

**Katharine & David Church  
3 Maldon Close  
Reading  
RG30 2DH**

FTAO Anthony Scholes, Planning  
The Office of Emma Gee  
Acting Executive Director for  
Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

30<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Dear Sirs

**RE: APPLICATION PL/24/0985  
1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR EXTENSION TO REAR OF BUILDING FOR 8 CARE BEDS  
FLORENCE HOUSE CARE HOME, 16-22 WESTCOTE ROAD, READING,  
RG30 2DE**

We wish to strongly object to this planning application for a second storey extension to the part of this (already excessively expanded) building which runs along the bottom of our garden.

We firstly want to emphasise how little time was provided for us to submit our objection, with notice being sent via your letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024 but not actually received by us until 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and with a deadline of only 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2024. It also came to our attention that aside from our next door neighbour, no notice was provided to any of the residents of Maldon Close who have also suffered for many years on daily basis from the impact of Florence House (previously Jasmine House until their rebrand after a negative inspection). They would therefore have been denied the opportunity to object without our own efforts (in our own limited free time and at our own cost) to make them aware. Presumably other households in the immediate locality in Westcote Road and the Parkside Road end of Parkhouse Lane will likewise remain unaware even though they would be similarly impacted by the proposed expansion but have been prevented from having their voices heard.

We would also highlight the apparent opportunistic timing of the application and wonder whether it was submitted with the precise aim that notice would be given during the summer holiday period in the hope that we, with our school age children, might be away and miss the chance to object at all. We know that other neighbours have recently been away on holiday and had to prepare responses at even shorter notice. Attempts of residents to contact our local councillors to raise our concerns have so far been unsuccessful, again presumably due to the summer holiday period.

We are shocked and bewildered by this proposal to add an additional eight bedrooms to this care home which has already been significantly over-developed on an incremental basis over the years. This further expansion would be in addition to the six extra bedrooms for which approval was given in 2015 (subject to conditions which have never been fulfilled) and add to the already large scale of the building, chaotic activity, noise and other nuisance inflicted on nearby residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

We are all too aware of the scale of expansions and the ever increasing negative impact of this commercial enterprise on the residents of Maldon Close. Whilst since 2020 we have lived in our current home, in one of the properties closest and most disturbed by the activities of Florence House, we previously lived together at another property in Maldon Close between 2006 and 2020. One of us also grew up living in Maldon Close from 1984 so has seen first hand the changes since that time when the section of the building which now forms part of the sprawling Florence House was occupied by Peter Brett Associates, which at the time a small and quiet architectural practice with larger car parking provision (adequate for its size) and which operated during standard business hours of 9:00am to 5:00pm, five days a week from Monday to Friday, closing on public holidays and over the Christmas period and with minimal impact on residents of Maldon Close or the surrounding locality.

Florence House is a business which is entirely out of proportion and character to the area in which it has chosen to operate and is without any apparent consideration for the limitations and maximum capacity of its site. This is a residential area where the properties are mostly either Victorian style with gardens of considerable size or more modern 1960s style detached and terraced properties in Maldon Close. When built, the individual properties at 16-22 Westcote Road would have had substantial grounds befitting Victorian homes of their size, however the land on which our property (and we believe that of our next door neighbour) was built came from a "sale of part" from within the title of the original Victorian home which immediately adjoins Maldon Close. Enough land was sold off from the individual Victorian property now forming part of the Florence House estate to enable two detached houses both with double detached garages and reasonable (although not substantial) gardens front and back to be built. The plot which remained within that section of the now Florence House estate had already therefore been diminished significantly in the 1960s, let alone since the repeated piecemeal expansions which have eaten away at the already limited outside space which is far below what would be reasonable for even a residential building of that size, let alone a busy commercial enterprise with its own many and varied needs.

The limited outdoor space retained within Florence House's title after the above mentioned "sale of part" was predominantly used as a car park, the size of which was reduced substantially after earlier building work (resulting in the various individual buildings being adjoined and a lift shaft being added) by way of a monolith of an extension without any apparent aesthetic consideration. This was later followed by the single storey extension running the length of the car park, which further reduced the car park's size, to which the current application proposes to add a second storey.

Since then the parking provision/outdoor space has been further depleted by the relocation of their industrial-sized red refuse bins and yellow clinical waste bins from the front of their building on Westcote Road to the car park in Maldon Close and placed right against our boundary fence at the bottom of our garden, red general waste Biffa bins at the left corner and yellow clinical waste bins at the right corner. A shed like structure has also been constructed around the area of the car park which houses their clinical waste bins, further reducing the space in the car park. In addition this decision appears to have been taken with no consideration whatsoever for the clear negative effect this now has on the use and enjoyment of our garden. When staff are putting rubbish into the bins we are forced to endure the strong and lingering bad smells and listen to the banging of the large bin lids as they are opened and hit against our fence before being dropped down from height without any thought for the noise created. The trollies used to transport the rubbish from the building outside also have wheels which scrape against the car park surface. A particularly unacceptable incident occurred in July 2024 when after a week witnessing a high volume of birds flapping around the car park area and over our garden, bird excrement across our fence and in our garden, random half eaten articles of food waste (for example a large mushroom, apples with bite marks, bits of toast) and general food wrapper and paper rubbish within our garden presenting a health hazard to our young children and pets. After a persistent bad smell of rubbish came to our attention on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2024 from the part of our garden where the red bins are directly on the other side of our fence, we then noticed that there were multiple rubbish bags piled high above the top rim of the red bin. We watched as magpie sat on top of one of the bags and having pecked a hole through the plastic was digging around in the rubbish bag with its beak before grabbing something and flying off. This continued throughout the afternoon with more magpies doing the same thing. It became apparent that as well as the bin being overfilled, it also did not have a lid attached to it meaning the entire contents of the bin were completely exposed to the elements and wildlife. How it could be considered acceptable for staff to leave bins in this state, creating an obvious nuisance and health hazard which must be an issue for their risk assessment, is beyond comprehension. Video and photographic evidence is available.

After raising this and other issues with the care home, a replacement bin was supplied, however every weekend since we are now aware that the red industrial bins are being overfilled to the point where the lids cannot be closed and we have to suffer the associated unpleasant consequences. We have also seen this occurring on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2024 (when a magpie was also seen dropping food waste into our garden and the outer bag from a used tea bag was found hanging from a plant on our arbour beside our fence at the bottom of our garden near the bins) and on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024 (evidence is available). We have also seen the yellow clinical waste bins being overfilled so that their lids do not close, including on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024 when the smell alerted us (evidence is available). Articles of rubbish are consistently seen across the ground of the car park area. Given the nature of this waste this is a significant hazard and is quite simply disgusting. This issue has probably been going on for quite some time given the gradual increase in birds and rodents witnessed in the immediate vicinity over the last few years. For it to be an ongoing problem recurring on a weekly basis, it is apparent that Florence House clearly do not have enough bins for their existing needs to last a weekend and it begs the question whether this is a cost cutting exercise or whether they simply do not have enough

room to accommodate the number of bins they do require. The proposal to add additional bedrooms with additional residents and staff generating additional waste and causing further nuisance and health hazards to us and other residents is therefore unacceptable.

Within the car park there are also often skips, shipping container type storage and sizeable piles of various discarded broken pieces of equipment, pallets and now the discarded red Biffa bin without a lid, all of which take up more of the space. An outdoor area with plastic seating has also been created for staff members to congregate on their breaks, again reducing the available outside space, the smell of cigarette smoke blowing into our garden and the rooms at the rear of our house and encouraging certain individuals from outside Maldon Close to come and collect cigarette butts discarded on the ground by the staff before using the care home's grounds as a cut through route passing along our boundary and peering into our garden.

The care home has long appeared to us and other residents of Maldon Close and no doubt the surrounding area to have reached (or indeed exceeded) capacity for the size of its plot and the infrastructure in place. The proposed further significant expansion is quite frankly a step too far.

The outdoor space with what little remains of the car park is the principal vehicular access to Florence House and is reached from within Maldon Close, an otherwise very quiet residential cul-de-sac. The operation of Florence House therefore already has a significant and oppressive impact on us and the other residents of Maldon Close, which would only increase if the additional eight bedrooms were permitted. We would strongly appeal to you to conduct a site visit and discuss this matter with us and other Maldon Close residents in order to see that this is not just a modest addition but instead the latest creeping excessive over-development from a commercial business which already, at its existing size, causes harm and nuisance to the wellbeing of local residents.

Florence House is an already large care home with 83 care beds with 60 staff, of which we understand that 30 are on site at any time, working in two shifts from 8:00am to 8:00pm and 8:00pm to 8:00am. We are unfortunately well aware that this is the shift pattern due to the shouting and prolonged running of car engines at these specific times (in addition to the similar behaviour we experience to a lesser intensity throughout the rest of the day and night) on the other side of the boundaries along the bottom and left side of our back garden. Staff typically spend time at shift change chatting loudly over their car engines (all the while through we have their car exhaust fumes and various sets of car lights coming through our fence panels into our garden). We have also on a number of occasions even heard them discussing individual patients by name and leaving us able to identify who they are talking about based on what we have heard coming from the patient's rooms. We have also been woken at approximately 2:00am on a weeknight by a staff member on night shift having a loud extended conversation on her mobile phone while standing on the narrow path running between the Florence House building and our boundary wall to the left of our property. Eventually after listening to every word of her conversation for upwards of 10 minutes, one of us had to actually get out of bed and go out into the garden to ask her to stop the disturbance. The lack of consideration we

experience is shocking and unacceptable. It is their workplace but they work in a residential area with multiple residences in close proximity.

In addition to the staff, there are the vehicles and general noise from the comings and goings of the many other individuals and companies associated with Florence House including visitors to the 83 residents, the two separate waste collection services (clinical waste and general refuse), delivery drivers, ambulances, hearses, maintenance contractors, skip delivery and collection and other ad hoc services. With regard to the clinical waste company used by Florence House, Albus Environmental, we have for a considerable period had to endure the significant noise disturbance from the bins being emptied at plainly anti-social hours of the night usually after 10:00pm and at times witnessed after midnight. Examples, for which we have video evidence are of 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024 at 10:15 – 10:35pm, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 10:25pm – 10:50pm, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 10:25pm – 10:50pm and 20<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 9:45pm – 10:10pm. While this is going on the bin lorry's engine is running, there are the bin wheels scraping across the surface of the car park, loud clanging and banging noises from the bins and the lorry's lift mechanism, light from the lorry cab visible above our rear boundary wall and sometimes loud shouts as the driver communicates with any staff members who are outside at the time. This noise can be heard from within our house and has woken our young children on occasion and leaving them too frightened to go back to sleep alone. It defies belief that this can be considered by Florence House to be acceptable or reasonable in a residential area.

Visitors to patients and medical practitioners making site visits often park on the road outside residents' properties and/or in the lay-by which runs along the right hand boundary of our property. Vehicles that do park or wait (with engines running) in the car park accessed from Maldon Close have to negotiate the tight angle to enter/exit the car park which routinely results in multiple attempts and manoeuvres having to be made, often going scarily close to the cars of residents parked quite properly outside their own homes. Frequently due to the tight angle, vehicles (often large vans and lorries) have to reverse back out along the whole length of Maldon Close around the bend and back onto Westcote Road in order to then come back along Maldon Close in reverse. With Maldon Close being a cul-de-sac there is no alternative entry/exit and residents have to cope with the inconvenience of waiting excessive amounts of time to simply leave or approach their homes while the road is effectively blocked by Florence House's vehicles making multiple attempts to gain access to their small car park. All the while residents in their homes are subjected to the extended bleeping and "THIS VEHICLE IS REVERSING" announcement on repeat, often early in the morning and late at night in the case of certain services to Florence House like the clinical waste bin collections. There is no room for cars let alone larger commercial vehicles to turn around within the car park, not least thanks to the additional obstacles that Florence House have decided to relocate, discard or construct in the car park as mentioned above. The careless attitude of some drivers to Florence House also endangers pedestrians, not only residents of Maldon Close accessing their homes but also the many people who use the pedestrian access to Parkside Lane from within Maldon Close.

We are aware that in 2014 (when we were living at 10 Maldon Close), planning permission (reference 131285) was refused for eight extra bedrooms in a single storey extension to the rear of the building together with an expansion of parking

provision to the front and rear. We would highlight the reasons for refusal included the following:

- reduction to the amount of communal outdoor amenity area;
- restricted outlook and shading for occupants;
- overdevelopment of the site to the detriment of occupants and harmful to the character of the site and the area and to the amenity of adjacent residents;
- harm to TPO trees;
- failure to demonstrate that parking on Westcote Road could be managed to avoid hazardous manoeuvres on the highway;
- detriment to visual appearance and character of the residential area;
- lack of provision for off-site transport improvements;
- Conflict with Policies CS7, CS38, DM4, DM7 and DM18 of the Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

In 2015 a revised application (reference 140369) was submitted with a reduction to the number of proposed bedrooms to six in two single storey extensions to the rear of the building, while retaining the majority of the secure landscape garden to the north-west of the site. There were also proposed amendments to the existing accesses and parking to/on Westcote Road to provide **eight** parking spaces and additional landscaping. Unfortunately for us and the other Maldon Close residents, this application was ultimately successful, although was subject to conditions including the following:

- landscape details to be submitted before development commences;
- approved landscape to be carried out before development occupied;
- access to be constructed before development commences;
- rooms not to be occupied until vehicle parking and turning has been provided;
- A car park management plan has been provided. Staff, residents and visitors made aware of allocation of spaces.

It does appear that this approval was implemented and the additional bedrooms have been occupied but there is no evidence to support a conclusion that the necessary condition in relation to the provision of landscaping and the provision of additional **eight** vehicular parking spaces and turning have been complied with. Astonishingly it has been proposed that the **eight** car parking spaces to the Westcote Road frontage (which were approved in 2015 but neglected to be implemented) will now be belatedly provided to meet any additional need for parking which may arise from the currently proposed development. We would emphasise that the provision of these **eight** spaces together with the amended accesses to Westcote Road were in fact considered necessary in order the permission for the six extra bedrooms to be granted in 2015 and the conditions specified when the permission was granted that the extra parking and amended accesses must be provided before that development could even be occupied. The requirement for **eight** additional spaces remains unfulfilled to date. The parking required for the approval of the 2015 extension simply cannot now be put forward to meet the additional parking requirements for another additional eight bedrooms. This defies logic and it is astounding that this has even been suggested by the Applicant.

We have been advised that when measured against the Council's adopted parking guidelines, Florence House comes up grievously short in relation to on-site parking provision. The October 2011 guidelines would require **52** parking spaces for a care home of the current size with the current on-site staffing level. For the proposed extension to be allowed to go ahead, **54** parking spaces would be required. The proposed provision of **16** parking spaces by Florence House compared to the required **54** spaces (in line with the Council's own adopted guidelines) represents a massive shortfall. We are surprised that the previous expansions were allowed with that existing shortfall let alone that another significant expansion is now being suggested.

Following (not coincidentally) the withdrawal earlier this year of Florence House's previous planning application for an additional single storey extension (in which they had disingenuously suggested that they had not added the **eight** parking spaces covered under their 2015 planning application reference 140369 due to a lack of need being demonstrated, notwithstanding that these additional spaces were actually imposed as a condition of their permission and in the time since they have significantly depleted their existing parking provision in the rear car park due to their actions as outlined above) some limited works have been undertaken in one area to front right hand side of the Florence House frontage where it adjoins the rear boundary of 1 Maldon Close. This work commenced in April 2024 and was not completed until the last week or so and has only resulted in what has been marked out as **two** parking spaces, not the **eight** additional spaces which a condition of their 2015 permission. Further, it is questionable whether **two** usable spaces have in fact been provided given that they are one behind the other so if the first space is used the vehicle will be blocked in as soon as the second is occupied meaning it is unlikely to be appealing to use. Since the works were completed we have only once witnessed the new spaces in use and on that occasion it was by **one** single car parking across the lines marking the two spaces ensuring firstly that they could not be blocked in and secondly preventing a second car from utilising the supposedly available second space. Photographic evidence is available should this be of assistance. Another point to emphasise is that the area for these "**two**" parking spaces has in part been freed up by their previous relocation of their industrial sized waste bins to the rear car park where they have not only reduced the available parking provision by significantly more than the alleged "**two**" spaces added but also caused more disruption and inconvenience to the residents of Maldon Close from the emptying of these bins (routinely at anti-social hours) and the additional examples of related nuisance detailed above. The net effect is therefore less parking than they had in the first place instead of more (and even then not as many more as required under the condition of their permission) and far greater distress caused to us and the other residents of Maldon Close than we could possibly have suffered from **two** cars (or **one** car based on the actual usability of the new parking area) travelling along or even parking in Maldon Close.

On the subject of the works to create the new "**two**" parking spaces, despite only apparently minimal excavation and resurfacing work being required to this small area, the work somehow took in excess of four months to complete. In that time Florence House's contractors created a great deal of disruption to us and our neighbours from the works themselves, including the noise and vibrations from

machinery as well as from the shouting to converse above the noise of the machinery and often just in general including while apparently on regular breaks from work. This work typically started before 8:00am in the morning and on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 it commenced before 7:30am (video evidence available). Early in the morning of Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024, one of their contractors was also responsible for knocking over a section of our garden wall along the left boundary of our property while operating a digger (notwithstanding that the wall in question was not in any way adjoining the area where the work was being undertaken). I was not informed until sometime later at around 9:15am, which was after their contractor had notified Florence House management, telephoned a brick layer friend and waited for this friend to come from outside the Reading area to inspect the damage. This is despite at least nine courses of brick work having been damaged to the point that they were in danger of immediately collapsing into my garden and on top of anyone or anything that may have been in the vicinity (photographic evidence available). A trampoline used by my two young children was clearly visible from my garden (as mentioned by the contractor both to me and to my next door neighbour at 1 Maldon Close after mistakenly calling at his house first believing the wall and trampoline to be within his garden) and therefore the lack of urgency when my young children (or indeed my pets) could have been out playing in the garden is shocking. After allowing the contractor and his brick layer friend into my garden to inspect the damage, I had to accept their recommendation to let them push back upwards the section of the wall which had caved in rather than the safer but less secure alternative of letting them take the damaged bricks down leaving my garden open for the whole extended bank holiday weekend and visible to anyone passing along Westcote Road with an insecure entry point for anyone with dishonest intentions and the possibility of my dog being able to escape. I was promised by the contractor's brick layer friend that he would return on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024 to complete the repairs but he did not actually come until Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 leaving my property vulnerable and my garden out of use for almost a week. The work was done and has held up to date, however the patch up job is very visible and not pleasing to the eye with bricks they had broken being replaced with new bricks of a completely different colour and the materials used for pointing the bricks in the damaged section also being an entirely different colour to the remainder of the wall. This episode raises questions over the due diligence Florence House's management carries out before engaging contractors and the quality of the contractors which they consider acceptable for carrying out work to their property. This would present further concerns in the event that permission was granted and the significant building project would commence using many and various contractors of their choosing.

This also links to a further ground for our objection to this proposal. We would have to endure significant noise, disruption and inconvenience as a result of the extensive and lengthy building work required for the expansion proposed. Our family would be facing the prospect of a massive building site across the length of the bottom of our not particularly long garden for a significant period of time which would impact greatly on our use and enjoyment of our garden and in likelihood also have negative impact on us while inside our house. We and other residents of Maldon Close would also have to endure the impact of increased traffic from additional commercial vehicles using Maldon Close to gain access to the rear of Florence House. The limited car parking remaining in the car park would also no doubt be unusable resulting in additional parking on Maldon Close outside resident's houses. The

inconvenient and worrying events outlined above in relation to the works undertaken over four months to create “**two**” parking spaces (and the negligence of their contractors damaging our property) causes us even greater concerns about the implications of the significant construction work which would be needed in order to complete the proposed building for which this latest application relates.

The expansion to the accommodation of Florence House and the additional occupants of the extra bedrooms will give rise to additional traffic movements from additional staff, visitors and required services. This will create further additional demand for parking on Westcote Road and especially on Maldon Close to make up for the substantial deficit in parking provision below the Council guidelines for an enterprise of this scale. This will be to the considerable detriment of the amenity of us and all residents of Maldon Close.

We are particularly worried to see that the latest proposed extension would involve building a second storey above the existing single storey extension previously approved (with the conditions not implemented) in 2015. The addition of a first floor will introduce a dominant and adverse feature to our outlook from our property. It will block out the sun and reduce light to our garden and house, especially in the winter months. The existing building with its piecemeal haphazard previous additions already looms ominously large over the left hand side of our property which makes the outlook along the length of the bottom of our garden especially valuable. The proposed second storey extension would completely obliterate this outlook and instead of seeing the top portion of the current single story extension’s roof, the sky above and the mature trees which provide a much needed contrast and relief to the enormous expanse of brick to its immediate left from the previous extensions, we will instead be facing the prospect of this space and light being engulfed by yet more tall brick walls and an increasing sense of being surrounded and engulfed by this hugely dominating building. It would feel like the walls were closing in around us and like our house had been effectively moved to a high-rise industrial landscape.

In addition the proposal provides for two bedrooms on the east elevation to have their principal windows facing directly at our home’s rear principal elevation and our private garden. The significant and adverse impact to the privacy and amenity of our family as a consequence cannot be overstated and we urge you to please give weight to the devastating effects this proposed building would have on the lives of us as a family in the home which is supposed to be our sanctuary, in addition to the economic impact we would fear from the probable reduction to the value of our house as a result of the extension if approved.

The new windows facing directly onto our property would no doubt be fully lit throughout the night in the same way as countless other lights remain permanently on at Florence House are currently. The windows would also provide the opportunity for us to be overlooked by Florence House residents and staff from an even closer proximity and a more direct vantage point right into the upstairs and downstairs rear rooms of our home, including our main living areas and a bedroom, as compared to the existing windows. We are already aware from the noise we are forced to hear that some residents are left in their rooms all through the day and night and therefore the new proposed extension could logically mean that we could potentially be watched 24 hours a day from the new bedrooms. The closer proximity and extra

height also give us cause to fear further and louder noise from the new rooms in addition that which we already experience from the existing bedrooms.

We have immense sympathy for the individual residents needing the care of Florence House, not least due to our own first hand knowledge of people living with dementia in other care homes locally, it is a truly terrible disease. It is for these reasons that we find it so immensely distressing to have to listen to Florence House residents screaming and shouting for hours a day, pleading for help with no help coming. Since at least the start of this year it has been especially traumatising with one elderly gentleman who every single day for at least three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening has been shouting and pleading for help from his parents and asking what he has done to hurt them on repeat. Sometimes it has continued for an entire day when it appears he has been left in room. In some instances the repeating pattern of words has changed to include the shouting of expletives, threats to kill his parents and the intention to make them die horrible deaths. This is so upsetting for us to hear for hours every day as adults but for our young children it has been immensely distressing and has led to some very difficult conversations and needing us to provide reassurance that other people we know in care homes aren't spending their days in a similarly distressed state to the residents we hear from Florence House. It feels inhumane that a person can be left alone for these extended periods of upwards of six hours a day to suffer in that state alone with no help or comfort being offered. There are also a number of other residents who hear shouting out on a daily basis, often using expletives and sometimes also banging objects on furniture trying to attract attention. We have also been woken in the middle of the night by a resident calling out in need of assistance and after this persisted for 15 minutes we felt obligated to call Florence House to point out that one of their residents clearly needed to be attended to. We cannot understand how despite us being able to hear this in an entirely separate property to the point that it has woken us up, that the pleas of residents cannot be heard by Florence House staff who are employed to care for them within the same building. We are aware that other neighbours in Maldon Close have also been upset from hearing similar shouting and have also had to make Florence House aware of it in order to prompt them to act.

There is also an incredibly frustrating and concerning problem which has been ongoing for more than three years which causes a noise nuisance to us and other residents of Maldon Close as well as being worrying for the residents of Florence House. This issue relates to patient call bells not being answered promptly and/or not being switched off which means we are subjected to an intrusive almost constant bleeping noise going on throughout every day and night for extended periods of often 40-90 minutes plus at a time with only occasional short breaks before it starts again (evidence via recordings of the sound is available). After reaching breaking point we raised this issue with Florence House in the summer of 2023 and after some implausible explanations and excuses it was eventually confirmed that the bleeping was coming from a central electronic panel which is supposed to alert staff to any call bell having been pressed by any resident in their room and will only stop emitting the bleeping noise once the staff member turns off the call bell from inside the resident's room. We politely pointed out that there is no credible justification for why this noise should be so loud outside their building to the extent that it significantly disturbs us (both in our garden and inside our house) and other

residents in Maldon Close even further away, especially when it doesn't seem to be heard particularly well or at all inside the building by the members of staff who are supposed to be alerted by it. Also no explanation could be given as to why they could not make arrangements for the alarm panel to be relocated to a more suitable place further inside their building, away from windows or other routes that allow the noise to travel outside, so as to minimise the significant disturbance to those in the surrounding area and also for their own benefit so that it would be more fit for purpose and allow their staff to better hear it and respond more promptly to the needs of their residents. As well as being a massive nuisance for us and numerous other Maldon Close residents to endure, it is also horrible for us to know that we are hearing this noise constantly as a result of countless residents appealing for help and apparently having to wait so long for that help to come. Whilst there was some limited improvement in the immediate short term it was not maintained. This is a further example of Florence House demonstrating no consideration for those who live in close proximity and no consistent effort being made to minimise the existing impact they have on us, let alone what it would be if they were allowed to expand further.

We fully appreciate that there is a need for care provision for the elderly and those with additional health needs and we have compassion for those who require it. Our distress and frustration are certainly in no way directed towards them. It cannot however be overlooked that Florence House is providing that care as a commercial enterprise and have elected to do so in a residential area. We are not so unrealistic to think that we should be able to expect complete peace and quiet while living where we do but what we are expected to endure from Florence House even at its current size is not right. We and other residents of Maldon Close already suffer an excessive daily negative impact from Florence House and this cannot in good conscience be allowed to increase by giving approval for them to expand even further. The operation of their business and their ambitions for growth cannot be at the expense of the mental health (and indeed physical health if the implications of disturbed sleep are factored in) of individuals and families living in Maldon Close and nearby. They should be taking steps to address the detriment they already cause rather than increasing it further by trying to expand even further beyond what their premises can cope with.

The extension proposed in 2014 was refused permission due to it conflicting with policies in the adopted development plans which were designed with the aim of protecting the amenity of residents, the character of the area and ensuring traffic convenience and safety. The current proposal in exactly the same way conflicts with the adopted policies and would have an even more significant impact on residential amenity, the privacy and outlook of us as adjoining residents, the character of the area and would result in further on street parking and vehicle movements, all of which would be to the immense detriment of the amenity of neighbours. Planning permission was already and only relatively recently granted to extend the care home, when at the time our property was owned by an elderly lady who suffered with both sight and hearing problems and would have struggled to submit objections to convey the significant negative impact that the proposal would have (and indeed has since had) on what is now our property.

We reiterate that the ongoing daily negative impact is already grave with Florence House at its current size and with any further expansion it is foreseeable that it would become utterly intolerable. This latest proposal is simply a step too far and the planning permission should not be granted.

Yours faithfully

Katharine Church (Solicitor) and David Church