

What the committee approved — and why it matters now

Plot 23 and the cumulative effect of subsequent changes

Application: 2026/91657	Subject: Committee-approved safeguards and subsequent departures
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Central point

The committee did not approve a collection of independent features. It approved a coordinated split-slope design in which levels, storey form, massing, spacing, retaining works and neighbouring amenity operated together. The subsequent changes at Plot 23 must therefore be assessed cumulatively, against the safeguards and assurances upon which the original decision was made.

The question for the Council: Does Plot 23, taken together with its garage, lower-ground accommodation, reduced separation, altered levels and associated engineering works, still reflect the coordinated solution placed before the committee?

Three express committee safeguards

1 HEIGHT The new dwellings were expected to be the same height as, or lower than, adjacent properties.	2 STOREY FORM The development presented to the committee comprised two- and three-storey dwellings adapted to the slope.	3 SEPARATION A specific 10-metre separation was required between Plots 23 and 34.
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Weight of the evidence

The evidence below is arranged in descending order of significance: first the committee’s express safeguards; then statements made by officers; then assurances given by the applicant’s planning consultant and architect; and finally remarks demonstrating what individual committee members understood the scheme to achieve. This distinction avoids treating every statement as if it carried identical weight.

1. Height, storey form and relationship with the slope

What the committee was told: The dwellings would be predominantly split-level, appearing as one or two storeys uphill and two or three storeys downhill. The split-level approach reduced reliance on retaining walls. The case officer also said the asymmetrical roofs were designed to keep height and massing lower.

Applicant's assurance: The architect described the buildings as generally three storeys built into the slope, presenting two-storey façades uphill towards Lingards Road.

Plot 23 is now approximately 1 metre higher than the approved level, subject to final verification of the precise discrepancy. Its enlarged frontage, garage wing and lower-ground store and garden-room arrangements create four visible and functional levels when viewed downhill. That outcome cannot properly be treated as a minor alteration to the two-/three-storey landform strategy presented to the committee.

The side garage also introduces an additional roof element. Unlike the earlier integrated arrangement, it widens the built form and adds to the apparent mass of the frontage.

2. Spacing, outlook and neighbouring amenity

Applicant's assurance: The planning consultant said that residents' concerns about building heights and highways had been "fully taken on board", and that the dwellings had been carefully designed to respect neighbouring amenity in terms of height, overlooking and spacing.

Applicant's assurance: The architect said the detached and semi-detached dwellings had "generous space between them", allowing views through to the landscape.

Those assurances must now be tested against the physical outcome:

- The committee required 10 metres between Plots 23 and 34. The as-built separation appears to be approximately 8.5–8.8 metres and therefore cannot be dismissed as an inconsequential dimensional change.
- The built form has widened on the garage side while the intended separation from Plot 34 has reduced on the other side.
- The approximately 1-metre uplift increases the elevated relationship with No.92 and the potential for overlooking.
- From Bedroom 2 at No.92, the outlook would be framed by the raised veranda. Occupation of that elevated external area would create direct intervisibility with the bungalow's windows. This is the material amenity effect underlying the earlier reference to people using the veranda.

The Council should not carry the original amenity conclusion forward when the height, spacing, garage and access arrangements upon which it depended have changed.

3. Retaining structures and the visual consequences of altered levels

Committee understanding: A committee member expressly accepted the split-level design because it avoided “lots of large retaining walls”, which would be “out of character” and could make the development look “pretty ugly”.

The significance of that exchange is not simply aesthetic. It records that the committee understood the landform strategy to avoid extensive, conspicuous retaining structures. The current position requires clear reconciliation with that understanding:

- A substantial gabion structure has been constructed in the vicinity of Plot 23, but the approved plan authorising its precise position, dimensions and appearance has not been identified.
- The stone rockery shown in the latest material is an additional feature on the north side of the public footpath; the green retaining-wall system is also still depicted. Their relationship with the constructed gabion works and the approved engineering scheme requires explanation.
- At the front of Plot 23, the retaining wall appears to have been extended in association with the double-width garage arrangement. Its visual prominence is increased by the unresolved elevation discrepancy.
- A further length of retaining structure between Plots 23 and 34 remains unexplained by the publicly available drawings.

Rather than describing the front wall simply as “ugly”, the relevant planning point is that it is long, highly visible and more prominent because of the increased level—the very type of visual outcome about which the committee member expressed concern.

4. Levels are interdependent

Officer’s explanation: When discussing the access position, the case officer explained that moving it higher would make the road higher and that “the entire site gets higher”.

That statement arose in the particular context of the site access. It should not be treated as a direct admission about Plot 23. Its importance is that the officer expressly recognised the interdependence of levels: changing one part of the scheme has consequential effects elsewhere.

For the same reason, Plot 23’s uplift, garage threshold, driveway gradient, retaining works, separation and neighbouring relationships cannot safely be assessed as isolated amendments. Each affects the practical and visual consequences of the others.

5. The coordinated solution has been progressively altered

What the committee was told: The scheme was promoted as an “appropriate technical and aesthetic solution” reached after more than two years of work.

That description supports the conclusion that permission was granted for one coordinated solution. A succession of later applications has progressively replaced or altered its component parts. Considered individually, each alteration may be presented as limited; considered together, they change the height, width, storey form, spacing, access and engineering of Plot 23.

This is where the concern about salami-slicing properly belongs. The issue is not the number of applications by itself, but the risk that piecemeal assessment prevents the Council and the public from seeing and assessing the combined development now being created.

Additional site matters requiring separate clarification

The following observations have been retained, but separated from the principal committee case because they require their own documentary explanation:

Drainage chamber and unidentified area

An area between the structures currently contains a drainage chamber but is not clearly identified on the publicly available plans. Its intended function, ownership, finished level and relationship with the surrounding retaining works should be shown on an approved drawing.

Unexplained retaining length

The additional retaining structure between Plots 23 and 34 should be identified by reference to the planning permission, drawing number and approved engineering detail said to authorise it.

Specific effect on Bedroom 2 at No.92

The raised veranda would occupy a prominent part of the outlook from Bedroom 2 and place users of the external area in an elevated relationship with the bungalow's windows. The concern is therefore direct intervisibility, loss of outlook and the experience of overlooking—not the particular activity taking place on the veranda.

Overall conclusion

The committee's original conclusion depended upon a coordinated set of safeguards: controlled height, two-/three-storey split-slope forms, lower massing, generous spacing, a specific 10-metre gap and reduced reliance on extensive retaining structures. Nearly every one of those safeguards is now affected by the as-built or proposed form of Plot 23.

Plot 23 has gained additional height, width, lower-ground accommodation and external engineering, while No.92 experiences the resulting loss of outlook and increased elevated presence. The careful balance presented to the committee therefore appears to have shifted materially in the applicant's favour.

Requested approach: The Council should assess the current proposal and the as-built works cumulatively. It should not rely upon the original committee's amenity conclusions unless it first demonstrates that the safeguards and relationships upon which those conclusions depended have been preserved.