

28 July 2026

FAO Marcus Watts
Senior Planning Officer
Development Management & Enforcement
Wokingham Borough Council

By email

Our Ref: 4686

Dear Marcus

Planning Permission Application Ref: 260863 (householder application) and 260864 (Listed Building Consent Application) – Bird Place, Henley

Following a meeting on site with the Conservation Officer on 26 June 2026 and in response to the Conservation Officer's written comments dated 10 July 2026, we note that there is no objection in principle to the replacement boathouse, the creation of a wet dock, the riverside mooring, the removal of the existing conservatory, or repairs to the boundary wall at Bird Place.

Following a meeting with Brian Conlon and Marcus Watts on 20th July, set out below is a response to the salient comments from the Conservation Officer that focus on matters of design refinement and the level of information provided within the submission.

The Applicant responds to the principal matters raised as follows:

Boathouse Design

The Applicant acknowledges the Conservation Officer's preference for the earlier pre-application design and accepts that the current proposal has evolved during the design process.

The intention behind the revised design was not to introduce a commercial or industrial character, but rather to create a contemporary interpretation of the traditional Thames boathouse using high-quality materials and modern construction techniques. The wider roof form was developed to improve the functionality of the building, accommodate modern boat storage requirements and create a simple architectural form capable of sitting comfortably within its context.

In the spirit of positive engagement, the Applicant has submitted additional drawings which include the detail requested at the site visit which more accurately show the proposed proportions, roof form and material hierarchy (which were established during the pre-application process).

With regard to glazing, the intention has always been to strike the balance between being visually lightweight and transparent so that it does not appear as a solid built form within important views of the riverside, whilst also being of high architectural quality in its own right. The Applicant has followed up with additional information including drawings which clarify the levels/ the position of the wet

dock. For clarity, the river level has since been confirmed which has lowered the height of the ridge of the proposed boathouse to lower than the existing conservatory.

It is acknowledged the proposed boathouse is wider than the pre-application concept, however this reflects the Applicant's requirement to accommodate two boats together with ancillary storage and workshop space. The proposal remains single storey, modest in height and comfortably subservient within the large riverfront plot associated with Bird Place and in a riverside context that contains significantly larger boathouse structures – see image below of Wharf Lane boat houses to the north of Henley Bridge.



View of Waters Edge, - Wharf Lane boat houses, north of Henley Bridge

As set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS) the Applicant explored a single-gable solution during the design process but found it resulted in a taller, less elegant building. The current design achieves a lower, more horizontal form that sits more comfortably within the landscape and represents the stronger design solution.

Regarding the reference to visual presence, width and massing, please do review the site elevations and visualisation in the DAS which demonstrate the true scale of the proposal in its context. The site is capable of accommodating a much larger structure without adverse impact on the context.

The Applicant also notes the comments regarding lighting. The building is intended primarily for daytime recreational use, and extensive illumination has never formed part of the proposal. If considered necessary, details of an external lighting strategy can be secured by condition to demonstrate that any lighting would be minimal, discreet and designed to preserve the dark riverside character of both conservation areas.

Historic Wet Dock

The Applicant accepts that the terminology used within the submission could have been clearer. It was never the Applicant's intention to mislead the Authority regarding the extent of the existing wet dock or the proposed works but rather to undertake proportionate survey work at the right time in the planning process.

Following further site investigations, has meant a more complete understanding of the existing structure has emerged and as referenced by the Conservation Officer in their written comments, elements of the existing dock appear to have been substantially reconstructed or altered during the late twentieth century perhaps when the existing conservatory was built.

The proposal seeks to reinstate the historic function of this part of the site rather than preserve twentieth-century fabric of limited heritage significance and we note that the Conservation Officer confirms that there is no objection in principle to the creation of a new wet dock or to the reinstatement of a historic dock in this location, subject to appropriate design and scale.

Boundary Wall

As discussed on site with the Conservation Officer, the existing boundary wall is curtilage listed. It separates the Bird Cottage plot with that of Bird Place and, as discussed in the submitted Heritage Statement as well as on site, the oldest element is to the eastern end. There is then the section that is currently incorporated into the conservatory and the western end (which maps show now follows a dog-leg) of newer construction.

The inclusion of repairs within the application was intended simply to ensure that any necessary conservation works were undertaken using appropriate traditional materials and techniques alongside the wider project. The intention was to agree the principle of repair and the Applicant expected that a written scheme of investigation and subsequent method statement for repair would be a condition to the listed building consent.

This relatively standard approach has two benefits, one being that the Applicant does not incur substantial time and cost in exploring an approach that is not acceptable to officers; and the second being that the proposed details remain in the Authority's control. It was not intended to imply extensive rebuilding.

A few elements of clarification that came out during the site visit were that the western most part of the wall that runs parallel to the existing wet dock is thought to be of more modern construction and that it is capable of being repaired without wholesale rebuilding. It is also important to note that part of the wall is currently incorporated in the existing conservatory. It is plastered and painted white on the Bird Place side. Removal of the conservatory will necessitate repair to this part of the wall, the extent of which cannot be confirmed until the conservatory is removed. It will also mean that this part of the wall can be reinstated as bare brick. Again, hence the Applicant's expectation that a planning condition is the best mechanism to agree the method of works required to the wall. Sensitive repair and refurbishment, controlled by condition, is considered to be a betterment of the current situation.

Riverside Mooring

The Applicant notes the comments regarding the importance of maintaining the soft, verdant character of the riverbank. The proposed mooring has been designed to facilitate safe access to the river while limiting intervention to the minimum reasonably necessary. As the Authority are aware, the Environment Agency have issued the relevant licence.

Conclusion

The Applicant remains committed to working collaboratively with the Local Planning Authority to address these matters through revised drawings and additional proportionate technical information. It is considered that these refinements can satisfactorily address the concerns identified while

retaining the heritage benefits arising from the removal of the existing conservatory, the enhancement of the riverside setting and the reinstatement of an active boating use appropriate to this Thameside site.

Yours sincerely



Jennifer Cooke

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