

Interested party 45

Comments

Please see my two objections to the planning application number 243125 on the Wokingham Borough Council portal dated the 4th February 2025 and the 14th October 2025.

I am writing to make comments regarding this appeal because the proposed development would cause lasting harm to one of the most attractive and historically important stretches of the River Thames, without providing benefits that justify that harm.

I have lived in Henley-on-Thames for the past 13 years and walk this stretch of the Thames regularly throughout the year. It is one of the reasons we chose to live here. Over that time I have come to appreciate just how special this part of the Thames Valley is, both for those of us who live here and for the many thousands of people who visit it throughout the year. I support the objections already submitted by the residents of Remenham Row, but I would like to add my own observations as someone who knows the site and its surroundings well.

The appeal site occupies an exceptionally sensitive location. It lies within the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area and forms an important part of the setting of the Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area. Thamesfield itself has also been recognised by the Council as a non-designated heritage asset.

The Council's Heritage Officer raised serious concerns about this proposal, and I believe those concerns remain entirely valid. The proposal is far more than a modest extension. It would introduce a large three-storey building whose height, scale and bulk would dominate both the existing site and the homes of Remenham Row residents. Although contemporary architecture has its place, this building would sit uncomfortably within its historic surroundings and would fundamentally alter the character of this stretch of riverside.

One of the most valuable aspects of this location is the uninterrupted sequence of views along the river.

of views along the river.

The stretch of the River Thames between Henley Bridge and Marsh Lock is one of the most beautiful and recognisable stretches of the Thames. It is valued for its historic setting, open views and tranquil character. Throughout the year, and particularly at weekends, large numbers of people walk and sail along the Thames to enjoy the open views across the river, the mature trees, historic buildings, meadows and landscaped gardens. These riverside views are among the defining features of Henley and Remenham. They are enjoyed not only by local residents but by the many visitors whose spending supports Henley's shops, cafés, restaurants, hotels and businesses. Henley's economy depends heavily on tourism and recreation, and the quality of its riverside environment is one of the principal reasons why people choose to visit.

The proposed building would have a significant impact on these views. From the Henley side of the river it would appear far larger and more visually dominant than the existing buildings, interrupting the attractive riverside scene that currently exists. Instead of sitting comfortably within its landscaped setting, it would become a prominent and intrusive feature.

The impact would be just as noticeable from the Remenham side. The building would be clearly visible from neighbouring homes and gardens, from the river itself, and from surrounding public footpaths and viewpoints. It would become a blot on the landscape from both sides of the Thames, permanently changing the character of this important stretch of river.

This is not simply a private view enjoyed by a handful of neighbouring properties. It is part of a nationally recognised landscape that contributes greatly to Henley's identity and to the enjoyment of everyone who visits it.

I also remain concerned about the Green Belt implications of the proposal.

Although the appellant describes the scheme as a redevelopment, it is, in reality, a very substantial extension to the existing building. The increase in size is plainly disproportionate and would result in a building many times larger than the original. For that reason, it cannot reasonably be regarded as appropriate Green Belt development.

Nor do I accept the suggestion that this site should be treated as Grey Belt. Its contribution to the setting of historic Henley-on-Thames is obvious to anyone familiar with the area. The site's riverside location means it forms part of the wider landscape setting of the town, and that setting would be noticeably harmed by the proposed building.

The Council's Heritage Officer has already explained the damage to the Conservation Areas and to Thamesfield itself. Existing residents at both Thamesfield and Remenham Row would also experience a noticeable loss of amenity. The openness of the Green Belt would be reduced by replacing relatively low-rise buildings with a much larger and more prominent structure. Taken together, these harms are substantial.

Having lived here for thirteen years, I have seen first-hand how much people value this landscape. It is enjoyed every day by walkers, rowers, boat users, local residents and visitors alike. This is not simply about protecting the outlook of nearby residents. It is about safeguarding one of the most recognisable and cherished stretches of the River Thames, whose beauty contributes directly to Henley's identity, its visitor economy and the enjoyment of thousands of people every year. Once a building of this scale is constructed, that harm cannot be undone.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Inspector to dismiss this appeal. [Close](#)

Supporting documents

No documents

Interested party 46

Comments

Further to my previous two objections to this planning application I am writing to comment on this appeal. I believe the proposed development would cause lasting and irreversible harm to one of the most beautiful and historically important stretches of the River Thames, and that the benefits put forward by the appellant fall far short of what would be needed to justify that harm.

I have lived in Henley-on-Thames for the past 13 years and walk this stretch of the Thames regularly throughout the year. It is one of the reasons we chose to live here, and I have come to appreciate just how special this part of the Thames Valley is — for those of us who live here and for the many thousands of people who visit it. I support the objections submitted by the residents of Remenham Row and add my own observations as someone who knows the site and its surroundings well.

The Green Belt case has not been made

This site is in the Green Belt, and I understand that under national planning policy, development of this kind is inappropriate in the Green Belt unless the appellant can demonstrate very special circumstances that clearly outweigh the harm. Having read the proposal carefully, this test has not been met.

The Green Belt exists for specific reasons, and this site speaks directly to several of them: preventing encroachment into the open countryside, and — perhaps most importantly here — preserving the setting and special character of a historic town. Henley-on-Thames is exactly the kind of historic town that the Green Belt is there to protect. The site's riverside location means it forms a visible and important part of the wider landscape setting of the town, and a building of this scale would noticeably erode that setting.

I also want to challenge the suggestion that this site should be treated as Grey Belt. My understanding is that Grey Belt is intended to apply to land that contributes little to the purposes of the Green Belt — scrubby, neglected land that no longer justifies its protected status. This site is the opposite of that. It sits within the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area, adjoins the setting of the Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area, and forms part of one of the most recognised and valued stretches of the River Thames. To classify it as Grey Belt would be a serious misreading of what that policy is intended to achieve.

The heritage harm is real and significant

The Council's own Heritage Officer raised serious concerns about this proposal and those concerns deserve significant weight. The appeal site lies within the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area and contributes to the setting of the Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area. Thamesfield itself has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset.

I understand that planning policy draws a distinction between substantial harm and less than substantial harm to heritage assets, and that even in the latter case, public benefits must outweigh that harm before development can be approved. However, the harm here is considerable.

The scale of the proposal is disproportionate

The appellant describes this as a redevelopment, but that description does not reflect what is actually proposed. This is a very large three-storey building that would dwarf the existing structures on the site. I would ask the Inspector to look carefully at the floor area and footprint comparisons: the increase in scale is plainly disproportionate and cannot reasonably be characterised as anything other than a major extension. That matters for the Green Belt assessment, and it matters for the impact on the surrounding area.

The impact on views and the riverside character

The stretch of the River Thames between Henley Bridge and Marsh Lock is one of the most beautiful and recognisable in the country, valued for its open views, tranquil character and historic setting. Throughout the year, thousands of people walk, row and sail here to enjoy the views across the river, the mature trees, the historic buildings, the meadows and the landscaped gardens. These are not private views enjoyed by a handful of neighbouring properties — they are part of a nationally valued landscape.

part of a nationally valued landscape.

The proposed building would fundamentally change what people see from both sides of the river. From the Henley side, it would appear far larger and more visually dominant than the existing buildings, interrupting an attractive riverside scene that has been enjoyed for generations. From the Remenham side, it would be clearly visible from neighbouring homes, gardens, the river itself, and from surrounding footpaths and viewpoints. It would become a permanent and prominent intrusion into a landscape that is, at the moment, genuinely special. This matters economically as well as visually. Henley's visitor economy — its shops, cafés, restaurants, hotels and businesses — depends heavily on the quality of the riverside environment. People come here because of what this stretch of the Thames looks and feels like. Harm to that environment is not just an aesthetic concern; it has real consequences for the town's economy and for the many local businesses that depend on it.

The harm cannot be undone

I want to end with what seems to me the most important point of all. If this appeal is allowed and this building is constructed, the harm it causes cannot be reversed. The building will be there permanently, and the character of this stretch of the river will be changed permanently with it. In a location as sensitive and as valued as this, that is an exceptionally high price to pay.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Inspector to dismiss this appeal. [Close](#)

Supporting documents

No documents
