



Bird Place

Henley

shack.

Design and Access Statement

Bird Place, Henley Bridge,
Henley-on-Thames

Design and Access Statement

Project:	Householder and Listed Building Planning Application Bird Place, Henley Bridge, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2LN Listed Building Reference: 1319073 (Grade II, listed 23-Dec-1983)
Prepared by:	The Shack Group (Architecture) with Smith Jenkins (Planning & Heritage), Sylva Consultancy (Arboriculture), Create Consulting Engineers (Flood Risk & Drainage), Morph (Ecological Consultants)
On behalf of:	Mr and Mrs Fawsitt

Application Proposal

Demolition of rear lean-to extension, erection of a single-storey rear extension with basement, internal alterations and refurbishment, replacement of one rear window, refurbishment of existing windows, proposed roof terrace within the existing roof form, upgrade to building services, and removal of two garden trees to the rear.

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Bird Place – Existing front facade (north)

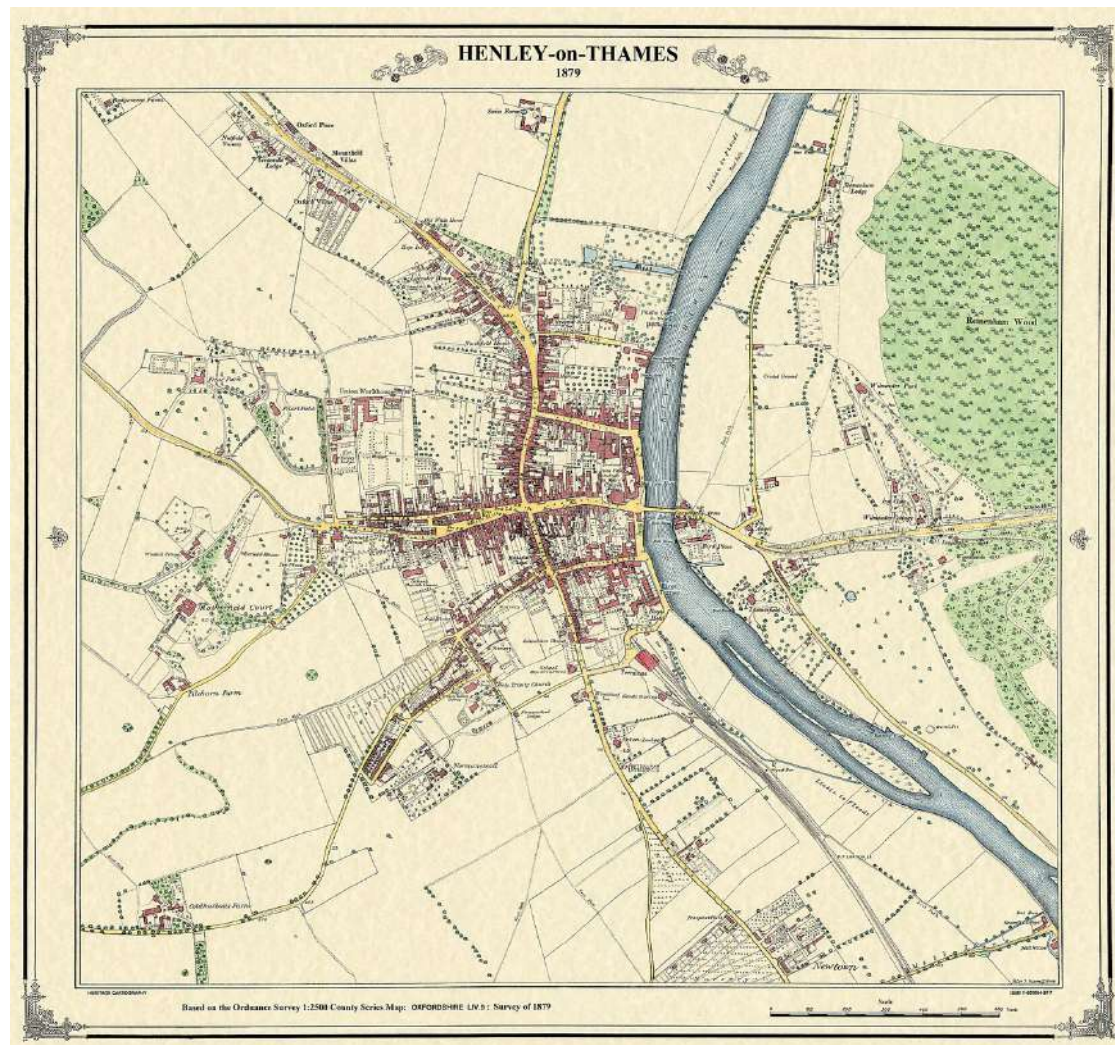
1.0 Introduction

Bird Place is a Grade II listed Georgian riverside villa located adjacent to Henley Bridge within the Remenham (Henley Bridge) Conservation Area. The property has been vacant for several years and is now in need of sensitive repair and adaptation to secure its long-term viable residential use.

This statement accompanies an application for listed building consent and planning permission for a comprehensive programme of works, including the removal of an unauthorised modern extension, a new single-storey rear extension, basement alterations, a new roof terrace, window repairs, and sustainability upgrades. The works are conservation-led and designed to secure the future of Bird Place as a landmark heritage asset.

1.1 Site Description and History

Bird Place is a Grade II listed Georgian house (18th century) with curtilage buildings, including Rose Cottage, a timber-framed former service wing. The property occupies a highly prominent riverside setting with a 40m frontage to the Thames, adjacent to Henley Bridge within the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area, the Green Belt, and Flood Zone 3.



Coloured Victorian map of Henley-on-Thames in 1879 - Bird Place visible

The house has been vacant for several years and is in a state of deterioration. The applicant intends to restore the property as their primary residence, investing in its long-term stewardship as a valued heritage asset.

The listing description refers to the main Georgian house, noting Rose Cottage as being of 'no special interest.' However, the Conservation Officer has confirmed that the brick service range and Rose Cottage should be treated as part of the listed building designation.



Bird Place - Existing rear facade (south)



Bird Place - River frontage (view west towards Henley)

1.2 Context Analysis

Bird Place is positioned in a highly sensitive heritage setting, adjacent to Henley Bridge and within the Remenham (Henley Bridge) Conservation Area. The house contributes to the riverside character of Henley, with its 40m frontage onto the Thames. The site also lies within the designated Green Belt, where extensions must not be disproportionate, and within Flood Zone 3, requiring resilient design solutions. The mature trees within the wider site form part of the area's verdant riverside character, as confirmed in the arboricultural assessment.



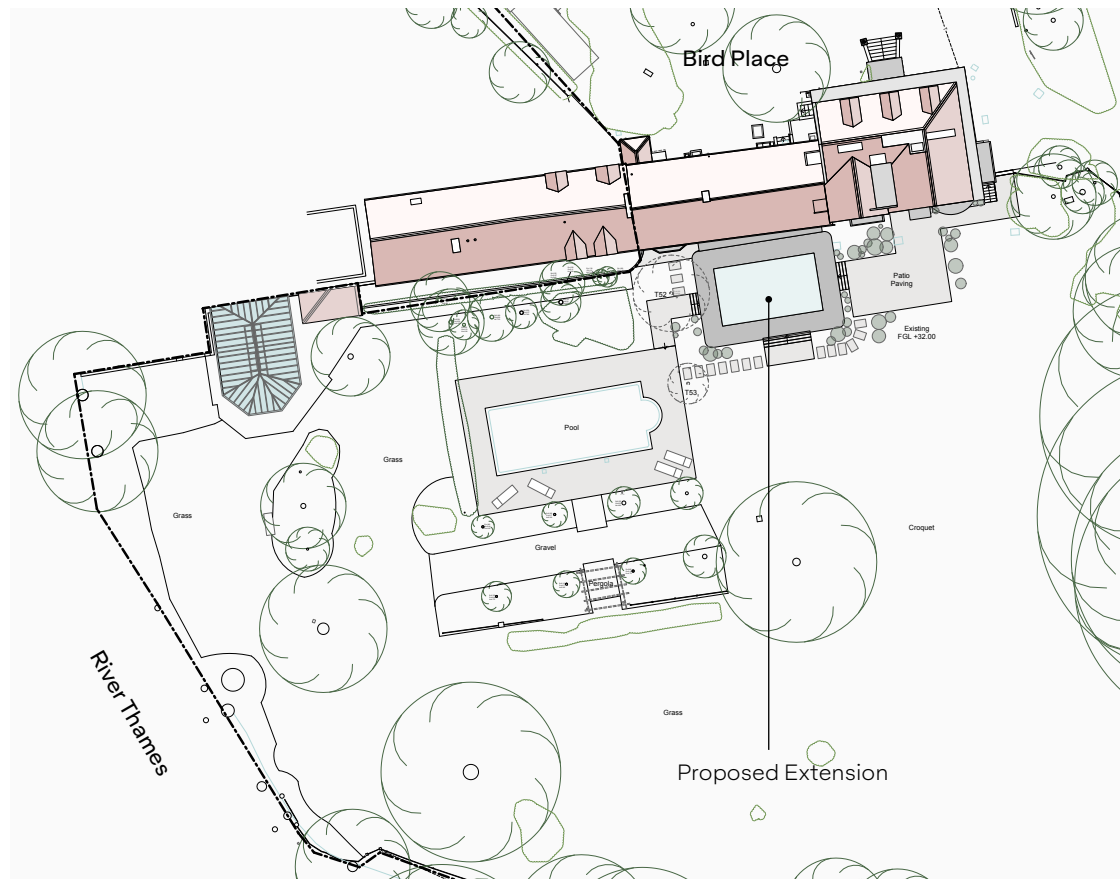
View north-east across the River Thames from Thameside (Henley) towards Henley Bridge and Bird Place



View north from the riverside walk towards Henley Bridge

1.3 Development Proposal

The proposed works comprise the demolition of an unauthorised lean-to extension, erection of a high-quality contemporary rear extension, lowering of the basement floor, refurbishment and repair of historic fabric, a new roof terrace, and limited tree removals. Alternative options were tested during the design process, including a larger extension with parapet roof and wider window replacement programme. These were discounted following pre-application discussions with officers and advice from the heritage consultant to minimise harm and ensure a subservient, reversible addition.



Proposed Site Plan



Bird Place - Existing rear facade (south)

1.4 Use

The property will remain in single-family residential use. No change of use is proposed. The applicant's intention is to secure the building's long-term viable use as a primary residence, thereby ensuring continued investment in its conservation and upkeep.

1.5 Design Principles

The design is heritage-led, guided by the following principles:

- Preserve and enhance the historic significance of Bird Place.
- Ensure new interventions are subservient, contemporary, and reversible.
- Retain key historic features such as the servants' stair and rear doors.
- Lower the extension roofline below the sill level of first-floor windows to maintain historic proportions.
- Minimise interventions into historic fabric, reusing existing openings.
- Integrate sustainability measures discreetly, avoiding harm to significance.

1.6 Mass & Scale

The proposed rear extension footprint is 67.5sq.m (9m x 7.5m), designed as a subservient addition to the main house. The scale has been reduced following officer and consultant advice to preserve window proportions and avoid dominance. The height of the extension is 3.2m, with a reduced section of 2.4m at the abutment, ensuring the rear elevation's legibility is maintained. Basement lowering remains entirely subterranean, with no external impact on massing.



Existing rear elevation (south)



Proposed rear extension (north)

1.7 Materials

Extension materials will comprise lightweight steel and high-performance glazing with a flat-profile roof incorporating PV glazing panels. The abutment will use recessed detailing to distinguish old from new. Refer to material schedule below:



Lightweight Steel & glazing



Dark grey metal cladding



High performances glass

Repairs to the historic structure adopt traditional materials: lime mortar for masonry, lime plaster internally, reclaimed timber boards for floors, natural slate for roof repairs, and cast iron rainwater goods. This ensures compatibility with historic fabric and aligns with conservation best practice.



Masonry



Timber floors



Natural slate roof tiles

1.8 Landscaping / Amenity

Two rear garden trees (T52 and T53) of low arboricultural value are to be removed to accommodate the extension. All mature riverside trees contributing to the Conservation Area character are retained. No wider landscape alterations are proposed, and the generous riverside setting remains intact.

1.9 Relationship to Neighbours

The only neighbouring property is Bird Place Cottage, which is physically separate and screened by vegetation. The proposals cause no overlooking, loss of privacy, or overbearing impacts, in line with the Planning Officer's pre-application advice.

1.10 External Works (Repairs)

- Masonry repairs and repointing will use lime-based mortars to match existing.
- The front entrance steps and porch will be repaired with lime products; the entrance door refurbished and retained, hardwood replacement only if necessary.
- Roof repairs will use like-for-like natural slate and clay tiles; structural timbers replaced only where defective, with matching species and section. Insulation installed between rafters using vapour-permeable materials.
- Rainwater goods refurbished; replacement in cast iron to replicate existing where required.



Entry porch



Slate tiles to front roof



Clay tiles to rear roof pitches

1.11 Internal Works (Repairs)

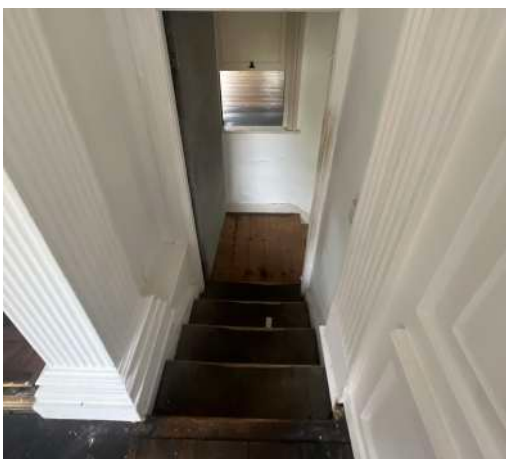
- Walls are to be re-plastered with lime where necessary; no gypsum plaster.
- Decorative cornices, skirting, and architraves retained and repaired on a like-for-like basis.
- Timber panelling repaired with matching joinery.
- Floors retained and refurbished; replacement boards in reclaimed timber
- Fireplaces repaired and retained with stone/timber to match existing.
- Hidden servants' stair retained.



Existing wall panelling to entrance hall



Existing staircase



Hidden servants' stair



Ground floor ceiling detail

2.0 Planning & Conservation/ Pre-App Engagement

2.1 Planning History

Certificate application 203127 (2021) – mixed residential and non-residential parking.

Various historic alterations, including 1990s conservatory.

No record of consent for swimming pool or existing lean-to extension.

2.2 Planning Officer Pre-App Advice (April 2025, Ref. 250789, Kieran Neumann)

A pre-application enquiry was made to the Local Planning Authority in March 2025. The response supports the principle of rear extension and basement lowering. Flood risk issues were highlighted and now addressed as part of this planning application (with raised floor levels and submitted FRA).

Comment: Risk of flooding from basement alterations, especially with Thames adjacency.

Response: A full Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by Create Consulting Engineers. It confirms raised floor levels (+600mm), resilient basement design, and no loss of floodplain storage.

These measures resolve the officer's concerns.

Comment: Need for detailed assessment of heritage impact of rear extension and basement.

Response: A full Heritage Impact Assessment accompanies the application as prepared by the project Heritage Consultant with further information included within this DAS (Section 5), following Historic England methodology.

Comment: Clarify tree removals and assess impact on Conservation Area.

Response: An Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Sylva Consultancy confirms only two low-value trees are affected, with no adverse effect on the Conservation Area or the listed building's setting.

2.3 Conservation Officer Advice (June 2025, Keith Frost)

The Conservation Officer response to the pre-app enquiry raised concern regarding the visual impact of roof junction, loss of historic doorway, truncation of windows, and treatment of basement.

In response the heritage focus has been strengthened. The project team, led by Smith Jenkins (Heritage Team), engaged further with the Conservation Officer's advice to ensure the extension responds positively to the listed building context.

The application proposal is therefore much narrower in scope, heritage-led, and specifically designed to mitigate the concerns raised in the pre-app report.

Comment: The service wing (Rose Cottage) is part of the listed building, not just curtilage, and alterations should be carefully controlled.

Response: This has been acknowledged. Works to the service wing are now limited, reversible, and conservation-led, with minimal loss of historic fabric. The proposals are respectful of its listed status.

Comment: Rear extension design was too dominant; flat roof cut across first-floor windows, reducing legibility of historic fabric.

Response: The extension roof incorporates a lowered section at the abutment to the house below sill height, ensuring historic proportions are fully retained. The design is now a lightweight, glazed form, set back and clearly subordinate.

Comment: Original rear door(s) should be retained as a visible feature.

Response: The rear door(s) are proposed to be retained in situ and expressed within the new link, ensuring legibility of the building's evolution.

Comment: Basement lowering acceptable only if original features are retained and recorded.

Response: A heritage-led approach is now adopted:

- Full photographic record before works.
- Retention and re-use of historic shelving and water pump.
- Contrasting finishes to new underpinning walls, marking original floor line.

Comment: Window replacement should match historic detail.

Response: Only one rear sash is to be replaced; this will be in handcrafted timber, matching existing profiles and glazing bar patterns. Other windows will be repaired and refurbished.

Officer concerns raised:

- Heritage value of the brick service range (Rose Cottage) – Officer clarified that the NHLE list description is not exhaustive, and the service range must be treated as part of the listed building.
- Scale and roof junction of proposed rear extension – Concern the roof would truncate the first-floor windows and leave insufficient brickwork exposed.
- Loss of rear door at junction with main house – Officer requested this be retained.
- Form and materiality – Suggested more lightweight, glazed, contemporary form with low flat roof (no parapet).
- Internal reworking of service wing – Some apprehension about degree of alteration.
- Basement lowering – Acceptable in principle, but loss of historic fabric noted.

Officer requested:

- Retention/re-use of features where possible.
- Photographic/historic record.
- Visual demarcation of original basement floor level using contrasting materials.

Applicant/Heritage Consultant (Smith Jenkins) response to items raised:

Significance of service range: The applicant acknowledges the Conservation Officer's position that Rose Cottage and the service range contribute to the listed building, even if of lesser significance. The design has therefore been carefully revised to respect this status.

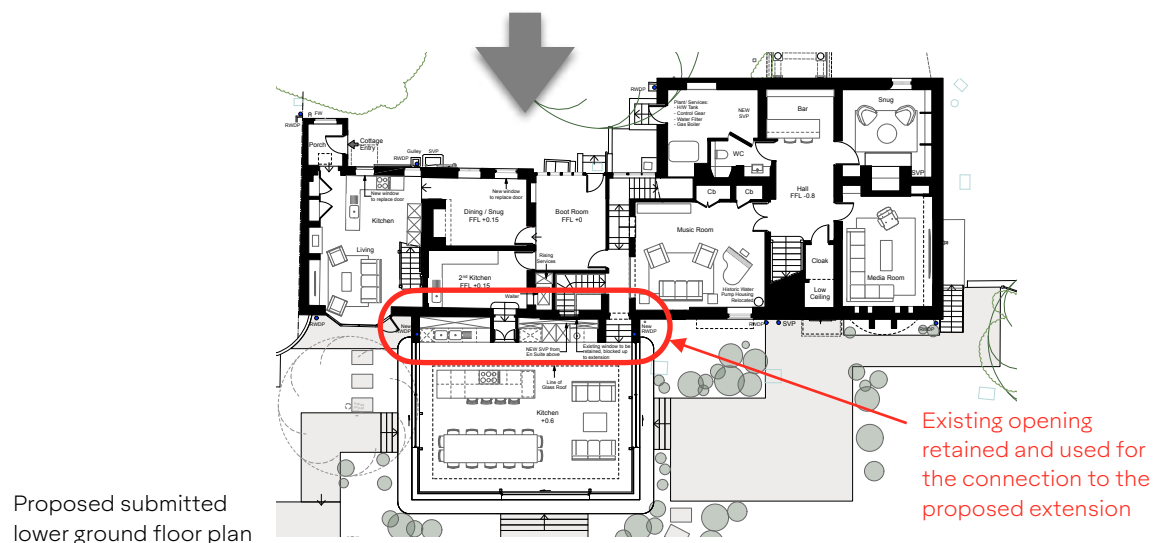
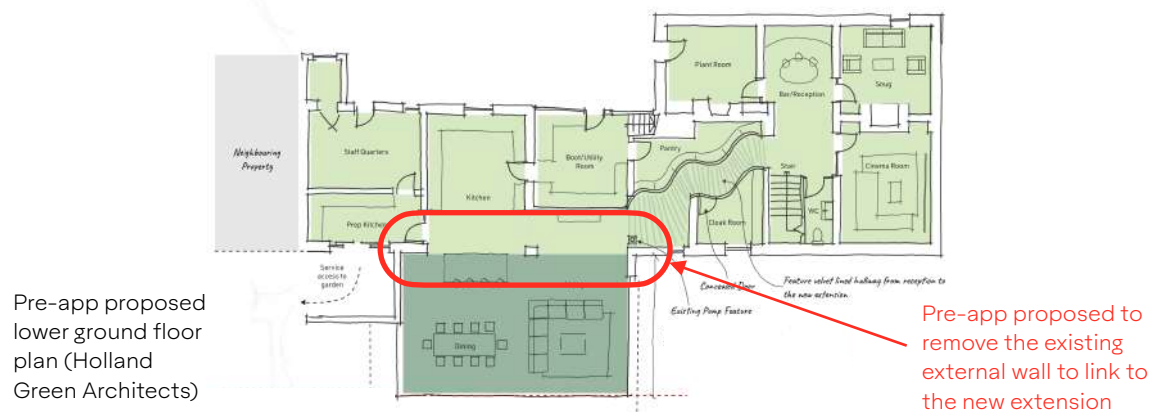
Extension design revisions: The proposed extension roof has been lowered to sit clearly beneath the first-floor sill level, ensuring brickwork remains visible and first-floor window proportions are preserved. The roof junction/ abutment to the existing building is simplified into a low-profile, flat roof with no parapet, improving legibility between old and new.



Sections through proposed extension (illustrating the abutment to the existing building)

Extensive use of glazing has been incorporated to create a transparent, lightweight feel, reducing visual dominance and achieving the conservation officer's recommended design approach.

Retention of rear door(s): The existing historic doorway at the service wing junction will be retained as a visible element, respecting the officer's request. The extension footprint has been modified to accommodate this.



Internal reworking: The proposed internal alterations have been rationalised to minimise loss of historic fabric while still allowing functional modern use. Significant original elements of the service wing will be retained.

Basement works: A full photographic record will be prepared before works commence, meeting heritage recording requirements. Original basement features such as the water pump and shelving will be retained where practical, or sensitively relocated if removal is necessary. New underpinning walls will use contrasting in-situ concrete finish below the original floor line, creating a visible marker of the historic level as advised.

These revisions directly respond to the Conservation Officer's detailed feedback, and have been endorsed by Smith Jenkins as providing an appropriate balance between heritage conservation and the building's viable continued residential use.



Existing basement - View 1



Existing basement - View 2



Existing basement - View 3

3.0 Design Evolution

The planning application proposal has evolved significantly from the initial pre-app submission as follows:

- The rear extension is simplified into a lightweight, transparent form. The roof lowered at the extension abutment to respect first-floor windows.
- Historic rear doors are retained and expressed.
- The hidden servants' stair is retained.
- The proposed en-suite partition is designed as lightweight and reversible.
- The Chimney removal is addressed with structural methodology.
- Basement works are heritage-led with full recording and retention of historic features.

This demonstrates a responsive and iterative design process, guided by officer feedback.



Proposed rear extension (3d Model view to west)



Proposed rear extension (3d Model view to east)

3.1 Design Concept and Architectural Language

The extension adopts a lightweight, contemporary design that contrasts deliberately yet respectfully with the solid Georgian massing of the listed house. Its use of large-format glazing, slim framing, and a flat part glazed and part solid roof with curved perimeter detailing provides a visually recessive form. This ensures the historic elevations remain dominant, while the extension reads clearly as a 21st-century addition.

The transparency of the structure maintains long views of the original brickwork, windows, and architectural proportions, reducing the risk of visual harm to the listed fabric. By avoiding pastiche, the design achieves a balance between legibility of the old and honesty of the new, aligning with Historic England guidance.



Precedent studies - Lightweight glazed extensions

3.2 Scale and Proportion

The extension is modest in height and footprint, carefully designed to sit below the cill line of the first-floor windows. This avoids the issue highlighted by the conservation officer that earlier proposals “cut across” historic proportions.

The extension’s horizontal emphasis provides a clear contrast with the more vertical Georgian fenestration. Its low profile means that it is subordinate to the host building, avoiding competition with the listed villa’s symmetrical composition.

3.3 Relationship with Historic Fabric

The interface between new and old is handled sensitively:

- The rear service wing doors are retained in situ and expressed within the new glazed envelope, linking the existing house to the extension and ensuring that the historic plan form remains legible.
- The extension projects slightly away from the rear elevation, ensuring that intervention in historic brickwork is minimal and largely reversible.

- Construction detailing (light-touch abutment joints, expressed junctions) makes a clear distinction between original and new fabric.

This approach respects the conservation principle of reversibility and allows future removal of the extension without permanent harm.

3.4 Materiality and Sustainability

The extension proposes a pared-back material palette:

- Glazing with slim-profile framing, recessive in tone.
- A flat roof that reduces visual impact and ensures views to and from first floor windows are maintained.
- High-performance glazing and thermal detailing that upgrade energy performance.

This combination ensures that the new element both minimises physical and visual intrusion and contributes to the sustainable future use of the building.

On balance, the extension represents a positive design intervention, respecting the listed building's special interest while providing sustainable enhancement for modern occupation.

3.6 Alignment with Officer Feedback

Earlier officer concerns regarding scale and dominance have been resolved by reducing roof height of the extension, creating a sensitive abutment and introducing transparency. Conservation officer advice to retain the rear door(s)/ opening has been implemented with no removal of historic fabric.

The extension now reads as a clearly subservient, reversible addition that complements the heritage asset.

3.7 Design Conclusion

The proposed contemporary single-storey rear extension is a carefully judged intervention that:

- Respects the listed building's historic significance.
- Provides architectural clarity through a contemporary yet recessive design.
- Subordinate in scale, preserving historic legibility, and introduces sustainable benefits.



Proposed rear extension (3D model view from south)

4.0 Planning Policy Appraisal

The proposal accords with national and local policy guidance as follows:

4.1 Green Belt

Extension proportionate in scale (<35% volume increase), consistent with TB01 (MDD Local Plan) and NPPF para 154(c). The volume of the existing dwelling is approximately 1335m³ and proposed extension is 205m³. The proposal extension therefore presents an increase in volume of only 15% therefore within guideline limits.

4.2 Heritage

NPPF (2024): Supports sympathetic extensions to listed buildings where significance is preserved (paras 199–208).

4.3 Flooding

Flooding (Policies CC09 & CC10): Officer concerns are addressed via a comprehensive FRA, raised floor levels, and integration of SuDS. The scheme is policy compliant with the submitted FRA confirming safety via resilient design and SuDS.

4.4 Trees

Trees (Local Plan Policy NE5): Tree removals are minor, justified, and supported by Sylva Consultancy's arboricultural report. Limited removals justified, no Conservation Area harm.

5.0 Heritage Benefits

The proposals deliver the following heritage benefits:

- Removal of intrusive unauthorised lean-to extension.
- Repairs using traditional materials and like-for-like replacement where necessary.
- Retention of key historic features (rear doors, servants' stair, fireplaces, panelling).
- High-quality contemporary extension that is lightweight, reversible, and subservient.
- Heritage-led basement works with photographic recording, retention and re-use of features, and clear demarcation of original levels.
- Improved energy performance with discreet sustainability measures securing long-term viable use.

Together these works secure the continued preservation of Bird Place, a vacant listed building at risk, and enable sensitive adaptation for 21st-century residential use. Assessment of heritage impact and justification is provided in the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Smith Jenkins.

6.0 Flood Risk & Drainage

A full Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by Create Consulting Engineers. The design now incorporates a 600mm raised finished floor level, flood-resilient basement construction, and SuDS. These measures directly address the officer's concern about storage displacement and surface water management.

7.0 Trees & Landscape

A full arboricultural assessment has been carried out of the application site to inform the application proposal. Two low-value trees (T52 & T53) are proposed to be removed with no heritage or visual harm. The submitted arboricultural report demonstrates compliance with planning policy requirements.

8.0 Sustainability/ Building Services

A key project briefing requirement is to enhance the energy efficiency of the existing building to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions associated with energy use systems (heating, hot water and lighting) whilst preserving the historic fabric of the building. This existing building services installations are outdated and in need of modernisation. They were likely installed prior to the listing in 1983 and do not give any regard to the significance of the heritage asset.

The measures to be incorporated include:

- Review of existing building fabric with sensitive installation of appropriate insulation, eg provision of insulation where this would not affect the existing constriction.
- Thermal improvements to existing windows through comprehensive refurbishment.
- Complete review and renewal of building services systems and above ground foul drainage.
- Replacement of the Gas central heating and hot water system.
- Provision of renewable energy to the extension roof - PV integrated into the glass skylight.
- Improved thermal efficiency: through glazing, insulation and services upgrades.

This approach will secure significant carbon reduction while maintaining the historic character.

9.0 Biodiversity / Ecology

Comprehensive ecological surveys (Morph Ecological Consultants, 2025) confirmed the presence of five bat roosts within Bird Place and Rose Cottage, comprising four occasional day roosts of soprano pipistrelle and one day roost of brown long-eared bat.

In line with statutory requirements, works will proceed only under a European Protected Species (EPS) licence issued by Natural England, with supervision by a Bat Earned Recognition Registered Consultant. Mitigation measures include:

- Pre-works checks and toolbox talks for contractors.
- Supervised hand-removal of tiles and mortar features.
- Provision of five new bat roosting opportunities (bat boxes and access tiles).
- Retention or recreation of loft access features for brown long-eared bats.
- Use of Type 1F bitumen felt in re-roofing to avoid entanglement risk.

In relation to birds, one potential blackbird nest was noted and the buildings offer nesting opportunities. Compensation includes installation of three bird boxes (two swift, one hole nest type) in appropriate shaded locations.

These measures ensure full compliance with national legislation and local planning policy on biodiversity, resulting in no net loss of ecological value and enhancements through new roosting/nesting features.

10.0 Access & Inclusive Design

The application proposal maintains the existing access arrangements as unchanged. There are no alterations to existing vehicular or pedestrian access. There is ample existing on-site parking provision which is to be maintained. Internally, the proposed alteration works improve circulation within the dwelling and basement headroom will be improved.

11.0 Conclusion

The application proposal directly responds to and addresses both Planning and Conservation Officer comments:

- Extension designed to be lightweight and reversible.
- Existing fabric including openings retained to preserve historic legibility.
- Basement works heritage-led with recording and retention.
- Flood risk resolved through FRA measures.
- Tree works justified and limited in scope.

The proposals are heritage-led, reflecting pre-application advice and Conservation Officer feedback. The works will result in minor, carefully mitigated impacts on historic fabric, delivering substantial public benefits in securing the building's conservation, viability, and sustainability.

The application therefore accords with national and local planning and heritage policy and represents an appropriate and sensitive adaptation of Bird Place for 21st-century residential use.



Bird Place - View to rear facade from the river frontage (The proposed extension will be hidden from view)

Appendix A – Schedule of Officer Comments & Applicant Responses

Officer	Comment	Applicant Response	Outcome
Planning Officer (Apr 2025)	Basement alterations may increase flood risk.	FRA submitted. Raised floor levels, resilient design, no storage loss.	FRA demonstrates safety.
Planning Officer (Apr 2025)	Clarify and assess tree removals.	AIA submitted. Confirms only two low-value trees removed.	No Conservation Area or setting harm.
Planning Officer (Apr 2025)	Heritage impact of rear extension unclear.	Heritage Statement by Smith Jenkins + DAS heritage benefits.	Heritage justification provided.
Conservation Officer (Jun 2025)	Service wing (Rose Cottage) part of listed building.	Acknowledged. Works limited, reversible, conservation-led.	Listed status respected.
Conservation Officer (Jun 2025)	Rear extension roofline cut across first-floor windows.	Roof lowered; lightweight glazed form adopted.	Visual harm avoided.
Conservation Officer (Jun 2025)	Rear door should be retained.	Rear door retained and expressed in link.	Historic legibility preserved.
Conservation Officer (Jun 2025)	Basement lowering acceptable only if features recorded.	Photographic record; retention/reuse of features; contrasting finishes marking original floor.	Heritage impact mitigated.
Conservation Officer (Jun 2025)	Window replacement should replicate original profiles.	One sash replaced with handcrafted replica. Others repaired.	Window detail secured.

Appendix B – Repairs & Materials Schedule

Element	Existing Condition	Proposed Repair / Intervention
Masonry & Repointing	Areas of mortar failure and spalling brickwork	Repoint with lime-based mortar to match colour, texture, profile. No cement.
Front Entrance Steps & Porch	Worn stone steps; entrance door weathered	Repair steps with lime mortar. Retain and refurbish door. Hardwood replacement only if essential.
Roof Repairs	Natural slate and plain clay tile roof with localised defects; some timber deterioration possible	Repair with like-for-like natural slate. Replace defective rafters/beams with matching species/sections.
Roof Insulation	Uninsulated roof voids	Install vapour-permeable insulation between rafters. No raising of roofline.
Rainwater Goods	Mixture of cast iron and later replacements	Refurbish existing cast iron. Replace only with like-for-like cast iron.
Walls & Plaster	Historic lime plaster with localised loss/cracking	Re-plaster with lime plaster where needed. No gypsum.
Decorative Joinery	Generally intact but with localised damage	Retain and repair. Replace only damaged sections on like-for-like basis.
Timber Panelling	Historic panelling present, areas of decay	Repair with matching timber joinery. Detail drawings provided as required.
Floors	Mixture of original timber boards; some worn	Retain and refurbish original boards.
Fireplaces	Original fireplaces in situ, some cracked/missing elements	Retain all fireplaces. Repair with stone/marble/timber to match existing.
Windows	Timber sash windows, mixed condition	Repair wherever possible. Replace one rear sash with handcrafted replica. Slimline glazing only if required.
Basement Features	Original shelving, pump and fittings present	Photographic record. Retain/reuse features where possible. Underpinning walls with contrasting finish.
Building Services	Outdated heating and drainage	Replace systems. Discreet SVP routing in voids/boxings. No new external vents.
Renewables	No existing renewables	PV integrated into extension skylight.