

Evidence of a Wider and Inconsistent Levels Problem Affecting Plots 23, 34 and 35

The Council has now confirmed that its assessment found Plot 23 to be under construction at a higher level than approved. It has not yet disclosed the measured as-built level or quantified the departure. Our existing evidence indicates that Plot 23's ground floor may be approximately 1 metre higher than approved.

This matters because raising the ground-floor level raises the whole dwelling with it. Its upper floors, windows, eaves and ridge will all be correspondingly higher, increasing its prominence and potentially its dominance over neighbouring properties.

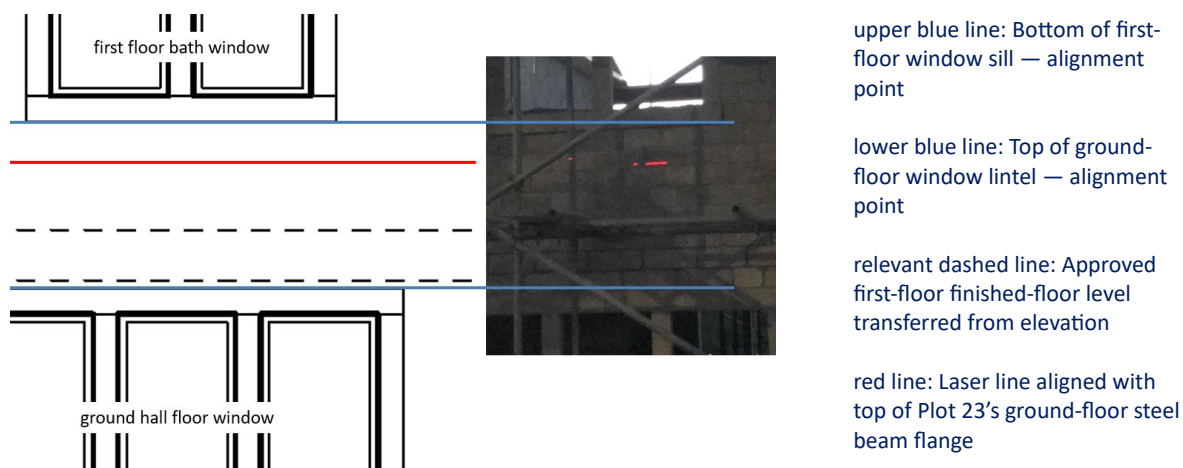
The approved drawings also establish precise vertical relationships between Plots 23, 34 and 35. By comparing those intended relationships with horizontal laser evidence visible against Plots 34 and 35 as built, we have identified a credible concern that the levels problem may extend to all three dwellings.

Plot 34

The approved levels are:

- Plot 23 ground floor: 201.20 m
- Plot 34 ground floor: 198.40 m

Plot 23's ground floor was therefore intended to be 2.80 m above Plot 34's ground floor. The grouped elevation indicates that Plot 34's first-floor finished-floor level is approximately 2.791 m above its ground floor. Consequently, Plot 23's approved ground floor and Plot 34's approved first floor should be virtually level, differing by only approximately 9 mm.



However, the horizontal laser line associated with Plot 23's as-built ground-floor/decking level appears approximately 0.63 m above Plot 34's indicated first-floor level. The two levels that should have aligned no longer do so.

The inferred relationship is therefore:

$$\text{Plot 34 excess} = \text{Plot 23 excess} - 0.63\text{m}$$

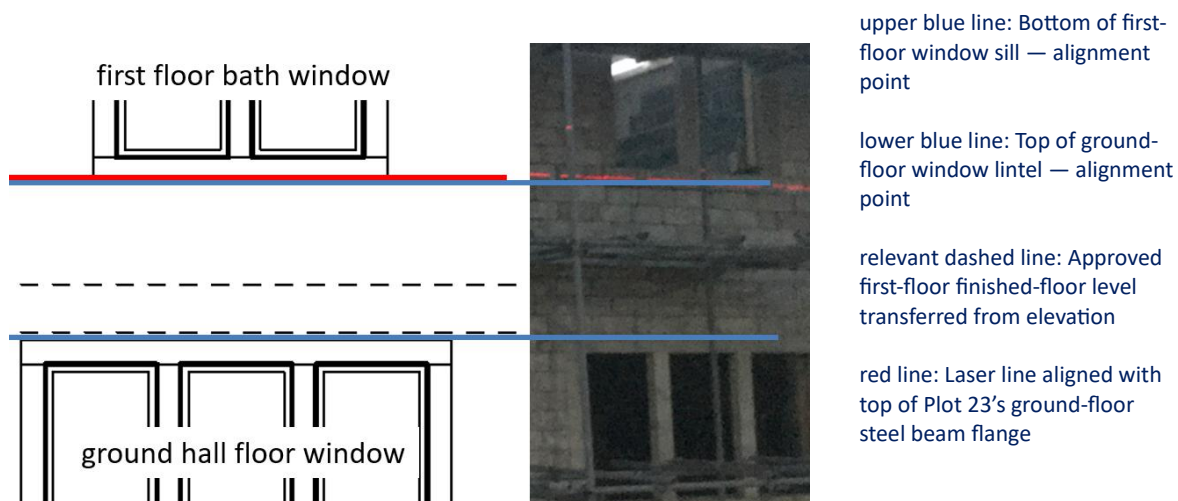
If Plot 23 is approximately 1 metre too high, Plot 34 appears to be approximately:

$$1.00 - 0.63 = 0.37 \text{ m too high}$$

Plot 35

Plot 35's approved ground-floor level is 198.10 m, 0.30 m below Plot 34. As Plots 34 and 35 use the same house type, their corresponding first-floor levels should retain that 0.30 m difference.

Plot 23's approved ground floor should therefore sit approximately 0.30–0.31 m above Plot 35's approved first-floor level.



The photographic comparison instead indicates that the horizontal laser line is approximately 0.69 m above Plot 35's transferred first-floor level. It is therefore approximately 0.38 m higher than the approved relationship requires:

$$0.69 - 0.31 \approx 0.38\text{m}$$

The inferred relationship is:

$$\text{Plot 35 excess} = \text{Plot 23 excess} - 0.38 \text{ m}$$

If Plot 23 is approximately 1 metre too high, Plot 35 appears to be approximately:

$$1.00 - 0.38 = 0.62 \text{ m too high}$$

Using 1 metre as the present working estimate for Plot 23, the present indications are therefore:

Plot	Illustrative indicated excess, assuming Plot 23 is 1.00 m too high
Plot 23	Approximately 1.00 m
Plot 34	Approximately 0.37 m
Plot 35	Approximately 0.62 m

These estimates move directly with the Council's eventual measurement of Plot 23. If its confirmed departure is greater or less than 1 metre, the indicated departures at Plots 34 and 35 will increase or reduce by the same amount. For example, if Plot 23 proves to be 1.10 m too high, the corresponding estimates become approximately 0.47 m at Plot 34 and 0.72 m at Plot 35.

Consequences of the apparent discrepancies

These figures do not suggest that the three houses have simply been raised uniformly by a common amount. Instead, each plot appears to depart from its approved level by a different amount. This means that the approved stepped relationship between the dwellings may itself have been altered.

That has important planning consequences. If confirmed, Plots 34 and 35 will also have higher floors, windows, eaves and ridges than shown on the approved plans. They will consequently appear taller and more prominent and may exert a greater enclosing or dominating effect upon existing homes along Lingards Road.

Plot 23 has the greatest direct effect upon No. 92, with Plot 34 also materially affecting its outlook. Plot 35 is less directly related to No. 92, but any increased elevation may have a greater effect upon neighbours situated further along Lingards Road. The problem may therefore extend beyond one plot and one neighbouring property.

This is especially important because the Planning Committee required the new houses to be the same height as, or lower than, adjacent properties. That safeguard cannot be assessed by referring to the approved drawings if the dwellings have not been constructed at their approved levels.

Our calculations are not presented as a substitute for a professional as-built survey. They are, however, sufficient to raise a credible and material concern. A discrepancy of approximately 9 mm could reasonably be attributed to drawing, photographic or alignment tolerances. Indicated differences of approximately 370 mm, 620 mm and 1 metre are of an entirely different order and require proper investigation.

The Council's own finding at Plot 23 demonstrates that concerns identified through this type of comparative analysis cannot safely be dismissed. The evidence now raises a wider and objectively testable concern that Plots 34 and 35 may also have been constructed too high, but by different amounts.

Potential development-wide implications

The concern may not be confined to Plots 23, 34 and 35. Issues concerning the setting out and elevation of dwellings have arisen elsewhere within the development. The findings concerning these three plots therefore raise a legitimate question about the reliability of the surveying, setting-out and level-control procedures used across the site.

The apparent departures are not even consistent between the three plots. This suggests that the issue may involve more than the use of a single incorrect site datum. It may indicate plot-specific setting-out errors, failures to check construction against the approved levels, or both.

Plots 23, 34 and 35 should therefore be treated as a warning that other dwellings already completed, currently under construction or yet to be constructed may also be affected. Those properties may consequently be higher, more prominent or more dominant than the approved plans indicate, with corresponding effects upon existing residents elsewhere along Lingards Road, Manchester Road, around Far Lower Wood Farm, and within the development itself.

It would be unsafe for the Council to investigate only Plot 23 after confirming that it is too high, while leaving the accuracy of the wider development untested. Nor should further dwellings be set out using the same controls until their reliability has been established.

The Council should therefore undertake a development-wide audit of the as-built and proposed levels, tied to a verified common datum. This should include completed dwellings, dwellings under construction and the setting-out information for those yet to be built. The results should be compared with the approved site levels and made available before further construction makes any discrepancies more difficult to remedy.

The Council should therefore:

- disclose the measured as-built level and quantified departure already established at Plot 23;
- survey the ground-floor, first-floor, eaves and ridge levels of Plots 34 and 35;
- relate all three surveys to the same approved site datum;
- determine why the apparent departures differ between the plots; and
- reassess the height, prominence and dominance of all three dwellings in relation to existing properties along Lingards Road, Manchester Road and around Far Lower Wood Farm.

A development-wide audit should also include:

- verification of the benchmark or site datum used to set out the development;
- examination of the original and current setting-out and survey records;
- as-built floor, eaves and ridge levels for a representative range of completed dwellings;
- verification of every dwelling currently under construction; and
- confirmation that plots yet to commence will be checked against the approved datum before foundations are poured.