

Dear Mr

Re: Application ref 6/2020/1365/Full 34 Vineyards Road Northaw

I am writing to offer my response to some of the objections raised by some of the residents of Northaw to our planning application referenced above.

I have been informed that, should it be recommended for approval, you wish to call in our application due to reasons given in emails sent by residents. I would like to take this opportunity to respond to some of the points they have expressed as I feel strongly that there have been some misunderstandings, particularly from No 32 in the section that they entitled 'environmental impact'.

To clear up the matter of the history of the site, as mentioned in the email from No 48, this land has been in our family for three generations. Number 36 was originally owned by my wife's great uncle and aunt, , and number 34 was purchased by my wife's grandfather, ; although referred to as 'the orchard' in some emails, it was originally used as a vegetable patch and contained a few fruit trees which would have been planted anywhere between 1936 and 1981 when passed away, therefore no new trees have been planted for at least 38 years making the word 'orchard' inaccurate.

The land then passed to my wife's father , who tended the land until his age meant he could no longer do this. Thirty three years ago he tried for planning permission but chose not to follow the application through. The land was then looked after by his son who attempted to put in a pond about ten years ago, but this was never successful as there was no natural water supply. We had to remove the pond liner recently to comply with the insurance policy that we now have on the land. 34 Vineyards Road is now owned by surviving children - and . Beyond this connection to 34 Vineyards road I would like to add that the family lived in Church Lane for some years and my wife attended Northaw Junior School where her mother, later worked as a teacher.

I would like to explain to you what happened when this land, as part of estate, was part of the process of probate. While we were in this process the insurance company used by , 32 Vineyards Road wrote to my father-in-law stating that they believed that trees and vegetation on the land was causing subsidence to no 32 – I have attached a copy of this letter which gives exact details of the claim. As a result of this letter we visited the land to see for ourselves and were met by , who insisted on showing us the damage done to the inside of her garage and her house. She was obviously distressed and we were sympathetic to her situation. I refuted that the trees' growth was responsible, and that rather the problem was caused by the exceptionally dry weather conditions of the previous two years which had caused shrinkage. I would like to add that I have said to the insurance company that we are happy for No 32 to access our land if they need to do any underpinning work as the wall concerned is so close to the boundary.

On close inspection of the land I found much of it to be inaccessible due to the thickness of brambles and the oak tree at the front to be in a diseased and dangerous condition. Given its proximity to the road and the driveway of No 32, and the instruction of the insurance report, we agreed to have it taken down as soon as possible, work was carried out at our expense on 27/6/19.

With regard to clearing the rest of the land, I agreed to carry out the removal of the trees etc. specifically mentioned in no 32's report immediately. I also informed [redacted] that I would clear the rest of the land during the winter, and before the spring nesting season, to minimize the impact on any wildlife.

The clearance of the land was completed over a two week period in January 2020. Everything was cut and cleared by hand, all the trunks and usable wood was separated out and given to neighbours, including no 32. All the brushwood and brambles were piled up before being burnt in one area on a day when a north wind meant that there was minimum smoke impact on the neighbouring houses.

During this process not a single trace of wild life was found: no nests, deer tracks, hedgehogs, shrews or amphibians or reptiles, not even a sign of rabbit droppings or burrows was found. I would like to add that I have a golden retriever that I use to check out bonfires before I light them and undergrowth before I cut it down as he is very good at alerting me to hedgehogs etc. Therefore I dispute the suggestion that this work was undertaken in an aggressive and careless manner.

Following the initial clearance of the land I had a follow up phone conversation with the insurance company who called on behalf of [redacted] – she wanted to confirm that the land would not be allowed to return to its previous condition. I assured them that it will be kept cut down and in its current condition, which you can see today, and that in fact we would be applying for planning permission to build a house on that land as there is nothing else one can do with what is ostensibly a building plot in a row of houses with a road to the front and a tennis court to the rear. Incidentally this view was reflected in the conversations I had with passers-by who stopped to talk during the two weeks I was working there.

With regard to some of the other issues raised. One of the neighbours emails has pointed out that the plot is the exactly the same size as No 32 and the topography is similar with a gentle fall from the road. This levels out where we intend to build the house, then falls away again to the rear necessitating minimal cutting and filling and soil displacement, the site is also slightly lower as it is on the downhill side of no 32.

With regard to the light, No 36 is too far away to be affected and No 32 has a large blank wall facing our boundary with one frosted window at the top. As the front of No 32 faces north and back faces south the front of the house is already in its own shadow particularly the ground floor. The garage of no 32 is sited on the north east corner meaning that sight and light impact of our build will be negligible.

With regard to the concern about car parking, if you look at No 32 they do not have a problem and as the plot is exactly the same size, No 34 should not have a problem.

Looking at the boundary of the land, No 32 has an external wall 1.35 metres from the boundary and has a substantial wall only 80cm from the boundary (as seen from the photograph 3 sent in by No 32). No 36 has built their garage right up to our boundary.

To address another point, that of the land being designated as 'agricultural land'. When my father-in-law's estate was going through probate we were advised by our solicitor that it did not fit this definition and we would need to engage a land agent to produce an official report. The solicitor organised this and the estate had to pay a considerable amount of tax on the land. I would also like to say that Her Majesty's Royal Mail have delivered mail to this address now that it has a post box - a clear indication that 34 Vineyards Road is an address.

Finally, we sincerely believe that what we are proposing will be an attractive and beneficial addition to a road which has a varied mix of house styles and sizes.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter

Yours sincerely