

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252334
Site Address:	Bird Place, Henley Bridge, Henley On Thames, Wokingham, RG9 2LN
Expiry Date:	30 January 2026
Site Visit Date:	24 April 2025 and 2 December 2025
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed erection of single storey rear extension with basement following demolition of existing rear lean-to extension, rear roof terrace, lowering of basement floor and changes to fenestration.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Listed Building – Bird Place, Grade II Listed
Conservation Area – Remenham Henley Bridge
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – Amber Risk Zone
Green Belt
Ground Water Zones
Tree Preservation Orders
Radon Affected Area
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Listed Building Buffer Zone
Ordinary Watercourse
Flood Zone 3

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development 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 CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking

	CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS6 – Development in the Green Belt CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH5 – The historic environment HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
252335	Application for Listed Building Consent for the proposed erection of single storey rear extension with basement following demolition of existing rear lean-to extension, rear roof terrace, lowering of basement floor, changes to fenestration, internal alterations and associated repair/refurbishment works.	TBD
203127	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for both the stationing of motor vehicles incidental to the enjoyment of	Approved 10/02/2021

	residential dwelling(s) and the stationing of motor vehicles for uses other than incidental to the enjoyment of residential use, consisting a mixed use.	
202203	Application for Listed Building consent for demolition of the existing coach house following partial collapse of the building (retrospective).	Approved 13/10/2020
201423	Householder application for the proposed erection of a carport and store with first floor accommodation to form an artist's studio, to replace existing (collapsed) coach house.	Approved 21/09/2020
181402	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of the land for the stationing of motor vehicles other than those incidental to the enjoyment of residential use.	Refused 16/08/2018
44599	Conservatory	Approved 31/07/1995
R/73/68	Conversion of integral wing to separate cottage at Bird Place (Rose Cottage)	Approved 19/04/1968

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
WBC Drainage – No objections
WBC Highways – No objections
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections
WBC Built Heritage Officer – Objections (see main body of report)
WBC CIL – No comments received
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

Berkshire Archaeology – No objection subject to condition(s)

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Remenham Parish Council (RPC) met on 10 th November 2025 and considered 252334 (Bird Place). They are of the view that a modern 3 floor extension comprising a below the river-flood plain basement, ground level with large glass windows and raised roof-top terrace) would visible across the river and was not in keeping with a grade 2 listed building. RPC wishes to object to this application.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Bird Place is a large 18th Century Grade II Listed Georgian dwellinghouse located immediately adjacent to Henley Bridge and the River Thames.

Bird Place is a highly significant and complex building. The site holds a great deal of historic interest, being a prominent and a well-known building in the town. Whilst on the Berkshire bank, and within the parish of Remenham, Bird Place has always been seen as a 'Henley house'. *A History of the County of Berkshire: Volume 3*, ed. P H Ditchfield, William Page (London, 1923) notes Bird Place as the residence of Mr. W. A. Simmons, J.P – as in Simmons & Sons, still going in the town and elsewhere.

Architecturally, the building is highly complex. Whilst many historic buildings will have phases of development, these tend to be relatively obvious and clear to read. Bird Place has not only multiple phases of development, but these are convoluted intertwined throughout the building.

The application site is located wholly within the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area and within the direct setting of the Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area. Furthermore, the application site lies within the wider setting of the Grade II listed Bird Place Cottage, The Little Angel, Henley Royal Regatta Headquarters, The Angel, 18 Thameside, Rectory and Coach house on Thameside, 11-12 Thameside, The Old Granary, Friday Cottage, Baltic House, River Terrace and Obelisk, the Grade II* Church of St. Mary and the Grade I listed Henley Bridge. The site also lies within the wider setting of the Grade II* Registered Park & Garden of Park Place and Temple Combe. All of which, to a greater or lesser degree, draw significance from their setting and context.

In addition, the application site is within the setting of a number of non-designated heritage assets, which include, but not limited to, the Royal Mansions, numerous 19th and 20th century boat houses along Boat House Reach on the Henley side of the river.

The area of land to the east of Bird Place's garden (within the same ownership) is currently in use for a 'mixed use' of residential and non-residential parking, approved by certificate application 203127 on 10th February 2021. Upon visiting the site, the land has substantial tree canopy coverage and is not laid with any formal surfacing. Consequently, by reason of its consented use and physical separation from the main garden/driveway, it is outside of Bird Place's residential curtilage.

Adjacent to the bank with the River Thames is a conservatory that was approved in the late 1990s. Adjacent to this is also a historic boat dock that whilst overgrown and unusable currently, was historically visible along with the previous boathouse on historic aerial mapping until the 1960s.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for a variety of extension and alterations to Bird Place, including the service wing known as Rose Cottage. The proposals include a single storey extension in a contemporary architectural form, along with associated landscaping, the excavation of the lower ground floor, the creation of a viewing/sun deck and the replacement of a Yorkshire sash window.

There is an associated Listed Building Consent application (252335) which covers all of the above proposals but also deals with several sets of internal alterations/repairs that do not require planning consent.

Principle of Development:

General:

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.

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Policy CP3 follows on from this, stating that development must be of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life, nor should development cause detrimental impacts onto important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.

Local Plan Update:

Policy SS5 of the LPU (Development in the Countryside) states that development proposals in the countryside will in general only be supported for the types of development set out below:

- a) The construction of new dwellings which accord with Policy H4: Exceptions sites, Policy H5: Rural workers' dwellings and Policy H10: Traveller sites;
- b) Development proposals for which land is allocated;
- c) Development which supports the rural economy and equestrian uses in accordance with Policy ER3: Supporting the rural economy and Policy DH7: Equestrian development;
- d) Low carbon and renewable energy generation schemes in accordance with Policy CE7: Low carbon and renewable energy generation;
- e) The re-use or conversion of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction which would not require extensive reconstruction;
- f) The replacement, extension or alteration (including sub-division) of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction, and which do not lead to disproportionate increases in scale, form or footprint beyond the original building;
- g) Redevelopment or infilling of previously developed land that does not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside or the rural setting of the village;
- h) Agricultural and forestry development that is demonstrated to be reasonable and proportionate to the need;
- i) Outdoor sports, recreation, leisure and nature conservation development that is demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate for the use;
- j) The provision of essential community facilities which cannot be located within

settlement boundaries and are demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the use;

- k) The provision of essential utilities and infrastructure (including development for strategic transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a countryside location), and cemeteries and burial grounds; or
- l) Minerals and waste development in accordance with relevant policies in the minerals and waste local plan.

All development proposals within the countryside must take a landscape led approach to development in accordance with Policy NE5: Landscape and design and, where applicable:

- a) Contribute to and enhance the local, natural and historic environment;
- b) Be of a scale, nature and location within the countryside that is appropriate with regard to its use;
- c) Be sited and designed to minimise visual impact
- d) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements either individually or cumulatively;
- e) Not lead to isolated new dwellings;
- f) Not lead to the need for additional buildings;
- g) Maximise opportunities to make the location more sustainable;
- h) Have no unacceptable adverse impacts on highway safety or have a severe residual cumulative impact on network capacity; and
- i) Maximise opportunities to improve public access to the countryside.

Policy SS6 of the LPU (Development in the Green Belt) states that the construction of new buildings are considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- 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;
- d) The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) Limited infilling in villages;
- f) Limited affordable housing for local community needs; and
- g) Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - i) Not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - ii) Not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the borough.

Green Belt:

Policy TB01 of the MDD Local Plan refers to the NPPF, insofar to enforce the requirement that development will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt.

Policy TB01 also states that the alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling in the Green Belt over and above the size of the original building(s) shall be limited in scale. For extensions to dwellinghouses, a cumulative increase of generally no more than a 35% increase in volume over and above the original dwelling is considered acceptable.

Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy refers to national policy to enforce its aims, therefore attention turns to the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

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

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF provides a list for exceptions for development that can be considered appropriate in the Green Belt. Of particular relevance to this application scheme are the following:

- 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;

Bird Place is a historically large property, with minimal extensions added to its external form over the last century. As it stands today, the property has a volume of 1335 cubic metres. The proposed rear extension would have a volume of 205 cubic metres including the lower basement, which equates to an approximate 15% increase in volume. The viewing deck proposed in the rear roof form would result in no notable increases in volume.

Whilst the additional basement excavations have not been included within the applicant's volume calculation, it is highly unlikely that the additional volume would exceed 35% cumulatively with the rear extension. Even if it were to minorly exceed this figure, it is not considered that its scale and nature of the proposals would be disproportionate as per the NPPF as 35% is a general aim of TB01, rather than a strict requirement (it does not form part of the adopted policy wording, rather the subtext).

Overall, compliance with Green Belt policy is achieved.

Countryside:

The site lies within the Countryside as designated in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Core Strategy policy CP11 states, in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except in certain circumstances. This criterion is as follows:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
- 5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements;
 - or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

Criterion 4 is most relevant in this instance. As outlined above, the LPA do not consider that the proposed alterations would not be disproportionate in scale to the host dwelling and site as a whole. As such, it is not considered that the proposals would result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building, and compliance with CP11 is therefore achieved.

Character of the Area/Heritage:

Policy and Legislative Context:

MDD Local Plan Policy TB24 states that the Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

- a) Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.
- b) Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.

Section 16 of the NPPF focuses on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 203 states that plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

Paragraph 207 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Paragraph 208 states that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 209 states that where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 212 states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 213 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional

In the event that a development proposal leads to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the LPA has a statutory duty to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72 of the aforementioned Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Site Context/Significance:

To make changes to any historic building – particularly one of such interest – a full and informed understanding of its significance must be had as to not only avoid adverse impacts to the architectural and historic interest, but to appropriately conserve and manage change. Such a concept is enshrined in the British Conservation Movement, from Morris and Ruskin to English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* (2008) – still the authority on the subject:

“Sustainable management of a place begins with understanding and defining how, why, and to what extent it has cultural and natural heritage values: in sum, its significance. Communicating that significance to everyone concerned with a place, particularly those whose actions may affect it, is then essential if all are to act in awareness of its heritage values. Only through understanding the significance of a place is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value are vulnerable to harm or loss. That understanding should then provide the basis for developing and implementing management strategies (including maintenance, cyclical renewal and repair) that will best sustain the heritage values of the place in its setting. Every conservation decision should be based on an understanding of its likely impact on the significance of the fabric and other aspects of the place concerned.”

This concept is further embedded within paragraph 207 of the NPPF referenced above.

It is not typically custom for the LPA to provide a detailed analysis of the significance of a heritage asset during the planning process – as per para. 204, the onus is for the applicant to provide such an assessment. However, in this case as understanding the significance, particularly the historical development of the building, is central to the determination of the application, a brief assessment will be supplied.

Primary Elevation:

The primary north and east façades exhibit identical traits. The façades are of a brown brick mainly with fine tuck pointing, in a mixture English, Flemish and Header bonds – as can be typical for tuck pointing. Despite the lack of recent maintenance, the tuck pointing is in excellent condition and does appear to be original. Brown brick became fashionable in the 1730s, through a blend of clays, brick manufactures marketed this hue as of ‘higher status’ – and indeed more expensive – than the

regular provincial red brick. This is partly why the brown is used on the primary element, with the secondary service wing of 'regular' local red brick. The fenestration has gauged brick arched segmental heads – such style went out of fashion by the 1750s. The extant windows have flat heads with Cavetto and Bead glazing bars – a style popular in the 1790s-1800s. It can therefore be assumed the windows are not the originals but inserted some 50-60 years after the construction of the façade. The gap between the segmental head and the flat sash head has been infilled with brick, not inexpertly, but certainly not of original construction.

Given the known dating of architectural elements and materials, the north and east façades can be comfortably dated to the 1740s. There is comparison to Church House in Beckley, known to have been built in 1744 (as illustrated in Nathaniel Lloyd's *A Historic of English Brickwork*). This main element has a raised ground floor – the piano nobile – as might be expected for a high-status 18th century neo-classical house. This, however, is resultant of part design, part circumstance. The north and west façades appear to have been applied to, and raised upon, an early building. Other than clear features such as uneven dimensions, the roof structure is clearly altered and not what would be expected for a newly built piece of architecture. The inclusion of blind windows is not related to the Window Tax introduced in 1692 (a common misconception) but a deliberate design notion as the maintain classical rhythm and balance. This is further confirmed by the presence of contemporary interior panelling in the rooms with the blind windows.

Southern Elevation:

By contrast, the southern elevation (to the primary element) bears little in relation to the polite front of the building. The two phases are clearly evident – brown brick, as per the front, with a smaller red brick element. These two components are gabled, but at different heights and scales. Both have been altered. The brown brick 'half' is likely to be concurrent with the north and east façades. The lower bow window is likely to have been added in later in the 18th century, perhaps the 1750s-60s. The upper portion of the bow is later again, likely more towards the turn of the 18th century. The arches of the original window (of which is replaced) can be seen just to the top of the flat roofed bow. The oversized arched window is likely to be original, the surrounding brickworks is undisturbed, with Queen closers evident. It is peculiar for such a 'polite' house to have such a rudimentary and 'vernacular' elevation. Such ad-hoc alteration demonstrates the rise and fall in the owner's means and changing architectural interests.

Western Elevation:

The west elevation is very interesting. Of the same brown brick as the north, east and part south, and thus likely concurrent, it clearly demonstrates alteration. In the first, it has a gable, which forms the unusual roof form. The detailing of the gable (as to have a parapet type edge, as opposed to a more vernacular wet edge tile finish) is identical to the southern element, as discussed above. These two parts are undoubtedly contemporaneous in construction.

The top two casement windows are exactly what would be expected for an 18th century servant's level to appear. The middle sash is as per the front, a segmented arch which has then had a flat top sash inserted. A further segmented arch can be seen above the service wing dormer which abuts the elevation – clearly an early

window was here, then removed when the service wing was altered. The lower sash is the most interesting. It has no brick header (i.e. no support to spread the load), this would never have originally been built like this. Below the window is clearly infill brickwork, with lower further differentiation to the rendered banding. To the right is completely different brickwork again. Red brick with vitrified headers in a Common bond. The brickwork extends down to the ground level. The brickwork is of the late 18th century and fine work, second only in quality on building to the tuck pointing on the primary front. Evidently substantial change has occurred here.

Basement:

The lower ground floor of the main element is most peculiar. It is not typical, nor what would be expected for a cellar of a neo-classical house. Firstly, the ceiling height in part of the level is far too low. Obviously low by modern standards, but even taking into account the lower average heights of people in the 18th century, it is not correct. For a 'new' house, built afresh, it would never have had a been constructed with such a lower level. Vernacular Georgian houses would typically have a ceiling height approaching 6ft (depending on context) with 'smart' houses (such as this) having ceiling heights of 7ft-9ft – again depending on context. Further to this, there are evidently two phases within the basement – one part is floored with stone flags primarily the under the north and west, with a secondary element to the south and east. This level is evidently different, being part of the red brick gabled element (noted above) – as if it this was a completely different house. The phasing to clearly different and altered to suit.

Most importantly, part of the walling is built of flint, in a mixture of smaller and large stone – this is highly unusual and would never be expected for 'new' construction of the time. Flint is an uncommon building material in the immediate vicinity. Being an alluvial geology, flint would have to be brought down from the fields above river plain – perfectly normal, however due to the increased labour and cost, flint at the time (and indeed still today) was typically only used on high-status buildings, or by those commissioned by patrons of means. St. Mary's Church in Henley – 'Ivy Cottage' an eyecatcher for Temple Combe further down the river are good examples – or, more pointedly, Friday Cottage, a 15th century warehousing range almost plumb opposite Bird Place on the Oxford bank.

Putting together these points, and whilst it remains conjecture, this may be the remanent of a much earlier building. Given this, there is a high degree of interest in the lower level. To excavate this area would immediately remove any archaeological interest and perhaps eradicate any evidence of the past building.

Service Wing:

On the surface Bird Place's service wing appears to be of two or three phases. There is clear evidence the element closet to the primary element was the coach house – with the 'hayloft' door very obviously blocked on the north elevation, with the original coach door now containing a large mullion and transom leaded light. The brickwork here is Georgian, primary in a Flemish bond. There are numerous vitrified headers, and the bricks were likely brought down from Nettlebed. There is, however, evidence externally that the eaves line has been raised. From the brickwork, the 'first' phase is likely around 1790-1810 – probably concurrent with other alterations (such the upper bow window on the south elevation), then subsequently altered. Internally, the roof

structure appears as might be expected, that of machine or pit cut softwood. However, part of a truss is different. The axe cut timber appears to be oak or perhaps ash. This is unusual and deserves further investigation. This could be evidence of an earlier structure or perhaps brought in (reused).

Architectural Salvage:

As is not entirely uncommon for historic buildings, there are a number of architectural features which did not start life at Bird Place. The extremely rare and interesting oversized Yorkshire sash (discussed below), the large projecting oriel Edwardian window is unlikely to have been constructed specifically for the building. The Gibbsesque (very vaguely) door surround to the rear is peculiarly placed (it would be expected to be for primary entrance and to be centred). Internally, some of the panelling is undoubtably Georgian and made for the space, other aspects shown evidence of being cut down – having been not made for the building and have come from elsewhere. Some of the panelling appears to be early 20th century but perhaps installed in the 20s – given other tell-tales such as plumbing and other fixtures. Some of the fire surrounds are Edwardian, some a bit later. All this adds to the architectural and historic interest of the listed building.

Orientation:

The principal elevation is orientated towards White Hill (as in the road) this is an ancient route – with the crossing recorded in the 13th century, however, may date back two millennia. It is curious why a newly constructed mansion should face a rudimentary road when the landholding included the valuable river frontage. Earlier, contemporary, and later mansions in the area (albeit of slightly grander status) such as Fawley Court, Greenlands, Culham Court, Phyllis Court etc., all have strong river facing elevations. Not so for Bird Place. This may well have been a quirk of the builder, but given the physical evidence, it is possible the main element was built where it was built and orientated the way it is oriented, due to the pre-existing constraints and the (relative) ease and reduction in cost of adding to, and altering, an already existing building.

Assessment:

Proposed Rear Extension:

The application's proposal of a single storey extension to the south – to replace the unauthorised lean-to – in a contemporary language drastically contrasts with the host's architectural appearance, that of a traditional 18th and 19th century polite and domestic vernacular. The highly modernistic aesthetic introduces a bellicose form to the established architectural language with conflicts with traditional appearance, the host setting. Whilst a contemporary approach could be considered to represent an 'honest' tact to building philosophy, it is clear in this instance the jarring nature of the architectural form is at odds with the contextual historic significance. The resulting incongruity would be highly notable in the historic context and relationship to nearby heritage assets.

Although of a single storey, the overall projection and arrangement of the proposal would begin to compete with the visual dominance of the main part of the building impairing its historic legibility. That the proposed extension of a contemporary, 'lightweight' and simplified design approach does not overcome this. The large areas of glazing proposed would compete with and distract from the more modest

fenestration across the building, and its overall solidity. Furthermore, the perpendicular arrangement competes with, and thus erodes, the primarily linear plan form of the building causing harm to the interest derived from this element.

Existing Basement Excavations:

As discussed above, the lower level of the primary element holds great interest as extant. It may, potentially, be of even greater significance. The proposed excavation and alteration to the plan form would seek to remove and undermine all the historic interest within this level. The flooring is a mixture of stone flags and clay tiles, evidently C18th and C19th in date. Such features would be lost through the proposals. The removal of some of the storage shelving, which have stood there for centuries, would seek to erode the historic interest here.

The shelving is sawn-cut stone, at least 19th century in date used for the cold storage of wine and foodstuffs. The proposed drawings indicate the retention of some of these, but given the floor level is proposed to be lowered, it would be impossible to retain the shelving as is – the legs would require extending down, otherwise they would ‘float’ in the air, and in any regard the shelves themselves would be closer to eye height than the extant level. Similarly, it is proposed to retain but reposition the historic water pump. The pump is likely Victorian, perhaps early 20th century and provides interest as to the building’s water supply. The removal or reposition of the pump would seek to undermine the historic interest and render it as a decorative artifact rather than an integral element of the building’s significance.

The structural assessment by Cooper & Withycombe confirms the excavation of the basement is possible from a technical perspective. However, any such excavation would require substantial alteration to the structure. As noted in the structural report, the building would require underpinning. This is no small feat given the construction and ground type. The application has not provided sufficient detail as to establish the impacts not only the structure but the way in which works would interact with the building’s pre-existing faults and deficiencies.

New basement extension below the rear extension:

Related to both the above, it is proposed to create a further subterranean space wholly under the single-storey extension and partly under the service wing. The application has not provided sufficient information as to the structural status of the service wing and how any excavation would impact the structure and pre-existing conditions. Further to this, as the below-ground water level is extremely high here, consideration needs to be given to the subsequential impacts of how any proposed large basement would interact with the existing structure(s).

Viewing Platform:

The application proposes the creation of a ‘viewing platform’ or ‘sun deck’ between the two internal pitches of the gables to the south elevation. The details are not entirely clear, but it would appear from the drawings, and as discussed on site, that the structure of the platform would bridge the existing lead valley and attach to the roof structure. How such an attachment would be achieved is uncertain.

No opening-up (which in itself may require consent) has been undertaken to inform

the proposal. It is likely the structural alteration would require significant cutting and removal of historic fabric. The extant dormer, which is at least of the 19th century, would be completely removed, leading to the loss of the historical arrangement. Further to this, the addition of glazed balustrading would seek to add a conflicting element of contemporary appearance to the traditional roofscape. Whilst viewing platforms either designed or by coincidence, are not unusual in the vicinity, particularly given the views afforded of are not only for the attractive riverscape, but the ability to view river craft (although of course the Regatta is the other side of the bridge) – however the contrived creation of a modern platform in this position would seek to undermine the historic and architectural interest.

Oversized Yorkshire Sash Window:

The room known as 'Bedroom 6' (proposed 'Bedroom 1') contains a large Yorkshire sash window – that is, a horizontal (as opposed to the 'regular' vertical) sliding sash. Such windows are uncommon. To have one of this scale – oversized – is extremely rare. As noted above, the building contains a significant amount of architectural salvage – that is, pre-existing architectural features brought from other buildings.

Whilst it remains conjecture, there is sound evidence for this Yorkshire sash to be thus. The window exhibits all the characteristics of an authentic Georgian window. The glazing bars are of quality, finely detailed - Cavetto and Bead in profile – likely constructed of Pitch Pine. Yorkshire sashes tend to be more 'provincial' in fashion, the simple horizontal design originated in the 16th century – in and around Yorkshire (hence the name), with refinement over the centuries. The Cavetto and Bead glazing bar profile was popular in the 1780s-1800s, and thus it is highly likely this window dates from this period. It is however, oversized for the room and elevation, peculiar even. The lack of Queen Closers on the exterior brickwork further leads credence to the suggestion the window did not start life in this position and has been inserted post-construction.

It cannot be certain when the window came to be in this position, however it is evident it has been in this position for some time. Whilst not an original construction feature per se, the architectural feature itself is historic and very rare. Its presence in this position demonstrates the development of the building and thus strongly contributes to its significance. The removal of this feature would seek to harm the significance of the listed building and erode the special architectural and historic interest.

Impact on Remenham Bridge Conservation Area:

The Remenham Bridge Conservation Area is, in part, characterised by a low density, with a gentle built character and verdant context, which provides a contrasting setting to the directly related neighbour of Henley town on the other side of the river. Unlike the town, greater space and thus openness, (arising from both topography and land ownership) allows for a number of historic buildings to be set within their own grounds, Bird Place being one of them. This is a sensitive location, betwixt the bottom of White Hill and the river with the open expanse of Bird Place's garden to the south strongly contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and thus its significance as a designated heritage asset.

Whilst there are limited views of Bird Place from within the Conservation Area, the site is within a wide vista as appreciated from the Oxfordshire bank. This vista – as

viewed from numerous angles and positions strongly contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As a historic riverside mansion, the interplay between built form and the riverscape is crucially important. The traditional appearance of Bird Place – one of the oldest surviving riverside mansions - and open and verdant character contribute to the riverside setting. Whilst it is acknowledged the immediate area contains a number of modern contemporary built elements, these detract from the traditional character and appearance of the Conservation Area and have sought to cause harm to their significance. These modern elements, whilst in close proximity, all have differing aspects of interest and there is not an identical impact upon the heritage assets' significance.

Impact on Henley Conservation Area:

As noted above, the impact upon the Remenham Conservation Area's character and appearance is primarily effected through the vista as appreciated from the Oxfordshire bank. This area of the Henley Conservation Area (Riverside Character Area) partly draws its interest and significance from the traditional riverscape, a component of this – as noted above – is the interplay between the built form and riverside. Bird Place – whilst in part obscured by trees is a riverside landmark. The wide vista as appreciated from Thameside includes so many unchanged and historic elements – from the tower of St. Marys, to the Grade I Henley Bridge – and importantly – Bird Place. Through the proposed contemporary elements, this traditional vista would be eroded and cause harm to its significance. Whilst visibility is a good indicator of the impact to setting, as Historic England's *The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)* advises:

“Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not.” And that: “The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places.”

Setting, therefore, is not just the visual link between buildings and environments, but in part the way in which they are experienced. Detachment through vegetation and trees, either extant or proposed, can provide a visual distinction between environments, however a landscaped boundary, or buffer, cannot always shield against non-visual atmospheric characteristics, such as noise and presence. Landscaping can also easily be subject to future change. Trees can easily be felled, hedging lost and thus there may not always be such detachment between buildings. As such, whilst the visual aspect plays a part of the character of the setting, it is the encompassing environment which truly defines how the assets are experienced. As the Henley CAA notes:

“The River Thames is one of the most important features of the conservation area and intrinsic to the establishment and evolution of the town. At Henley the Thames is broad and has a green setting beyond the limits of the relatively compact urban area.” It is the contrast between the “compact urban area”

It is the contrast between the “compact urban area” and the low-density and lower built form of the Berkshire bank which strongly contributes to not only the setting of the Henley Conservation Area but to the character and appearance of the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area, which in itself derives significance from the contrasting urban grain from the town. Through the contemporary architectural nature, the proposals would undoubtedly seek to introduce a greater urban character to the Bird Place vicinity.

As such, the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area through the introduction of a conflicting form which would seek to erode the established character and appearance of the designated heritage asset. The proposals would also result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area, of which part of its significance is drawn from the setting. Through the contemporary architectural form and appearance, the proposals would seek to alter the traditional outlook from Oxfordshire bank and further erode the established context. This harm would be considered to be at the lower level of the ‘less than substantial’ scale.

Impact on other designated and non-designated heritage assets:

All heritage assets draw a degree of significance from their setting. Typically, in a developed setting (as opposed to a rural one), the historic built context forms part of the setting and thus interest. The Grade I Henley Bridge is one such asset which draws significance from the setting. Similarly to the conservation areas, the bridge is viewed within its riverscape context, and as assessed above, this traditional context would be eroded through the proposed alteration of Bird Place.

Summary:

There is strong physical and circumstantial evidence to suggest Bird Place is formed on an earlier structure. Given the long linear form (combined with Bird Place Cottage), perpendicular orientation to the river, building materials (flint, old timbers), there is a remarkable similarity to the 15th century ‘Friday Cottage’ (listing reference 1218624) a warehouse range almost directly opposite Bird Place on the other side of the river. Whilst this remains absolute conjecture, the similarities are striking. Given this, the building may hold even greater significant than currently understood and deserves a full academic archaeological assessment.

Given the above assessment, less than substantial harm would arise to the identified designated heritage assets. The spectrum of ‘less than substantial’ harm ranges depending on the designated heritage assets impacted. The ‘less than substantial harm’ is identified from a lower level to the CAs and other listed buildings (including the Grade I bridge) rising to a moderate level to Bird Place itself, with the potential to reach a high level given the unknown impact upon the potential earlier structure within the building. Where harm is identified para 215 of the NPPF requires that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits (including heritage benefits) of the proposal, which includes securing the asset’s optimum viable use.

Some economic benefits would be brought about through the construction phase and the general investment into the property. However, the scale of those benefits is short-term and limited by the extent and nature of the proposal. The primary

outcomes of the proposed works, namely the increase to and re-order the living accommodation and the obtaining of views of the surroundings, would be private benefits to the applicant that do not provide clear and convincing justification as required under para. 213 of the NPPF. It is not considered the scheme as proposed in its entirety is fundamentally necessary to secure the optimum viable use of the building, which already provides generous levels of accommodation. Moreover, no substantive evidence has been presented which verifies that the property would not be useable or viable as a dwelling now or in the future, or that its conservation as a designated heritage asset would be at risk, if the application's proposals were permitted, as submitted, were not implemented.

Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the LPA has a statutory duty to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Through the loss of historic fabric, erosion to the plan form, unsympathetic architectural form and detailing, the proposed alterations would fail to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building (S16 and S66, P(LB&CA)A 90).

Section 72 of the aforementioned Act, requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Through the unsympathetic form and appearance of the extension and viewing platform, the proposals would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas (S72, P(LBCA)A 90).

Given the identified harm, WBC Built Heritage raise objections to the proposed development, with the proposed development conflicting with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Archaeology:

There are potential archaeological implications with this proposed development as demonstrated by Berkshire Archaeology's Historic Environment Record. The desk-based assessment submitted with the application highlights the early development of this site, which is in a conservation area and close to Henley. Little is known about the property's development before the middle of the nineteenth century when it first appears on mapping, however, the adjacent attached property has 17th century origins, and there is a possibility that 17th century building may also have been on this plot. The current basement proposals would permit the inspection of foundations, or for elements of earlier phases of building to be exposed.

The application site falls within an area of archaeological significance and archaeological remains may be damaged by ground disturbance for the proposed development. It is therefore recommended that a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) condition is applied, should permission be granted, in order to mitigate the impacts of development. This is in accordance with Paragraph 218 of the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should *'require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible'*.

Subject to a condition securing a (WSI) and the implementation of the works in accordance with its recommendations, Berkshire Archaeology raise no objections to the proposals.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Due to the nature of the proposals and separation distances from neighbouring properties, the proposals raise no concerns on these grounds.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

WBC Highways raise no objections to the proposed development; the extension and works to the basement would result in additional habitable rooms, however, there is ample parking available on site to meet WBC parking standards.

Amenity Space:

The proposals would not harm the usability of the dwelling's rear amenity space.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site, due to its immediate proximity to the River Thames, is predominantly within Flood Zone 3.

This application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy (Create, September 2025, ref: GB/VL/P25-3458/01). The development has been assessed against the national Flood Risk Standing Advice, as per NPPF paragraph 176 and footnote 62, since it is a minor extension to an existing dwelling.

WBC Drainage have reviewed the submitted documentation and do not have concerns on either fluvial or surface water flooding grounds. The Drainage Officer is satisfied that the development would not result in an increase in flood risk elsewhere, or within the site itself through the appropriate management and maintenance of floodplain storage (assisted by the proposed surface water drainage strategy).

Subject to compliance with the mitigation measures within the submitted report referenced above, WBC Drainage raise no objections to the proposed development.

Landscape and Trees:

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Sylva Consultancy, 18th September 2025) has been submitted with this application.

The site is accessed via White Hill, B4130 which is a Green Route. Just at the point of access into the site there is a mature Horse Chestnut tree protected by TPO 1843/2022. The tree is numbered T9 in the Arboricultural Report from Sylva Consultancy.

There is minimal impact on existing trees with just two trees proposed to fell that conflict with the proposals, these are T52 'B' quality Mulberry and T53 'C' quality Cupressus as identified in the submitted documentation. No objections are raised in this regard.

Tree T9 Horse Chestnut – TPO 1843-2022 is provided with a 15m root protection area radius indicating that it is a Veteran tree.

Overall, WBC Landscape and Trees raise no objections to the proposals on arboricultural grounds, subject to compliance with the arboricultural information submitted and a condition securing a landscaping scheme.

Ecology:

Bats:

A Bat Emergence Survey (Morph Ecological Consultants, September 2025) has been submitted with this application.

During the bat emergence surveys, four soprano pipistrelle day roosts were recorded using gaps around the windows present at the western gable end wall of Bird Place, and one brown long-eared day roost was recorded within the loft space of Rose Cottage, observed when deploying remote monitoring equipment and later seen emerging from a tile near the roof ridge. General bat activity levels were high around the property, with frequent recordings of pipistrelle bats and commuting noctules.

As five bat roosts were recorded, which will be impacted by the proposed works, a licence from Natural England will be necessary prior to works commencing. Given the low conservation value of the roosts, the Bat Earned Recognition route could be obtained. Works to the roof and windows will need to be supervised by a licenced ecologist, with bat boxes erected nearby as construction phase mitigation.

To compensate for any potential roosting features to be lost, three bat boxes should be erected along the western gable end wall of Bird Place, and access features for the brown long-eared bat roost should be retained/incorporated within Rose Cottage.

If recommended for approval, compliance with the mitigation measures within the report will be secured via condition.

Great Crested Newts:

The application site is located within an Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts. The Ecological report submitted (Phillips Ecology, June 2025) concludes that upon assessment of the site, there is minimal anticipated impacts onto this protected species due to the very minor nature of the external alterations proposed to the dwelling. No objections are raised in this regard.

Pre-Application Discussions:

Under Section 4 of the NPPF, applicants are encouraged to engage with the Local Planning Authority prior to the submission of formal application(s), particularly when the application site is sensitive and the proposals complex in nature. In this case, the applicant submitted for pre-application advice for the some of this application's proposals (with additional elements not including in this application) – such early engagement is, of course, welcomed by the LPA. However, it is important to note that pre-application advice is simply that – advice – it is not binding to any particular outcome of subsequent application(s), and the any advice given as part of the proposals relies, in part, on the information provided by the applicant. As para. 44 of the NPPF notes:

“The right information is crucial to good decision-making, particularly where formal assessments are required...”

As noted above, the assessment of significance of Bird Place provided as part of this application, and indeed lesser-so, at the pre-application submission, has not fully assessed the significance of the site and thus the information was incomplete at the time of enquiry. As the Inspector noted under a recent appeal decision (APP/H1705/W/25/3371827):

“The appellant’s engagement in a pre-application enquiry is noted. However, it is important to emphasise that pre-application advice is informal and non-binding and does not predetermine the outcome of a formal planning application. Any perceived positive feedback received during those discussions does not override the need for a full and proper assessment of the proposal against the development plan and all other material considerations. Notably the pre-application response from the Council states that this is a preliminarily view and would be reviewed at the application stage through the site visit. As such, the existence of pre-application advice does not justify approval, nor does it diminish the weight of the identified conflict with the development plan.”

Conclusion:

In light of the several areas of heritage harm raised above, this application is recommended for refusal on the following grounds:

1. In the absence of sufficient information and by reason of the development’s scale, massing and overall design, the proposals would fail to conserve or enhance the important character and special architectural and historic interest of Bird Place as a Grade II Listed Building, for which no adequate justification has been provided. As such, there would be undue harm to the significance and appearance of the listed building and its setting. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. By reason of the development’s scale, massing and overall design, the proposals would fail to conserve or enhance the historic settings of the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area, Henley Conservation Area and Henley Bridge, a Grade I Listed Structure, consequently harming their special architectural and historic interests. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

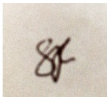
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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:	Refusal
Date:	29 January 2026
Earliest date for decision:	4 November 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	30.1.26