

201876 Blewgarth, The Warren, Caversham, Reading RG4 7TH

Amended plans comments - 12 May 2021

The new planting shown in amended plans is welcome. However the height of the summer house as a result of seating on two levels remains a concern and, contrary to the Design and Access Statement, is substantially more prominent than the existing.

First comments - 01 February 2021

Comments from the Caversham and District Residents Association – CADRA

LOCATION

The plot is on the SW boundary of the St Peters CA. It is visible from Caversham Bridge and from the Thameside promenade on the far side of the river.

PROPOSALS

The proposals are for a replacement wet boathouse and a new amenity building. Some care has been taken with the design of the replacement buildings and the choice of materials. However, the new amenity building is set right at the river's edge, whilst the original amenity building was set back from the bank. The new building is also considerably taller and of greater volume than the original structure, occupying the major part of this Leisure Plot. Two new trees are proposed towards the rear of the site but there is no provision for planting by the river.

DESIGN CONSTRAINTS

The site is situated on a prominent bend in the river directly adjacent the Conservation Area. The recently adopted St Peters Conservation Area appraisal p33 para 7.6 states:

7.6 Development close to the Conservation Area

It is important to consider the effect of potential development outside the Conservation Area or close to it on the perceived quality of the Conservation Area.

Para 7.7 on page 34 continues:

7.7 Treatment of the riverbank

The north bank of the River Thames has a visually soft treatment with greenery and gardens descending to the river edge and this adds to the quality of the setting. One length of riverbank has however been sheet steel piled in the past adding a hard and discordant element to the river edge. Further sheet steel piling of other parts of the riverbank should be avoided where possible. Sympathetic edge treatments should be sought where work is required to stabilise the riverbank. Soft engineering solutions are now more readily available and in addition to aesthetic benefit, can offer habitat and ecological advantage.

The site is also within the View cone of protected views. View 3. Upstream from Caversham Bridge. This is covered by policy EN5 in the Reading Local Plan. The study "Assessment of significant Views with Heritage Interest" provides the evidence base for policy EN5. Pages 27 and 28 of the study para 3.1.11 state in respect of this view (final paragraph)

3.1.11 Sensitivity to change

At river level part of the charm of the view is the contrast between the sharp hard curve of the southern bank with the wide soft green curve of the north bank. It is important that the soft

north bank is maintained. Close to the bridge, one length of bank has been sheet piled at the river edge to an unnecessary height adding a hard and discordant element. Further sheet steel piling of other parts of the northern riverbank to an excessive height should be discouraged and sympathetic edge treatments should be sought where work is required to stabilise the riverbank.

The Design and Access Statement within the application indicates that the proposed structure should not be substantially more prominent than its antecedents.