



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990

Heritage Statement of Case

Appeal by: Retirement Villages Development Limited

Against the Council's decision to refuse the application for:

Full application for proposed part demolition of existing building and replacement with a three storey extension to provide extra-care units, with associated soft and hard landscaping works; provision of additional vehicle parking, bin stores and ancillary structures; and alterations to existing basement.

Site Address: Thamesfield Retirement Village, Wargrave Road, Remenham, RG9 2LX

Planning Inspectorate Ref: 6011062

Local Planning Authority Ref: 243125

July 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Statement of Case (Heritage) is submitted in relation to the appeal against the Local Planning Authority's decision to refuse permission in principle under application ref: 243125 for *'Full application for proposed part demolition of existing building and replacement with a three storey extension to provide extra-care units, with associated soft and hard landscaping works; provision of additional vehicle parking, bin stores and ancillary structures; and alterations to existing basement.'*
- 1.2 The application was refused by the Local Planning Authority on 11th December 2025. The reasons for the Local Planning Authority's refusal of the application are set out below:
- (1) The proposed development, by reason of its bulk, scale, height, and proximity to neighbouring dwellings at Remenham Row, would result in an unacceptable level of overlooking and perceived loss of privacy to the front elevations of those properties, together with an unneighbourly overbearing impact. The development would result in material harm the living conditions of existing residents. The proposal is therefore contrary to Section 12 of the NPPF, Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Core Strategy and the Borough Design Guide.
 - (2) The proposed development, by reason of its scale, height, bulk and massing would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Remenham and Henley Bridge Conservation Area and the Henley on Thames Conservation Area. This would result in limited-moderate less-than-substantial harm to the significance of these designated heritage assets. When applying paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the identified harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with the statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Section 16 of the NPPF (2024), Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Core Strategy and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.
 - (3) In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposed development fails to secure opportunities for training, apprenticeships and other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills contrary to MDD Local Plan policy TB12.
 - (4) In the absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposed development fails to mitigate the increases in demand on NHS services through failing to contribute towards the creation of additional clinical capacity at Bell or Hart GP Surgeries or an identified primary care estates project in the local area to

serve the development. This is contrary to CP1 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF (2024).

- (5) In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure biodiversity net gain monitoring, the proposed development fails to demonstrate and secure that there would be no long term biodiversity net loss as a result of the proposal by either on site mitigation or off-site compensation and how this would be managed, contrary to Core Strategy policy CP3 and CP7, MDD Local Plan Policy TB23 and the NPPF (2024).

1.2 This Heritage Statement of Case relates reason (2).

2. LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 Statutory duties relating to proposals affecting listed buildings and conservation areas are contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, notably Sections 16, 66, and 72.
- 2.2 Central Government planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024. Section 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, although the Framework should be read as a whole. Further guidance is provided by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which is regularly updated.
- 2.3 The Section 16 of the NPPF and the PPG emphasise the need for a clear understanding of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution that its setting makes to its significance, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, including from development within its setting, requires clear and convincing justification. Where less than substantial harm is identified to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the NPPF states that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The PPG explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits. In determining the application, the Council identified harm to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 2.4 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the NPPF states that great weight should be given to its conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be, irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial harm, or less than substantial harm to its significance. In determining the application, the Council gave great weight to the assets' conservation.
- 2.5 The NPPF further stipulates that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, which includes being sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. The National Design Guide (2021) Section C2 emphasises the importance of heritage and

context when considering the merits of a design. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide (2012) places further importance of local design considerations and the conservation of the historic environment.

- 2.6 Paragraph 48 of the NPPF requires an application for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant development plan policy context for this appeal comprises the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy (2010), Managing Development Delivery (2014), Borough Design Guide (2012) and Landscape Character Assessment (2019) and Historic Environment Topic Paper (HETP) (2024) evidence base to support the Local Plan Update.
- 2.7 The Council considered that the appeal proposals would be contrary to Policies TB24 and TB26 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan which state:

Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)

- 1. Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas are shown on the Policies Map.*
- 2. 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.*
- 3. Proposals for building works shall retain or incorporate existing features or details of historic or architectural significance or design quality into the scheme.*

- 2.8 And thus conflicts with Policy CP3(c) (related to heritage) of the Core Strategy, which states:

CP3 - General Principles for development Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- a) Are 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;*
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
- d) Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;*
- e) Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;*
- f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*
- g) Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;*
- h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;*
- i) Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land; and*
- j) Do not lead to a loss of community or recreational facilities/land or infrastructure unless suitable alternative provision is available.*

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and streetscenes and where required Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes.

3. SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1 The appeal site is located at *Thamesfield*, a 19th century riverside mansion set in extensive grounds, located within the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area and within the direct setting of the Henley-on-Thames Conservation Area, itself identified as a non-designated heritage asset. Furthermore, the application site lies within the wider setting of the Grade II listed Bird Place, 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, 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 setting of the Grade II* Registered Park & Garden of Park Place and Temple Combe.
- 3.2 In addition, the application site is within the setting of a number of historic buildings, which include, but not limited to, the 18th-19th century cottages of Wargrave Road, Century House on the Berkshire side and the Royal Mansions, numerous 19th and 20th century boat houses along Boat House Reach on the Henley side of the river. Whilst not of historic interest, having been built in the late 1990s, the proposals impact upon the direct setting of Remenham Row, which by virtue of the spital character, sympathetic design and material usage, positively contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF AFFECTED HERITAGE ASSETS

4.1 Significance is defined by the NPPF (Dec 2024) as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”

4.2 Designated Heritage Assets – Conservation Areas

4.2.1 Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area

The Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area was designated by Wokingham Borough Council in 2004 and occupies the Berkshire bank of the River Thames opposite Henley-on-Thames, encompassing the riverside section of the historic village and parish of Remenham. The area lies within the Green Belt and has a semi-rural character in direct contrast to the urban town of Henley on the other side of the river.

4.2.2 The significance of the Conservation Area is derived from its extensive riverside landscape, comprising open fields and grounds, mature woodland, with large dwellings and clubs and river-related infrastructure predominantly facing the Thames and smaller buildings set back along the arterial routes. These elements provide an attractive green backdrop to views from Henley towards the wooded slopes of the Chiltern Hills, reinforcing the picturesque quality of the Thames Valley. The Conservation Area's linear form, extending along the river rather than inland, further emphasises its historic and functional relationship with the Thames. Boathouses, clubs, moorings, landing stages and other riverside structures tangibly illustrate the area's longstanding recreational and navigational use.

4.2.3 The Conservation Area also contains several designated heritage assets that contribute to its special interest, including Bird Place, Bird Place Cottage, the Regatta Headquarters and the Little Angel public house (all Grade II) as well as the landmark Henley Bridge (Grade I) (jointly shared with South Oxfordshire District

Council). A number of other historic buildings also contribute to the special interest, including Thamesfield, the 18th and 19th centuries cottages on the Wargrave Road, and the Edwardian villas and Home Farm on Remenham Lane.

4.2.4 The special interest of the Conservation Area derives from its picturesque riverside landscape, its historic relationship with the River Thames, and the combination of open parkland, recreational infrastructure and woodland rising towards the Chiltern Hills. Thamesfield makes a significant contribution to this character as one of the area's principal buildings, although the removal of some historic riverside features and the presence of later development have modestly diminished that contribution.

4.2.5 *Henley Conservation Area*

The Henley Conservation Area was designated by South Oxfordshire District Council in 1979 and subsequently extended in 2004. The adopted *Henley Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* (2023) identifies the area's special interest as arising from its historic relationship with the River Thames, its surviving medieval burgage plot pattern, and its rich architectural character, reflecting successive phases of 18th and 19th century rebuilding and expansion. The Conservation Area encompasses much of Henley town centre and is divided into nine Character Areas. Thamesfield shares visual and historic relationships primarily with Character Area 06: Riverside.

4.2.6 The Riverside Character Area reflects Henley's enduring connection with the River Thames and remains the focus of the town's recreational and sporting identity through its rowing clubs, boathouses, regatta facilities and associated riverside uses.

4.2.7 Built form primarily faces, and is arranged along, Thameside, which follows the river in a north-south alignment, with east-west streets linking the waterfront to the historic town centre. The urban grain is looser in this part of the town, and the dwellings, hotels, pubs and clubs generally occupied large buildings.

4.2.8 The area contains numerous listed buildings, including the Grade I Henley Bridge, Grade II* Angel Hotel, Grade II* Rectory, the Grade II listed Coach House, nos. 11

and 12 Thameside, and the Old Granary. Further south, the Grade II Baltic House and Grade II River Terrace (Nos. 1–7 Thameside), as well as the Royal Mansions and the turn of the century boat houses on Thameside, all of which contribute positively to the riverside townscape and have direct intervisibility with the appeal side and have an appreciation of its riverside grounds and the historic river frontage.

4.2.9 One of the defining characteristics of this area is the quality of its views. Henley Bridge provides an important arrival point into the town with expansive views across the Thames towards the wooded landscape beyond, while long views along the river and across to Remenham reinforce the visual relationship between the two banks. Views of the appeal site, and thus its visual contribution to the significance of the CA, and setting to the identified heritage assets, is particularly notable from when approaching the town centre from the south-east, walking along the tow path from Mill Meadows.

4.2.10 The significance of the Henley Conservation Area derives from its medieval town plan, historic architectural quality, riverside setting and continuing role as a vibrant market town. The Riverside Character Area is distinguished by its strong association with the River Thames, recreational infrastructure and important river views. Thamesfield forms part of the setting of this character area and makes a strong and positive contribution to its significance, principally through its presence within views across the Thames, but also through the historical development of being a large mansion set in grounds on the other side of the river where land was available, in contrast to the heavily developed town.

4.3 Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings)

4.3.1 Henley Bridge is a Grade I listed stone structure spanning the River Thames linking Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Constructed between 1786 and 1788 to replace an earlier medieval bridge, it was designed by the architect William Hayward with decorative elements by sculptor Thomas Baldwin. Built from finely dressed limestone, the bridge consists of five semi-elliptical arches with rusticated masonry, classical balustrades, and ornamental niches containing statues. The arched form,

proportions and stonework make it arguably one of the finest 18th century river bridges in England. Beyond its architectural merit, Henley Bridge has played a central role in the town's development for over two centuries, serving as an important crossing point on the Thames and forming a distinctive backdrop to internationally renowned events such as the Henley Royal Regatta. Its Grade I listing recognises its exceptional historic and architectural significance as a landmark of national importance.

- 4.3.2 Bird Place is a Grade II listed house primarily dating from the 18th century (although it may contain an earlier core) with later 19th and 20th century alterations.

Constructed in brown and red brick with a plain parapet and tiled roof, the principal elevation is of the 1740s, altered later in the 18th century, five-bays with sash windows, and a central entrance framed by a neo-classical Doric porch atop a raised cellar. The interior retains important historic fabric, including a staircase with turned balusters and moulded newels together with 18th and 19th century wall panelling, which contribute significantly to its evidential and aesthetic value. The house also illustrates the historic evolution of the site through its connection with the adjoining 18th century Bird Place Cottage, demonstrating the gradual development of a riverside estate. Bird Place makes a strong positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Similarly to Thamesfield, Bird Place sits in substantial grounds with a wide river frontage. Whilst Bird Place is not orientated towards the river, it provides comparable context for Thamesfield, in that the fashion for large riverside mansions continued into the 19th century, from this neighbouring, earlier, example.

- 4.3.3 Bird Place Cottage derives its significance primarily from the survival of historic fabric, largely dating from the 18th century onwards, and its historic relationship with riverscape and to Bird Place. Although extensively altered internally and externally, the cottage retains a small number of historic features, including early 20th century dormers, a Yorkshire sliding sash window, reused early 18th century sash frames with original crown glass, and some historic timber beams. A modern extension has obscured much of its original form from the river aspect, however. The cottage's significance lies mainly in its surviving historic fabric and its role as a former

ancillary building to Bird Place and contribution to the riverscape aspect of the Conservation Area.

- 4.3.4 The Henley Royal Regatta Headquarters derives its architectural and historic significance from its rare status as a permanent civic building dedicated exclusively to an annual sporting event, and from its distinctive post-modern design by the noted architect Terry Farrell, completed in 1986. Occupying a prominent position at the eastern end of Henley Bridge, it forms a landmark within the townscape and makes a strong contribution to views from both the Royal Henley Bridge Conservation Area and the Henley Conservation Area, enhancing its overall significance. The building is Grade II listed, making it one of the 'youngest' listed buildings in the country.
- 4.3.5 The Little Angel is a Grade II listed former coaching inn and public house situated at the bottom of White Hill (known as Remenham Hill). Dating principally from the 18th century, with later 19th and 20th century alterations, the building reflects a typical character of public house in the area, being constructed of painted flint and brick beneath an old clay tile gabled roof, it is distinguished by brick dentil eaves, three gabled dormers, prominent chimney stacks, and a symmetrical road frontage with sash windows containing glazing bars. Although the ground floor has been modified over time to accommodate commercial needs, the building retains much of its historic form and vernacular character. The Little Angel is significant for its architectural interest as a well-preserved example of an 18th century Berkshire inn and for its historic role in supporting travel, trade, and social life along this important route beside the River Thames.
- 4.3.6 The Grade II* Registered Park and Garden at Park Place, Remenham, is an exceptional 18th and 19th century designed landscape occupying a prominent position above the River Thames. The estate originated in 1719 when Lord Archibald Hamilton established a Palladian villa and landscaped grounds on the site of the earlier Strouds Farm. Its greatest period of development came under General Henry Seymour Conway from 1752, who transformed the estate into one of the most celebrated picturesque landscapes of the Georgian period. Conway introduced a series of ornamental features, including the celebrated Happy Valley,

woodland walks, temples, a menagerie, extensive tree planting, and the distinctive Conway's Bridge, constructed from stone salvaged from Reading Abbey. During the 19th century, the estate was further enhanced under successive owners, notably with remodelling by Henry Holland and later improvements to the pleasure grounds by the landscape gardener Robert Marnock. Today, the park retains its essential historic character as a richly varied landscape of formal terraces, ornamental gardens, mature parkland, woodland, and sweeping lawns descending towards the River Thames. Long vistas, carefully composed views, specimen trees, ornamental structures and the integration of the neighbouring Temple Combe estate combine to create a landscape of exceptional aesthetic and historic significance.

4.4 Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)

4.4.1 Thamesfield is a mid-19th century riverside mansion, which was altered and enlarged in the late 19th century. The building was further altered and extended in the late 20th century including changing function from a single residential dwelling to first a youth centre and subsequently a nursing home and retirement complex, of which it stands today. Whilst the building is altered and the site developed, the original white stuccoed Victorian mansion is still very clearly read and is highly prominent on the Berkshire bank of the river with landmark quality. By virtue of its age, architectural and historic interest as well as the positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, noting particularly the views from the Oxfordshire side, Thamesfield is identified as a non-designated heritage asset. It is, however, important to note the extent of the NDHA is limited to the 19th century element, and does not extend to the 20th century extensions on the site.

4.4.2 The site was historically known as Thames Fields, common land, which was enclosed by the Remenham Inclosure Act of 1799. By 1852 Thamesfield was owned by William Lamb, followed by brewer Thomas Fox Alexander Byles and, from 1876, wealthy hop merchant Robert Arnold Cosier. In 1891, Cosier's son sold the estate to Sir John Edwards Moss (1850–1935) who came from a prominent banking and landowning family. Educated at Eton and Balliol College, Oxford, he was an accomplished sportsman, serving as Captain of Boats at Eton, winning the Ladies' Plate at the Henley Royal Regatta three years in succession, and

competing in the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race. After marrying Margaret Everilda Blackburn in 1873, the couple moved to Thamesfield in 1891, where the house became a centre for family gatherings and social events during Henley Regatta. During his ownership, Sir John transformed the estate by building glasshouses to cultivate tropical fruits and an exceptional orchid collection of more than 15,000 varieties. He remained at Thamesfield until his death in 1935, after which the house stood empty. In 1943, Thamesfield was rescued from decline when Viscount Hambleden and local businessman Ernest Makower secured its future as a residential youth centre. Parts of the estate were later leased to organisations including the Sea Cadets, the Eyot Centre and the riverside boat centre. In 1984 Graham Payne purchased the property, which after plans to redevelop the site into flats was refused, he sold the house to Betty Williams, who converted Thamesfield into a 36-bed nursing home in 1987 with 12 'close-care' apartments added in 1993 and a further 12 in 1996.

- 4.4.3 The Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area does not have a Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) document, nor does the Council have an adopted assessment criteria that can be applied to the identified and assessed of non-designated heritage assets. In lieu of these documents, Historic England's *Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage* has been used to appropriately assess and conclude on Thamesfield as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 4.4.4 The PPG states (para. 040): *"In some cases, local planning authorities may also identify non-designated heritage assets as part of the decision-making process on planning applications"* and *"Irrespective of how they are identified, it is important that the decisions to identify them as non-designated heritage assets are based on sound evidence."* Whilst Conservation Area Appraisals, Local Lists and Neighbourhood Plans provide an important resource for identifying NDHAs, as the PPG advises, assets which have not been previously identified, may arise during the planning process – Thamesfield is one such example.
- 4.4.5 As the PPG advises, sound evidence, and thus appropriate rationale, for identification of NDHAs should be used. In lieu of a locally adopted assessment

criteria, a national guidance document has been used - Historic England's *Advice Note 7: Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage* – by which way locally listed building are themselves NDHAs. The criteria and assessment are as follows:

- Asset type: *Although local heritage lists have long been developed successfully for buildings, all heritage asset types, including monuments, sites, places, areas, parks, gardens and designed landscapes may be considered for inclusion.*
 - Thamesfield is a building.
- Age: *The age of an asset may be an important criterion, and the age range can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics or building traditions. Rarity Appropriate for all assets, as judged against local characteristics.*
 - Thamesfield is a Victorian building, c1850s with later extensions and alteration*
- Architectural and Artistic Interest: *The intrinsic design and aesthetic value of an asset relating to local and/or national styles, materials, construction and craft techniques, or any other distinctive characteristics.*
 - Whilst altered and extended, the primary river frontage and southern elevation can still clearly be read a good example of Victorian Italianate neo-classicism. Externally some original architectural features have been lost such as chimneys and windows (although replaced with appropriate one-over-one and two-over-two sashes). Internally a number of original features remain including fireplaces, mouldings and plasterwork.
- Group Value: *Groupings of assets with a clear visual design or historic relationship.*
 - Thamesfield has important group value as one of a number of Thames-side mansions built in the 19th century. Arguably more distinct on the Berkshire bank, the wider context of riverside settlements in the vicinity strongly contribute to the appreciation for the 'Golden age' of the Thames, the late 19th to early 20th century leisure filled epoch where the banks of the river were developed.

- Archaeological Interest: *The local heritage asset may provide evidence about past human activity in the locality, which may be in the form of buried remains, but may also be revealed in the structure of buildings or in a designed landscape, for instance. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are primary sources of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.*
 - N/A
- Historic Interest: *A significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures, may enhance the significance of a heritage asset. Blue Plaque and similar schemes may be relevant. Social and communal interest may be regarded as a sub-set of historic interest but has special value in local listing. As noted in the PPG: 'Heritage assets ... can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity'. It therefore relates to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence, contributing to the 'collective memory' of a place.*
 - As with the group value and landmark status, Thamesfield strongly contributes to the riverside character, demonstrating not only the development of the area but retaining physical presence (despite alteration).
- Landmark Status: *An asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value, may be singled out as a landmark within the local scene.*
 - Thamesfield has a strong and undeniable landmark quality. It is highly prominent along the river, visible from a wide vista from the Henley side. The white stucco appearance significantly contributes to this status, making it not only physically more visible, but more notable compared to the other red brick and timber structures of the banksides. The building is widely known by locals as 'the white house', giving it a strong communal status. This is further reinforced by the fact, by virtue of being a retirement home, many local people actively interact with the building either by living there themselves or by visiting relatives.

- *For clarity, the NDHA status is limited to the historic element of Thameside, and does not include the late 20th century additions. It is an accepted process to identify part of buildings as having heritage asset status and not all, for example a Historic England listing description can exclude specific elements, for examples '*PILLAR HOUSE, 113 AND 115, BATH ROAD, Cheltenham, Grade II, No. 1386719 'Semi-detached villa, now offices. c1810-40, **with extension c1980s to rear (not included)**.'*' (emphasis added).

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

5.1 The proposed development directly impacts the significance of Thamesfield as a non-designated heritage asset, and the character and appearance, and thus significance, of the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area, as a designated heritage asset. The proposed development also impacts upon the setting, and thus significance of a number of other designated heritage assets, identified above.

5.2 Thamesfield

5.2.1 Thamesfield makes an important contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as one of its principal buildings. Its riverside location, eye-catching appearance, mature landscaped grounds and prominent position contribute to the verdant backdrop experienced in views across the Thames from Henley. The contribution to the understanding of the historical development of the Remenham bank is also valuable, being still appreciated as large Italian 19th century mansion. And whilst much altered, these modern extensions, by virtue of their scale and appearance, do not overly dominate the site.

5.2.2 The proposed three-storey accommodation block would seek to replace an existing modern single-storey range – identified as ‘Block C’ – understood to predominantly date from 1993, part of the rear of ‘Block B’ which dates from the late 20th century, as well part of the rear of the 19th century element of the mansion where it attaches.

5.2.2 The proposed development would seek to significantly increase the height, scale and massing of the existing built-form. This would also result in a considerable increase of plan-form density on the site, and whilst Thamesfield has been extended a number of times, this further extension would give rise to a greater urban character. The proposed development would deviate from the established built height and scale of the site, and seek to introduce a divergent form and appearance.

- 5.2.3 In terms of materiality, whilst the red facing brick is characteristic of the area, and – in general terms – would be appropriate for development in the CA, as the Thamesfield site does not contain red brick – being primarily of white stucco, and buff/brown brick, this would further emphasis the incongruous appearance.
- 5.2.4 The blocky ‘roof’ form, that is the third storey, differs remarkably from all of the other existing elements on the site, which, no matter of their age, have sought to reflect the shallow pitched slated roof of the original 19th century building. Indeed, some elements of the 20th century development of the site are reasonably successful – for instance the form of ‘Block D’ fairly reflects the form of a low-rise 19th century villa, and whilst the materials and detailing betray any authenticity, it has sought to appropriately respond to the historic context. In respect to the roof/third storey component whilst the dark colouring may reflect the slate roofs of Thamesfield, the black-grey block form seeks to dominate and overshadow the host and vicinity and fails to respond to the historic context and relationship to both historic (and later) built form in the area.
- 5.2.5 Due to these factors, the proposed development would fail to respond to the architectural and historic interest of Thamesfield, causing harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

5.3 Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area

- 5.3.1 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, Thamesfield being one of them. This is a sensitive location, betwixt the 18th century vernacular cottages of the Wargrave Road and the rolling banks and river beyond. It is this openness and verdant character which strongly contributes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and thus its significance as a designated heritage asset.

- 5.3.2 Whilst there are limited views of the historic element of Thamesfield from within the Conservation Area, the modern extensions can be readily appreciated from the Wargrave Road and from the historic buildings which run alongside it. 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 Thamesfield and open and verdant character of its private setting contribute to the wider riverside appearance. It is, however, acknowledged the area contains a number of modern contemporary built elements - notably the upper element of Thames Bridge House, and front (river) extension of Bird Place Cottage - these detract from the traditional character and appearance of the Conservation Area and have sought to cause harm to its significance.
- 5.3.3 The proposed development would have significant visual impact upon the vicinity, notably from the junction of Remenham (White) Hill and the Wargrave Road and from Thameside in Henley. It also important to note the strong visibility of the development which would occur from the upper level of buildings such as Royal Mansions and the Grade II listed River Terrace, which whilst not in the public realm, command fantastic views across the river, over the bank and up to Park Place RPG.
- 5.3.5 Through the height, scale and massing, in combination with the form, appearance and materiality, all of which conflict with, and thus fail to preserve, the identified character and appearance, the proposals development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Remenham Bridge Conservation Area. Due to the divergent character of the proposed extension to Thamesfield, the building would seek to erode the established character and appearance of the designated heritage asset. Due to the considerable impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, through the size of building, scale and divergent character, this harm would be identified at a moderate level in terms of the less than substantial harm scale.

- 5.4 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."

- 5.5 Setting, therefore, is not just the visual link between buildings and environments, but in part the way in which they are experienced and understood. Detachment through vegetation and trees, either extant or proposed, can provide a defined visual distinction between environments, however a landscaped boundary can be subject to change. Trees can easily be felled, hedges 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 and appreciated.

5.6 Henley Conservation Area

- 5.6.1 This area of the Henley Conservation Area (Riverside Character Area) partly draws its interest and significance from the traditional riverscape, a component of this is the interplay between the built form and riverside. Thamesfield, as a riverside landmark, positively contributes to the wide vista as appreciated from Thameside. 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" 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 Thamesfield vicinity.

5.6.2 Part of the Henley Conservation Area's significance is drawn from its setting, that of the traditional outlook from the Oxfordshire bank and the interrelate context of the numerous built historic buildings and structure. This contextual setting is also provided through the developmental history of the area, specifically in that Henley was the urban town, whereas Remenham was the rural bank where large dwellinghouses were built to appreciate the riverscape from their own grounds. Through the bulk, scale and massing and conflicting appearance to its host, Thamesfield, the proposed development would result in harm to the setting, and thus significance of the designated heritage asset. Through the erosion to the established setting, this less than substantial harm would be identified at the lower level of the scale.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Development of the appeal site would give rise to an urbanising effect which would erode the established character and appearance of the area. The proposed development, through its form, height, scale and massing, would fundamentally alter built environment within the Conservation Area and vicinity thus adversely impacting the established and historic contextual setting.

6.2 The proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the identified designated heritage assets:

Designated Heritage Assets:

Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area – less than substantial harm at a moderate level

Henley Conservation Area – less than substantial harm at a low level

And result in harm to the following non-designated heritage asset:

Non-Designated Heritage Asset:

Thamesfield – harm to significance

6.3 In respect to the other designated heritage assets identified as being impacted by the proposed development, whilst their setting would be altered, this impact would not be considered to rise to the 'less than substantial' harm level in regards to Section 16 of the NPPF, and thus the Council identifies no harm to arise to these assets.

6.4 The application would be considered to conflict with Principle G1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD which requires that: "*Development must respond positively to its site and local context, including; Heritage assets and their settings, for instance archaeological features, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and conservation areas;*" and Principle G2 that states: "*Development must create a sense of place that responds positively to the character of the local area in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape and public realm qualities.*"

- 6.4 In making its determination of the planning application, the Council was required to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Council performed its duty in this respect, and through the form, scale and appearance of the development, the Council considered the proposals would fail to neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Remenham Henley Bridge Conservation Area.
- 6.5 Given the identified harm, the proposed development would conflict with Policy TB24 of the Wokingham Borough Council Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan and Policy CP3(c) of the Core Strategy.