

Objection to Appeal APP/X1925/W/25/3372664 (25/01438/FP)

I live at **99 Pixmore Avenue**, immediately north of 101 Pixmore Avenue. My parents have owned this house for over 40 years; I grew up here and have recently returned with my own family as a long-term tenant, intending to stay. Neither I nor my parents objected to earlier applications only because we were unaware of them at the time – I was living elsewhere and my parents did not receive the notice. Had we known, we would have objected, and my parents will submit their own objection to this appeal.

I have read the Council's **delegated officer report** dated **23 July 2025** (FP-Supporting Documents-23072025) and the appellants' **appeal statement** dated **24th September 2025** (FP-Appeal Documents-24092025). The officer report sets out the reasons for refusal under headings such as *design and character* and *living conditions*. The appeal statement refutes these reasons. Below I address each heading used in the delegated officer report in turn, quoting from both council and appeal documents and explaining the grounds for my objection to the proposed development. In my view, the harms that would be caused by this development (as identified in the delegated report and laid out in detail in this letter) clearly do not outweigh the benefits of creating one additional one-bedroom dwelling in this location.

As a further point of context, we are ordinary residents. We do not have the time or resources to engage planning professionals to prepare or submit our objection, whereas the appellants have instructed consultants to argue their case. I trust the Inspector will focus on the substance of our concerns rather than the professional polish of the appellants' documents.

1 Principle of development

The officer report accepts that the site lies within the settlement boundary and that there are "no objections to the broad principle of development". I do not oppose new housing in principle but oppose this specific design because of the harm identified below. The appeal statement likewise recognises that the site is sustainable and well served by public transport; the dispute is about the form and impact of the development.

The appellants repeatedly emphasise that no objections were received when the application was first advertised. This should not be taken as evidence that the development is acceptable. As explained above, I did not live at 99 Pixmore Avenue when the application was submitted, and my parents (the owners) were unaware of the proposed extension. Had we been notified, we would have objected. The absence of objections therefore reflects only a lack of awareness, not support for the scheme. In any event, planning applications are determined on their merits; the officer's report rightly identifies substantive harms that outweigh the benefits regardless of the level of public response.

The appeal statement also claims there is “**no recent planning history**” for 101 Pixmore Avenue. In fact, the delegated report lists a 2016 permission for a first-floor flat with an external staircase, a 2019 scheme for two flats that was refused and a 2020 ground-floor flat permission. This appeal would create a dwelling on a site already subject to successive extensions. The appellants even describe this proposal as “finishing off” previous works, which underlines that history and contradicts their own claim. Far from being a blank slate, the property has a continuous planning history. This incremental pattern drives my concern about overdevelopment and explains why the cumulative impact of additional development is so significant.

I also refute the premise that creating an additional flat merely “finishes off” the existing building: single storey rear extensions don't create unfinished buildings.

2 Design and character of the area

Council's concerns

The report notes that the proposed extension would deepen the building and create a blank flank wall “at a height of 5 m ... in close proximity to the shared boundary”. It highlights that the proposed flat would have only two small windows and large trees at the rear would reduce natural light. The conclusion is that the scheme constitutes overdevelopment and represents “a poor design that would not respond positively to local context”, conflicting with **Local Plan Policies SP9 and D1**.

From my perspective as the next-door neighbour in an original Garden City house that has been carefully preserved, the building already dominates its plot. Previous extensions are already in very close proximity to the shared boundary and to our property (see photos 1, 2, 5 and 6); had I been aware of those applications I would have objected. The claim in the appeal statement that this proposal simply “finishes off” an existing project overlooks the cumulative impact of the development. Any further increase in bulk and height will erode the character of this historic house and its setting.

Appellants' rebuttal

The appeal statement claims the delegated report gives “little insight” and argues that the extension would be no higher or wider than existing built form. It stresses separation distances of 2.5 m to my boundary and 4.5 m to my house, notes that no new north-facing windows are proposed and contends that there is no consistent building style in the area.

The appellant's case is internally inconsistent on the question of windows. In one part of the statements they assert that no north-facing windows are proposed; elsewhere they describe enlarging an existing window; and in another section they acknowledge that a new side window will be inserted into the existing first-floor flat. The delegated report and plans confirm that the last of these is correct. This confusion makes it difficult to understand the true extent of the overlooking/additional invasion of privacy and underscores the need for caution when interpreting the appellant's claims.

My response

The officer's assessment is correct. Extending the first-floor rearwards will intensify the massing and create a five-metre-high blank wall very close to my boundary, which would significantly increase the sense of enclosure and reduce openness in my garden. The appeal statement suggests there is no prevailing or consistent building style in the area. In fact, the vast majority of Letchworth (and much of Pixmore Avenue) is built in the **Garden City** style—generous plots, balanced proportions and careful detailing—and 99 Pixmore Avenue is a prime example of that style (located within the Heritage Character Area and allocated as a home of special interest by the Garden City Heritage Foundation). My family has preserved its original character with great care, whereas the building at 101 Pixmore Avenue already departs from the prevailing pattern. The proposed extension would further erode the Garden City character of this part of Pixmore Avenue.

The appellants also rely on a 45-degree test to argue that the extension would not affect neighbouring windows. This misses the point. **First**, earlier extensions already sit directly in front of some of my windows—additional building would further block what light is remaining following previous extensions (see photo 2). **Second**, the 45-degree test assumes a flat window plane, yet my ground-floor living room is a bay window; one of its angled panes faces directly towards the proposed extension and clearly lies within 45 degrees of it (see photo 3). Therefore, even under the appellants' own test there will be a loss of outlook and light. From my perspective, the 45-degree test is both misleading and irrelevant: the windows at the back of my property (from my living room and Master Bedroom) both directly overlook the site of the proposed extension, and would be significantly impacted by it (see photos 3 and 4).

Finally, the appellants' suggestion that such mutual overlooking is typical ignores the Garden City context: these houses were designed with generous plots and careful orientation to minimise overlooking and preserve privacy. The site already appears cramped and contrived; additional built form would exacerbate this. The design therefore fails **Policies SP9 (Sustainable Development) and D1 (Sustainable Design)**, which require development to respond positively to local context and achieve high-quality design.

3 Living conditions of neighbours

Overbearing impact

The officer report states that the extension would be “highly visible” from my rear garden and would appear “**over dominant and overbearing**”. It further notes that the dwelling would appear “discordant and cramped” on its small plot and would reduce light to the existing first-floor flat. I agree strongly with this assessment.

The appellants argue that the proposed flat sits above the ground-floor unit and would have “no physical presence” when viewed from within that flat. However, this ignores my perspective as the immediate neighbour. A two-storey wall along my boundary will loom over my garden, significantly reducing my enjoyment of this private space. The officer is right to conclude that the development would be overbearing.

The appellants also suggest that the existing ground-floor amenity area “serves little if any amenity function” and that a condition requiring landscaping would be a planning gain. This claim runs counter to historic planning applications made by the applicants themselves, which cited the amenity space as for the sole use of the new ground floor flat (built in 2020). When the most recent application for a ground floor flat at 101 Pixmore Avenue was approved, the development of the amenity area was explicitly cited as part of the reason for approving the scheme (see 19/02850/FP). The proposed opening up of the existing amenity space for shared use would seriously impact on the privacy of the ground floor unit. There appears to be no buffer at all between the ground floor bedroom and the amenity space. Responsibility for maintaining the condition of the amenity space sits with the current owners of 101 Pixmore Avenue and should not be a consideration in the current planning application – the condition in which they choose to maintain it is irrelevant.

Whatever the condition of the amenity space at 101 Pixmore Avenue, it does not change the fact that the proposed extension would dominate and overlook my well-used garden. A landscaping scheme on their side cannot mitigate the loss of openness and privacy to my property.

Overlooking and loss of privacy

The report notes that new side windows—particularly on the northern flank—could “cause additional issues with overlooking” into my rear garden. It also notes that the proposed staircase would be next to bedrooms and could cause noise.

In addition to noise, the **new** staircase will overlook my garden. While it may not face directly into our rooms, its height and position will afford a view over our outdoor space, eroding privacy. My concern is both the overlooking from this staircase and the associated comings and goings along the boundary (which will provide increase noise and enable residents to see directly into our garden and our living room), as well as the appellants’ proposal to add a side window where none currently exists.

The appeal statement insists that there will be no north-facing windows and therefore “no actual/perceived overlooking”. It admits that a new window is proposed to an existing first-floor flat but states that this would face my gable wall.

In practice, the existing staircase already looks directly into our landing, bedroom and bathroom, and its door overlooks our shower. At night the kitchen light from the current flat illuminates these rooms. Plans show a new side window in the existing first-floor flat where none currently exists; the appellants sometimes call this an enlargement, but it would in fact create a new opening facing us. Even without north-facing windows in the new flat itself, any additional opening or landing facing our property will intensify overlooking and erode our privacy. The external light from the ground floor extension illuminates our main bedroom and living room all night, and any external lights from an additional flat above it could exacerbate these issues.

For all these reasons I support the officer's conclusion that the proposal would harm neighbour amenity.

Noise and disturbance

The officer report lists noise from the staircase and movement associated with the new flat as part of the harm to amenity. The appeal statement counters that a one-bed flat would produce minimal noise and notes that Environmental Health raised no objection. While noise from one extra household may appear small, the staircase and the residents route of entry and exit will be directly adjacent to my property, and the cumulative impact of additional comings and goings late at night should not be dismissed. We already experience disturbance from residents using the existing staircase for the existing upstairs flat, and noise from heating and cooling units attached to it; a new flat would intensify this.

Loss of light and quality of accommodation

The delegated report notes that the new flat would have only two small windows and that removing rear windows from the existing flat and inserting side windows could reduce light for current occupiers. The appellants claim the proposed flat would still enjoy good sunlight, but the council's concern about window size suggests poor accommodation. Moreover, 101 Pixmore Avenue lies immediately south of our garden. Its existing extensions already cast afternoon shadow over our garden and rear rooms, and another storey would exacerbate this. I have provided photographs of the current shading to illustrate this impact (see photo 5). Policies **D1 and D3** require developments to provide high-quality accommodation and protect living conditions. The proposed development would have a significant detrimental impact on the living conditions for residents of 99 Pixmore Avenue.

4 Highways and parking

The officer report records that two existing parking spaces serve the existing flats and that no additional space is provided. It concludes that, due to the site's proximity to the town centre and bus routes, the lack of an extra space would not be detrimental. In reality, on-street parking on Pixmore Avenue is already oversubscribed. Previous extensions to this building have removed dedicated parking spaces which were previously available for the business (including both a garage with covered parking spaces and additional external parking spaces to the rear of the shop), leading to significant build up of traffic in the immediate area in recent years. Cars frequently park across our dropped kerb and block access to our drive, forcing us to apply for an H-bar marking to protect our space(see photo 7). Most households on this street own vehicles. Adding another resident with no dedicated parking will only increase pressure on parking and make it harder for us to get in and out of our drive. I therefore disagree with the officer's conclusion on parking and ask the Inspector to consider the cumulative impact of additional parking pressure both on our house and on the surrounding area.

5 Planning balance and conclusion

The council's conclusion acknowledges that providing one extra dwelling offers only a "minor benefit" in terms of housing supply. It finds that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and to the living conditions of neighbouring dwellings, concluding that these harms outweigh the limited benefits. The decision notice echoes these reasons. The appeal statement asserts that the reasons for refusal "do not stand up to thorough scrutiny" and emphasises that no objections were received.

As the immediate neighbour most affected, I object to this proposal and strongly disagree with the initial planning application and the appeal statement. I support the officer's professional assessment and emphasise the following:

- **Overdevelopment and poor design:** As explained in Section 2, the proposal would deepen the building and introduce a five-metre-high blank wall close to my boundary. This contrived extension fails to respond to the local context and conflicts with Local Plan Policies SP9 and D1.
- **Loss of privacy and amenity:** As set out in Section 3, the scheme introduces a new side window facing my property and a second external staircase. This new staircase will not only increase foot traffic but will overlook our garden. Our existing privacy is already compromised by the current staircase and side windows; further openings in the form of an additional window and external staircase, and the comings and goings of additional residents, will exacerbate this.
- **Overbearing and enclosure:** For the reasons given in Section 3, the extension would loom over and enclose my garden, appearing overbearing and discordant.
- **Noise and disturbance:** Additional comings and goings via the new staircase will increase disturbance, particularly at night, as discussed under living conditions.
- **Parking pressure:** On-street parking on Pixmore Avenue is already oversubscribed, with vehicles blocking our drive. A further dwelling without designated parking will worsen parking stress and access issues.
- **Substandard accommodation:** With only two small windows, the proposed flat offers poor natural light. Section 3 summarises concerns about internal amenity and compliance with Policies D1 and D3.

Taking account of the council's detailed assessment and my own experience as a neighbour, the harms to character, amenity and parking clearly outweigh the limited benefit of creating one additional dwelling. I respectfully urge the Inspector to dismiss this appeal.

Given the complexities of the site and the existing relationships between properties, I invite the Inspector to include my property in any site visit. Only by viewing the proposal from 99 Pixmore Avenue will it be possible to appreciate the extent of existing overlooking, the position of the external staircase and the potential impact of the new development.

To assist, I have provided the following photographs:

1. **Photo showing view from main bedroom through the landing and window:** shows the front door and external staircase of the existing first-floor flat directly overlooking our landing, bedroom and bathroom windows, illustrating the current privacy issue.



2. **Photo showing view from second bedroom towards the blank wall:** demonstrates that the “existing window” the appellants propose to enlarge does not exist and that any new opening would directly face our property. Also shows how the proposed extension would impact light to the property and our outlook.



3. **Photo from our living room showing the impact an additional storey would have on light and outlook** (the building which can be seen is the existing extension, added in 2020; the current application proposes to add a one bedroom flat on top of this extension)



4. **Photo from main bedroom showing the impact an additional storey would have on light, outlook and privacy** (the building which can be seen is the existing extension, added in 2020; the current application proposes to add a one bedroom flat on top of this extension)



5. **Photos showing shading of our garden and rooms:** taken from our garden just before midday, this photo shows how the existing extensions at 101 Pixmore Avenue already cast significant shadow over our garden and rear windows, highlighting how adding another storey would exacerbate the loss of light (please note how the shade from the second storey completely blocks the light to our garden at the far end, with the current extension shading half the garden).





6. Photo from our garden showing the proximity of the proposed extension to our boundary



7. Photo showing parking in the direct vicinity of 99 and 101 Pixmore Avenue, including a car parked across the dropped kerb at 99 Pixmore Avenue



Please let me know if further photographic evidence would be helpful.