

# OCC0147 Henley Bridge – North East Parapet Wall

## Heritage Statement Addendum

Doc. Ref. 1270070-MGT-SBR-147-RP-CB-001





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## 1 Introduction

Henley Bridge is a Grade I listed; five span load bearing masonry arch bridge. It derives significance from its inherent historic and architectural value as a grand landmark feature spanning the River Thames in Henley-on-Thames. The Design Access and Heritage Statement prepared by Atkinsrealis for Oxfordshire County Council dated 19/06/2024 and submitted as part of Listed Building Consent application number 241568, contains a full description of the historical significance of the asset.

This Heritage Statement Addendum has been prepared by M Group Transport on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council, as part of a further Listed Building Consent (LBC) Application to Wokingham Borough Council for the proposed works to reconstruct the North-East parapet wall. This Heritage Statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings: -

- Drg Ref: 1270070-MGT-SBR-147-DR-CB-001 Location Plan Rev P01
- Drg Ref: 1270070-MGT-SBR-147-DR-CB-002 Proposed Plan Rev P01
- Drg Ref: 1270070-MGT-SBR-147-DR-CB-003 Proposed Cross-section and Elevation Rev P01

The proposals seek to undertake the reconstruction of the northeast parapet wall following it having to be taken down urgently to make it safe in late October 2025.

## 2 Aims

This Heritage Statement aims to: -

- Describe the background and situation that led to the North-East parapet needing to be taken down as part of make safe works during the repairs to the main bridge.
- Present the proposed works in relation to Henley Bridge Northeast Wall Reconstruction.
- Assess the likely impacts on Henley Bridge and other identified heritage assets in terms of harm to their significance.

## 3 Location

Henley Bridge is located at Henley-on-Thames within the jurisdiction of both South Oxfordshire District Council and Wokingham Borough Council, centred on the River Thames SU 76375 82642

Location plan (Source OpenMap) – see figure 1 overleaf

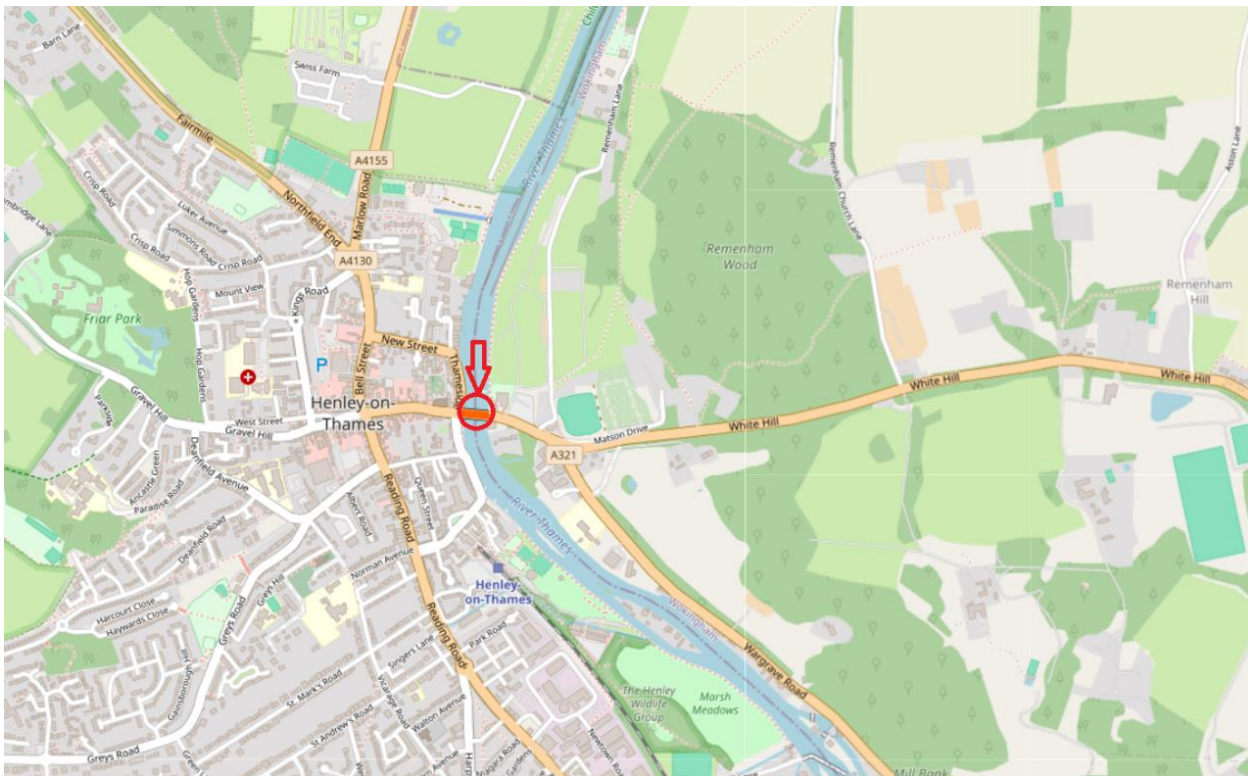


**Figure 1: Henley Bridge Location**

## 4 Description of proposals and justification

### 4.1 Background and Make Safe Works

During the completion of the consented works to repair Henley Bridge in Autumn 2025 the dense vegetation to the North-East retaining wall and parapet was removed to allow a closer inspection of the wall and to enable a review of any required repairs to be identified. It was anticipated that only re-pointing and localised like for like repairs would be required.

The vegetation removal revealed the full extents of the retaining wall formed of Flint construction below the parapet, with what is thought to be a former arch position denoted with alternating flint and ashlar faced voussoir stones. The Design, Access and Heritage Statement produced by Atkinsrealis in June 2024 suggests that the flint may date back to 12<sup>th</sup> century and be part of the original bridge structure (see photo 1 & 2 below showing the exposed retaining wall showing the position of a former arch and the flint work construction). Unfortunately, the stone parapet wall on top of the flint retaining wall was found to be in poor condition due to the significant Ivy root growth having up lifted it at its base and causing some localised structural cracking. The parapet was found to be leaning backwards towards Toll Gate House and was deemed to be causing a significant health and safety risk to the ongoing adjacent private building works. OCC / M Group communicated the situation immediately to both Wokingham Borough Development Control and South Oxfordshire Conservation Teams to advise that an urgent make safe operation was required, and that the parapet wall was to be carefully taken down, with the existing stones taken to Northampton Stone (sub-subcontractor for main Bridge repair works) mason's yard for safekeeping.



**Photo 1: View looking South-East - Exposed flint face retaining wall**



**Photo 2: View looking North-West - Exposed flint face retaining wall**

## 4.2 Description of Proposed Works

The proposed work to the Grade I listed bridge comprises the following: -

- i) Undertake the reconstruction of the North-East parapet wall and upper stringcourse using the existing retained stones (wherever possible) following preparation, and in accordance with the original recorded geometry (matching the adjacent parapet wall to the South-East).
- ii) Complete localised plastic repairs in lime mortar and with stainless steel 10mm diameter pins where required to the lower parapet stone stringcourse that remains in-situ.

The proposed works relate specifically to the reconstruction of the northeast parapet wall following a make safe operation in late October 2025 and the localised repair of the lower stone stringcourse above the flint retaining wall. No works to the flint retaining wall are proposed as part of this application.

Where the removed dense vegetation had established roots within the joints of the flint wall, any residual root growth will be cut back flush with the wall face, taking care not to disrupt or damage the flintwork.

The stored existing stones from the Northeast parapet wall shall be pre-prepared before they are transported back to site. On removal of the parapet, it became apparent that the parapet wall was formed from two leaves of approximately 80mm thickness with a 30mm thick lime mortar core at the centre.

The stonemasonry contractor (Northampton Stonemasons) for the main bridge works has performed a trial preparation exercise on a single removed block of stone to separate the two stone leaves successfully and removed the internal lime mortar core by sawing this on the internal faces. This approach will ensure that the retained stones can be reused to reconstruct the wall with a 30mm thick internal cavity that can be filled on site with a limestone rubble core. The two leaves of stone are proposed to be connected together with stainless steel wall ties at 450mm centres longitudinal and vertical between the re-laid stone courses.

Any residual lime mortar will be carefully cut back from the stones using hand tools prior to them being re-laid, ensuring that the stone fabric itself is not damaged. Where individual stones exhibit cracking or minor defects, these will be repaired by infilling with compactible lime-based mortar, rather than replacement.

The parapet wall will be reconstructed using the original stones wherever possible in their existing arrangement as far as practicable. This approach ensures full material continuity and preserves the historic character, appearance, and qualities of the masonry. Reconstructing the wall as per its original geometry will ensure consistency with the adjacent South-east parapet. There will be the requirement for a small percentage of the reconstructed parapet to be formed from new limestone due to a few of the existing blocks being structurally damaged from the significant root growth. Where new limestone is required, it shall be cut to match the course heights and leaf thickness of the existing reused stones. New limestone shall be RAG-T Douling stone as detailed in the stonework specification for the main works ref: 5208104-ATK-SBR-0147-SP-CB-0002 dated 06<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The workmanship for finishing mortar joints shall be as per the same Specification document.

### 4.3 Justification

The northeast wall forms part of the designated heritage asset of Henley Bridge and contributes to its architectural and historic significance. The proposed works are driven by the need to address active and progressive deterioration caused by vegetation growth, mortar failure and stone defects, all of which pose a risk to the long-term preservation of the wall and the wider bridge structure.

The approach adopted follows established conservation principles, prioritising minimal intervention, reversibility where possible, and the retention of historic fabric. The decision to remove the wall in October 2025 was taken on safety grounds due to the ongoing residential building works and the proposals to reconstruct the wall have been produced through pre-liaison with Wokingham Borough Council Conservation Officers, discussions with the stone masons whom conducted the main bridge works, and to ensure that the historic fabric is retained and matching the appearance of the adjacent elements. Re-using as much of the existing retained stone as possible ensures that the works remain entirely like-for-like, maintaining consistency in appearance, material performance and weathering characteristics. This aims to avoid the introduction of new materials that could visually or physically conflict with the historic masonry. Repairs to cracked stones using lime-based stone mortar, rather than replacement, further reduces the loss of original fabric and supports the continued legibility of the historic construction.

Vegetation removal is necessary to halt ongoing damage to the masonry. Undertaking this work under the supervision of a qualified professional ensures that the process is carried out safely and, in a manner, appropriate for historic stonework.

Overall, the proposed reconstruction of the northeast parapet wall following the urgent make safe works is considered to arrest deterioration, preserve historic fabric and sustain the significance of Henley Bridge as a Grade I listed structure. The works will be undertaken in accordance with conservation best practice and will not result in harm to the heritage value of the asset; instead, they will ensure its continued survival and appreciation.

## 5 Conclusion

The proposed works address identified defects to the northeast wall. The wall will be carefully reconstructed using all existing stone wherever possible, with no loss of historic fabric and no introduction of new masonry materials, unless essential to replace structurally damaged blocks. Repairs will utilise compatible lime-based mortar and discreet structural measures only where required. Overall, the works provide a controlled and sensitive solution to stabilise the wall and prevent further deterioration while retaining its historic character.