

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250057
Site Address:	Thames Bridge House, Henley Bridge, Henley On Thames, Wokingham
Expiry Date:	11 March 2025
Site Visit Date:	31 January 2025
Proposal: Full application the proposed erection of an automatic operation electric gates at car park exit.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Green Belt
Scale and Location of Development Proposals - Countryside
Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area
Listed Building Buffer Zone (adjacent to Grade II listed Bird Place, Bird Place Cottages and Henley Royal Regatta Headquarters)
Tree Preservation Order 1843/2022 (Horse Chestnut to NE corner)
Green Route
Flood Zones 2 & 3
Groundwater Zone 3
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB21 – Landscape Character TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value

	TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	The JMWP does not apply to the scale of development proposed under this application.
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
242897	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of automatic operation electric gates at car park exit.	Refused – 09/01/2025
232680	Full application for the proposed erection of a four storey building consisting of 3 no. residential units (3no. 3 bedroom units) with associated parking (6no. spaces) and amenity space including 2 no. first floor balconies and a roof terrace, following demolition of the remaining built form on the site.	Conditionally Approved – 18/01/2024
213626	Full application for the proposed erection of a four storey building consisting of 3 no. residential units (two x 3 bedroom units and one x 3 bedroom unit) with associated parking and amenity space including 2 no. first floor balconies and a roof terrace, following demolition of the remaining built form on the site. (Not implemented)	Conditionally Approved – 18/02/2022
202203	Demolition of coach house following partial collapse (retrospective)	Approved – 13/10/2020

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage: No objection
WBC Highways: No objection
WBC Public Rights Of Way: No comments received
WBC Built Heritage Officer: No objection

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Remenham Parish Council raises no objection but wish to
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	<p>ensure that the following are assessed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The proposed development would not encourage event advertising or climbing intruder access. <i>Officer's Note: Advertising is not proposed under this application and any signage would be subject to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended). Climbing intruder access is not a material planning consideration, although it is noted that the design of the railings would impede unauthorised access.</i> - Construction does not damage adjacent TPO protected trees. <i>Officer's Note: This is discussed in the 'Landscape, Trees and Biodiversity' section of the report.</i> - Its colour and 'no entry' signs are in keeping with a conservation area. <i>Officer's Note: It is acknowledged that 'no entry' signs are referred to in the submitted plans but these do not form part of the proposed development. Any signage will be subject to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).</i> - There is a mechanism to stop cars from using the site entrance as traffic flows adjacent to the site can be complex and heavy. <i>Officer's Note: The site entrance is shared with neighbouring properties and therefore it would not be appropriate for the LPA to impose any restrictions on the shared access under this application.</i>
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is located in a prominent position fronting White Hill within a cluster of commercial and residential development to the east of Henley Bridge. The immediate surroundings comprise various historic, residential and non-residential buildings including the Henley Royal Regatta Headquarters to the immediate west, the Leander Club to the north and Little Angel public house to the north west. The site falls within designated Green Belt and Countryside but visually appears as part of the built-up area of Henley-on-Thames.

The site is currently being redeveloped following the commencement of planning consent ref 232680 for the erection of a four storey building comprising 3no. 3 bedroom residential units with associate parking and amenity space. Prior to the commencement of this development the site was occupied by offices.

Proposal:

This application proposes the erection of an automatic gate on the site's vehicular exit point. The proposed gate would have a total height of approximately 1.5m and width of 3.7m with metal railings which match the height and appearance of the approved boundary treatment for the development.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development within the Green Belt and Countryside

The application site is located within designated Green Belt and outside of settlement limits in the open Countryside. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts with national policies for the protection of Green Belt land covered by Chapter 13 of the NPPF. Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that, "The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence". Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the Green Belt serves 5 purposes, the one most relevant to this proposal is, "(c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment".

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that, "Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances." When considering any planning application, LPAs must ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of its inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of eight exceptions applies. The proposed gate would constitute a new building operation, which is ordinarily deemed as inappropriate development. However, in this case the gate would be attached to the metal railings fronting White Hill which were approved under consent ref 232680. Therefore, paragraph 154(c) "*the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*" could be viewed as a relevant exception to this proposal. Similar principles over proportionate increases are reflected in Core Strategy policy CP12 and MDD Local Plan policy TB01.

Due to the nature of the proposed development and its minimal bulk, the proposal would be a limited addition to the built form approved under consent ref 232860 which is currently under construction. The proposal would not be a disproportionate addition

over and above the size of the approved redevelopment on the site in accordance with paragraph 154(c) the NPPF and the principles of Core Strategy policy CP12 and MDD Local Plan policy TB01.

Impact on Openness

Policy TB01 of the MDD Local Plan states that development proposals will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and that the alteration and/or extension of a dwelling shall be limited in scale. This is consistent with Section 13 of the NPPF. Paragraph 142 of the NPPF highlights that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and that the essential characteristics of the Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

The concept of Green Belt openness has both a spatial and visual dimension. There is no definition of openness in the NPPF, however in Green Belt context it is generally held to refer to freedom from, or the absence of, development. Development does not necessarily need to be visible in order to harm the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposal is well designed in respect of its permeable form which would sufficiently retain views into the site. While the proposal would enlarge the site's boundary treatment, due to its permeable design and proportionate dimensions the development would not have an adverse impact on the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt.

Overall, the proposed gate would not result in any adverse impact on, or harm to the openness of, the Green Belt and the proposed development is acceptable in principle subject to other material planning considerations.

Design and Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Paragraph 135(f) states that decisions should ensure that developments "create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible...and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience." Principle S11 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that streets should provide access for all, free of clutter, and should not be gated.

The proposed wrought iron boundary gate is relatively modest in terms of its design and scale. Its height, scale, colour and appearance would complement the approved iron railings and would also be compatible with the range of boundary treatments within the immediate surroundings. It would also be visually permeable allowing for views into the site which would indicate its presence as an attractive entrance feature rather than as a defensible security barrier. Moreover, due to its height not encroaching the approved railings it would not dominate the street scene.

It is acknowledged that the scheme would visually create a 'gated community' which is discouraged by the Borough Design Guide. Firstly, the proposed gate would serve a private car park area serving the occupants of the development, with restricted access in perpetuity, rather than a public road. This is typical with residential schemes of this size and nature, and it is therefore reasonable to expect a degree of definition between public and private boundaries which the proposed gate would provide.

As discussed, the proposed gate would relate well with the street scene while its design retains the permeability of the communal areas of the site from public vantage points on the byway. Additionally, the proposal would serve the vehicular exit only, with vehicular access via the shared drive which will remain open following the development.

Overall, the proposed gate would appropriately balance the security need for future occupants of the development with impact on local character and community cohesion in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP3 and the NPPF.

Impact on Heritage Assets:

Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan outlines that the Council will conserve and seek to enhance the designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by supporting development proposals that will conserve the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets.

The application site lies within the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area and is within the setting of Grade I Listed Henley Bridge, Grade II Listed Bird Place Cottage and Grade II Listed Henley Royal Regatta Headquarters. The Council's Built Heritage Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection, concluding that the gate would have no adverse impact on the setting of the conservation area and the adjacent listed building. As such, the proposal complies with MDD Local Plan policy TB24.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Due to the scale and height of the proposed boundary gate there are no concerns in respect of potential loss of light, overbearing or overlooking impact.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection, noting that there would be no obstruction to the adjacent highway as the gate would open inwards. Pedestrian access through the gates will remain possible through use of keypad entry while the shared vehicular access/entrance is to be retained as approved.

Landscape, Trees and Biodiversity:

The posts for the proposed boundary gate will be installed into existing hardstanding and attached to the railings approved under consent ref 232680. As such, no

additional impact on the adjacent TPO protected tree is anticipated. Due to its scale and siting the gate will have no impact on the on-site soft landscaping and biodiversity compensation measures secured via the original planning consent.

Other:

The proposed gate does not impact on any other material planning considerations.

The application is therefore recommended for **approval**.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):


When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	3 March 2025
Earliest date for decision:	13 February 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	06/03/25