

To Whom it may concernREF: "Floating Houses" at the Willows Riverside Park

Recently the application 17/00045/FULL was registered with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM). You might be puzzled why I am writing to you, after all it is just about upgrading the moorings in a location that is probably of no interest to you. However, in 2015 I wrote to you and in view of recent events, I think I ought to give you an update on the current situation and put this recent application into context so you are well informed.

In 2015, I asked for your support in objecting to planning application 15/01833/FULL that aimed to replace residential/leisure boat moorings with "floating houses" alongside the Willows Riverside Park, in Windsor (<http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/pam/view.jsp?ID=15%2F01833%2FFULL>). Among the nearly 300 objections received by the Council, there were objections from important entities such as:

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| ✓ Environment Agency | ✓ British Rowing |
| ✓ Eton College | ✓ Eton Excelsior Rowing Club |
| ✓ Residential Boat Owners' Association (RBOA) | ✓ West Windsor Residents Association |
| ✓ Association of Thames Yacht Clubs (ATYC) | ✓ Royal Yachting Association (RYA) |
| ✓ The Barge Association (DBA) | ✓ Thames Regional Rowing Council, British canoeing |
| ✓ River Thames Society (RTS) | ✓ Bray Parish Council |
| ✓ British Canoeing | ✓ Bray Parish Council |
| ✓ Windsor and District Canoe Club | ✓ Old Windsor Parish Council |
| ✓ Oakley Green and Fifield residents | ✓ Cookham Parish Council |
| ✓ River Thames User Groups RUG) | ✓ |

The Environment Agency (EA) wrote that it would be unlikely that consent would be given. The application was eventually withdrawn in December 2015.

However, the situation took an unpleasant turn and currently there are two issues that I need to make you aware of:

- 1- The arrival of a "houseboat" at the moorings, apparently without planning permission or consent
- 2- A planning application to refurbish the moorings (17/00045/FULL)

Let me take each in turn.

1- The arrival of a "houseboat" at the moorings

A "houseboat" was moored at the Willows Riverside Park just before Christmas without any warning and, apparently, without consent from both, the Environment Agency and RBWM. To try to get away with registering a planning application, the applicant put an outboard 90HP motor on this large house and says it is navigable.

There is a 1991 licence that allows Haufryn (the park owner) to moor "houseboats" at this site (App. no. 470296). However, it clearly states that **to protect the visual amenities of the Green Belt**, it applies only to **"TRADITIONAL boats or houseboats"**.

This "houseboat" is of modern design and resembles a mobile/park home. In no sense of the word can it be deemed traditional. In my opinion, it is nothing other than a dwelling floating on the water which is intended for permanent residential use and not as a navigation vessel. How can such an unwieldy design i.e. rectangular with no bow and an outboard motor, safely navigate upstream when the Thames is in full flow as well as negotiating the locks or indeed when the river is busy?

It is worth noting that EA also objected to the development to **protect the character and setting of the River Thames and the Green Belt:**

"Floating houses would pose an unacceptable encroachment into the public open space of the non-tidal River Thames in terms of scale and bulk and would detract from the vista one would expect along this stretch of the river".

These "houseboats" are for sale by the River Homes and Zoopla websites (*is the river for sale?!*). The sales brochure seems to indicate that 14 such "houseboats" will be located at this site. Undoubtedly, they would

have a wall-like effect" on the river, for both, those viewing it from the river and land standpoints. It would do nothing to protect the visual amenities of the River Thames at this narrow and busy stretch of the river near Windsor. According to the park manager, another "houseboat" is due in March.

Currently, there are, at least, **4 enforcement orders** on this "houseboat" , including one from the planning officer responsible for the original planning application and 2 from local councillors. The outcome is not yet known.

River Homes: <http://www.riverhomes.co.uk/berkshire/sl4/sales>

Zoopla: <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/new-homes/details/42606666#mAZ3jvB5z0X7H33T.97>

Note: I would like to clarify that I am not against "floating houses" or modern "houseboats" but they are not appropriate for this location. This is a narrow and busy stretch of the river as it is surrounded by 3 marinas, rowing and canoeing clubs and frequently used by passenger boat. In my opinion, besides the affront to the nearly 300 residents of the park who chose to live here because of the riverside amenity, this "houseboat" would pose a risk to others were it to navigate these waters. There are places that are appropriate for them but this is not one of them. Previously, there were TRADITIONAL boats moored here and they are just right for this site and in line with the mooring licence and EA objectives.

- 2- Planning application to refurbish the moorings (17/00045/FULL
<http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/pam/view.jsp?ID=17%2F00045%2FFULL>)

In isolation, this planning application appears straightforward, after all it seems to be only about improving the moorings. However, putting together the arrival of the "floating house" and the upgrade of the moorings, it seems to indicate that the objective is to prepare the moorings to receive more houses. Very quickly the Tree Officer and EA objected to the application on the grounds that no arboricultural and Flood Assessment information had been submitted.

This is a tricky application to object to. However, some people are asking for its approval to be conditioned to only having TRADITIONAL boats on the moorings to reinforce the 1991 licence.

I am out of my depth in providing feedback as I do not understand what the moorings requirements are. If you have some knowledge about the subject and have anything to say, please write to the planning officer (Claire Pugh at Claire.Pugh@RBWM.gov.uk). The deadline **is February 7th**.

Accepting "floating houses" alongside this narrow stretch of the river alongside the Willows Riverside Park goes against EA's objections and objectives and RBWM local policies and mooring licence. However the number of "floating houses" on the river, the adverse impact on the Green belt and setting of the Thames would be the same. Furthermore, it will set an undesirable precedent in the area and it would, probably, be an irreversible mistake.

If you feel strongly about this outrageous situation, please email the Environment Agency and RBWM Planning Department and express your views. Any support will be greatly appreciated.

Environment Agency: planning-farnham@environment-agency.gov.uk or
enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

RBWM Planning Dept. planning.maidenhead@rbwm.gov.uk or Claire.Pugh@RBWM.gov.uk

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any information.

Best Regards

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