highway safety or that the development would be contrary to LP policies Mo5, Mo6 or Mo7.

### Other matters

- 15. The appellant has referenced the benefit of providing additional housing suggesting that the objectively assessed need for housing in the area may be greater than is currently being planned for, although it is not argued that the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites. It is argued that sites within settlements should be prioritised over Green Belt land releases proposed in the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan: Core Strategy 2014. The Council's policies do allow for sites to come forward in urban areas but these must be judged against the policies of the development plan as a whole. Against which I have identified significant areas of conflict in this case, so notwithstanding the location of the appeal site in a built-up area this development is not supported.
- 16. The delivery of 7 dwellings would be a social benefit of the scheme and related to this the construction of the development would generate economic benefits for the area. These benefits are not however of significant weight to outweigh the harm I have identified which would result from the development to the character and appearance of the area, including potential loss of trees, and harm to living conditions of adjoining occupiers.

#### Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Mark Reynolds

Inspector

