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HERITAGE STATEMENT

In respect of

Staff accommodation, Stowdes Estates, Culham

On behalf of

Imperium Trust Company

AHC REF: PM/10402

Date: December 2025

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & SCOPE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report has been prepared and written by Patrick C. Maguire, IHBC, Director at Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd., on behalf of Imperium Trust Company in order to provide an independent assessment of the impact in built heritage terms of the proposals affecting Stowdes Estate, Remenham.

Heritage designations & considerations

- 1.2 The application site is the remains of a former walled garden at the south-western corner of Stowdes Estate.
- 1.3 The site is not the subject of any statutory heritage designations; however, the garden wall around the site dates to the 19th century and during the determination of previous applications (refs.152499 and 240847) has been identified by the Council's Built Heritage Officer as, '*a notable historic feature that is worth preserving*', although he fell short of identifying it as a non-designated heritage asset.

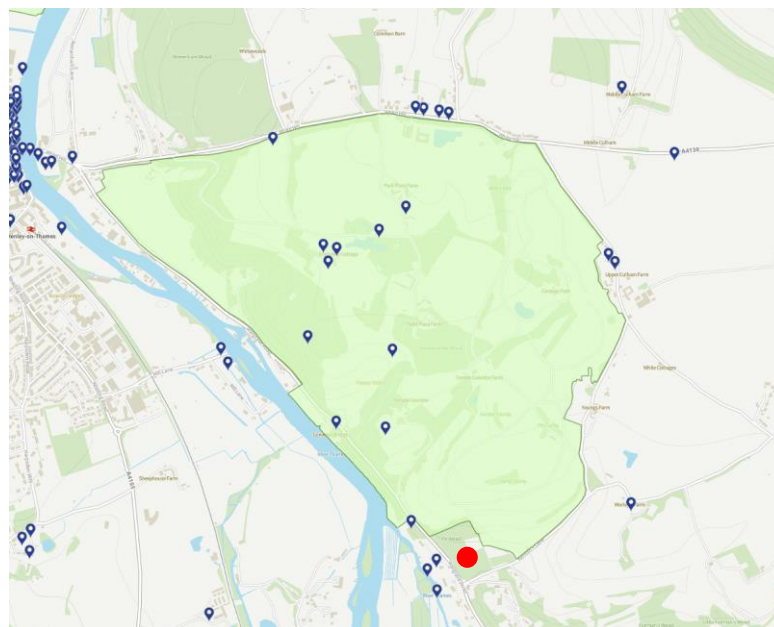


Fig.1. Historic England map showing the Park Place Registered Park & Garden (green shading) and listed buildings in the vicinity (blue pins). The approximate location of the walled garden has been identified with a red dot

- 1.4 In addition, the site is located close to the boundaries of Park Place, a Grade II* Registered Park & Garden. Park Place is a substantial designated area, representing the former gardens and parklands associated with Park Place (house), a Grade II listed building located c.1.4km to the north-west (**Fig.1**). This large designated area contains several listed buildings and structures. The ownership of the parkland has been broken up into several smaller estates and the southern part of it (which does not contain any listed structures) falls within Strowdes Estate.

Recent planning history

- 1.5 The full planning history for the site is set out in the documentation prepared by Avison Young but of particular relevance to the current submission are applications ref. 110460, 152499, and 240847.
- 1.6 Application ref.110460 was granted planning permission in December 2011 and allowed for the demolition and replacement with a single dwelling of Bell House, a 20th-century building within the former walled garden. While this scheme has not been built out, Bell House has since been demolished.
- 1.7 Application ref.152499 was determined in December 2016 and granted consent for the erection within the walled garden of four single-storey staff residential units together with a machinery shed/parking and an associated estate management store/office associated with the residential use of Strowdes. In that case, the Council's Built Heritage Officer took the view that, *'Given its largely hidden location and lack of connection with the historic park and garden, the scheme is not considered to have a material impact on the character of the Registered Park'*.
- 1.8 Application ref.240847 built on the 2016 consent and allowed for four single-storey residential units for the use of staff, alongside a communal outbuilding for welfare and storage, again ancillary to the use of Strowdes. This was granted planning permission in September 2024.
- 1.9 During the determination of ref.240847, the Berkshire Gardens Trust commented on and raised concerns with the submission (June 2024). The consultee supported, *'the retention of the 19C garden walls and removal of built*

form away from the north-east corner, enabling the walls to be better appreciated'; however, they also felt there was the potential for less than substantial harm to the Park Place Registered Park & Garden through the effect on its setting. This did not provide any specific comments on design or a firm assessment of any such harm but instead highlighted that this was a possibility and, quite reasonably, that it should be properly examined through an up-to-date Heritage Impact Assessment.

- 1.10 In response to this, I was commissioned to prepare a Heritage Statement to consider the effects of the proposals on the significance of the walled garden and, crucially, the contribution that its setting makes to the significance of the Park Place Registered Park & Garden. This Heritage Statement, which was informed by a full site visit and documentary research, was issued in July 2024 and found no harm through the proposals to any of the heritage assets identified.
- 1.11 Following preparation of the Heritage Statement, the Berkshire Gardens Trust did not provide any further comments on the proposals but the Council's Built Heritage Officer set out his views in consultee comments dated 7th August 2024. The officer agreed with the findings of the Heritage Statement, concluding that, *'It is considered with respect to the wider setting and that of the registered parkland, with the development being contained within the walled garden, the walls of which will screen the new buildings, the proposals is [sic] not thought likely to have any detrimental impact. As such, from a heritage stance there is no objection to the proposed scheme'.*
- 1.12 In their delegated report, the Council's Case Officer acknowledged the views of the Berkshire Gardens Trust, which they interpreted as an objection, but noted that these were written before the Heritage Statement (or the separate Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment by Matthew Wigan Associates) had been prepared. It was ultimately the view of the Case Officer that, *'the buildings would not lead to less than substantial harm to the heritage asset or the wider landscape. This is because it is clear that views of the site will be limited. While there may be some visual impact, it is considered that the buildings compliment the existing walled garden and the impact on the park and garden as a whole will be very limited. The proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard'.*

Methodology

- 1.13 This report draws on my July 2024 Heritage Statement, revising it to assess the revised proposals now under consideration, as well as subsequent changes in relevant policy and guidance. It has been informed by a further site visit, carried out in September 2025, which also allows for an update of baseline conditions where relevant.
- 1.14 The assessment falls into two distinct parts: the first sets out the historical background to the site and its surroundings and focuses on assessing the significance of the site in its current form, principally in terms of the contribution it makes to the significance of the adjacent Registered Park & Garden as part of its setting.
- 1.15 As such, this report complies with the requirements of paragraph 207 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the onus it places on those planning changes to historic assets to include a clear description of the significance of the assets affected, albeit that the requirement in the NPPF is only such that, *'The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'*.
- 1.16 This second part of the report, which should be read in conjunction with the drawings prepared by LA London Architects and the documentation prepared by Avison Young, focuses on an assessment of the application scheme and the impact of the proposals in heritage terms.
- 1.17 This two-stage approach of understanding 'significance' before moving on to assess the impact of potential change on that 'significance' has for some time been regarded as good conservation practice in the design and application process (see, for instance, English Heritage's, now Historic England's, 'Conservation Principles', 2008) and, following the introduction of the short-lived PPS5 in 2010 and the NPPF in 2012 (and its more recent iterations), is now effectively a standard requirement for most applications affecting heritage assets.

Assessment

- 1.18 For the reasons set out in full in the main body of this report, I remain of the view that the application proposals would not result in harm to the Park Place Registered Park & Garden as part of its setting.
- 1.19 This is consistent with the views expressed by the Council's Built Heritage Officer on previous proposals for staff accommodation in this area (refs.152499 and 240847), as well as the Council's pre-application feedback on the current scheme.
- 1.20 As such, it is my professional opinion that the proposals are compatible with both local and national policy and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the historic built environment, including the guidance set out in the NPPF and its accompanying PPG and, as such, there is no reason in heritage terms to withhold planning permission in this case.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site is a former walled garden set within woodland on low ground to the south-west of the Park Place Registered Park & Garden. The woodland is bounded to the west by the Wargrave Road and to the south by Kenton's Lane.

2.2 The history and wider character of Park Place is summarised well in the statutory Registered Park & Garden entry (**Appendix 1**). In terms of historic development, this states that:

'In 1719 Mrs Elizabeth Baker sold land called Park's Place, also known as Stowdes, to Lord Archibald Hamilton, who at some time after this erected a Palladian mansion called Park Place on a new site (VCH 1923). In 1738 Park Place was sold to Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-51) (ibid). Following Frederick's death in 1751 the estate was bought by General the Hon Henry Seymour Conway (1720-95), cousin of Horace Walpole, who enlarged the parkland during the 1760s-80s, embellishing it with various ornamental structures and buildings and developing the area known as Temple Combe. Following Conway's death in 1795, the estate was sold in 1797 to Lord Malmesbury who further expanded the park to the east, and entertained Pitt, Canning and other notable men of the day there. Following its sale in 1816 the estate passed through several hands during the C19. The house was rebuilt c 1871, following a fire, for John Noble of Noble's Paints and Varnishes (who had bought the estate in 1867), together with a new stable block. The grounds were subject to extensive 'landscape gardening' carried out under Robert Marnock (1800-89) c 1869, who planted thousands of specimen trees and shrubs, 'as far as possible every known variety!' (Noble 1905). In 1949 the estate was sold out of the Noble family into divided ownership, the house becoming a school during the later C20, and being now (1998) in private ownership. A golf course has been constructed in the north-east corner of the park, with a second, smaller one in Happy Valley, and the estate remains in divided ownership'.

2.3 The entry goes on to describe the house and the grounds immediately around it, as well describing how, to the south of the house, lies Happy Valley (since converted to use as a golf course) and to the south of this, *'lie the grounds of the former Temple Combe, a house erected during the later C18 at the top of*

*the scarp, enjoying panoramic views of the Thames Valley. The original house, lying 700m south-east of Park Place house, was demolished in the C20, to be replaced in 1963-4 by a low, curvaceous modern house on the same site (Pevsner 1966), known as Happy Valley. This small estate, enclosed within the Park Place estate, is largely composed of woodland surrounding open lawns and paddocks, its principal feature being the Druidic Temple (erected 1787, listed grade II). The Temple stands at the top of the hillside 100m south-west of Happy Valley house, comprising a circular collection of forty-five granite megalithic stones set vertically into the ground with other stones as lintels... From the Temple views extend south-west across the river to the water meadows and the distant hillside' (statutory list entry at **Appendix 1**).*

- 2.4 Strowdes Estate is set still to the south of Temple Combe, the two separated on the western side by a further valley (**plate 1**). Indeed, the western part of Strowdes Estate forms part of the extensive parkland first laid out in the later 18th century that lies around the core of the gardens and pleasure grounds around Park Place and Temple Combe (these continue, outside of Strowdes Estate, to the east of Park Place).



Fig.2. Rocque's 1761 map of Berkshire. The approximate location of the application site has been identified with a red dot

- 2.5 What is now Strowdes Estate can be seen on Rocque's 1761 map of Berkshire (**Fig.2**) prior to the laying out of the southern area as parkland by General Conway in the 1760-70s and before the construction of Temple Combe to the north. It is depicted as a series of field parcels, enclosed by rural lanes. A series of smaller field parcels can be seen on the 1818 inclosure maps for Wargrave (that showing the application site at **Fig.3**). Note, this does not yet show the walled garden nor Hennerton House to the south.



Fig.3. 1818 inclosure map with the approximate location of the application site marked with a red dot (the area to the south is shown on a separate map – not reproduced – and does not yet show Hennerton House in place)



Fig.4. 1822 one-inch scale OS map with the approximate location of the application site marked with a red dot

2.6 The 1822 one-inch scale OS map (**Fig.4**) shows Hennerton House to the south (constructed in 1817 by C.F. Johnson, presumably shortly after the 1818 inclosure map was surveyed) but does not yet show the walled garden on the application site. This is unlikely to be simply a result of the small scale of the map, as the walled garden is shown on the 1887 one-inch scale OS map (not reproduced).

2.7 Compare these maps with the 1898 1:2500 scale OS map at **Fig.5**, which shows the area between Wargrave Road and Kenton's Farm laid out as parkland, with tree avenues leading into the interior from lodges to the south and west.

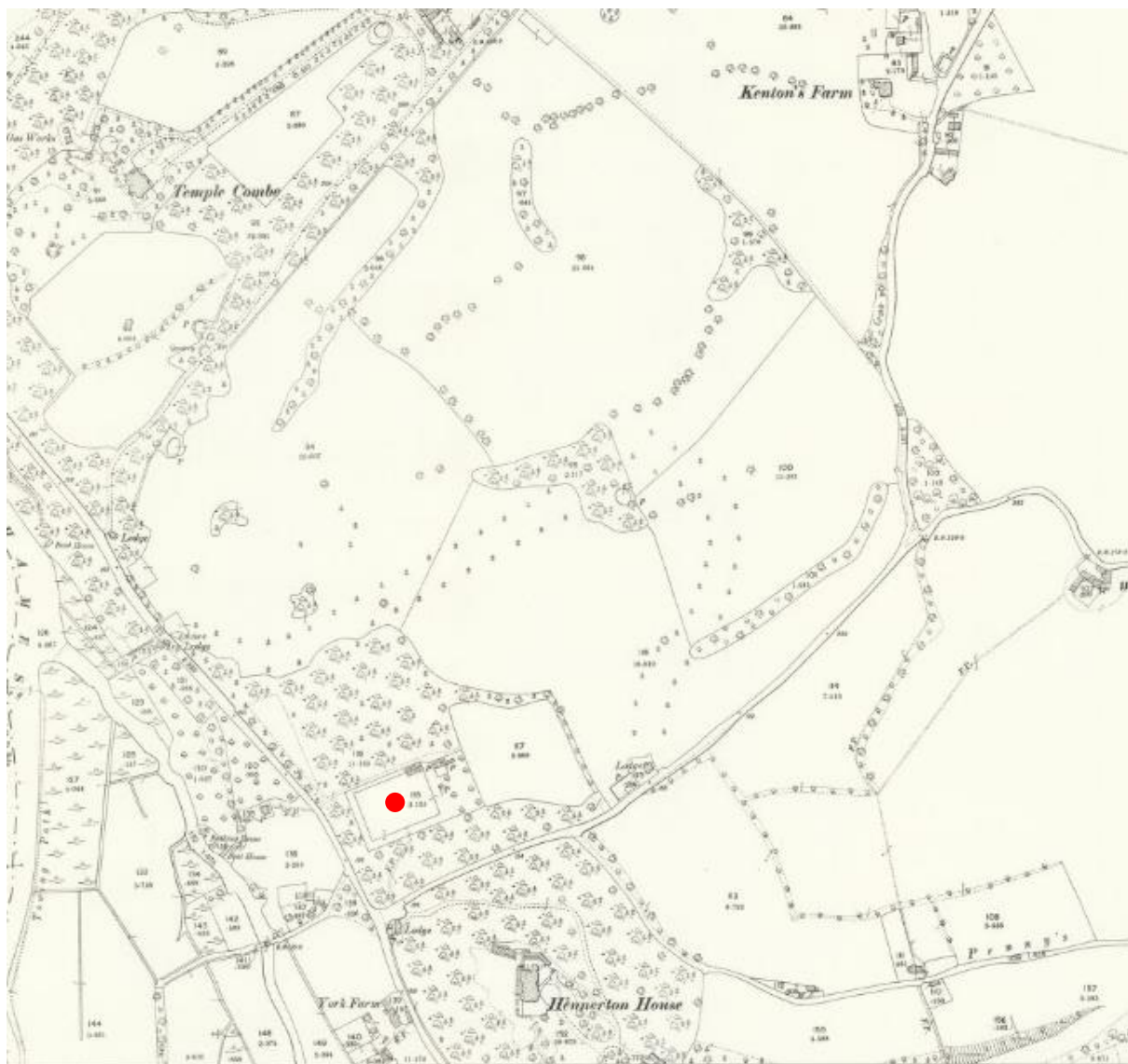


Fig.5. 1898 (revised 1897) 1:2500 scale OS map. The approximate location of the application site has been identified with a red dot

- 2.8 The 1898 map shows the walled garden that forms the application site within woodland to the south-west of the parkland. The Built Heritage Officer on application ref.152499 noted that, *'It is understood that this structure [the garden wall] never formed part of the historic estate of Park Place but may have related to the adjoining Hennerton Estate immediately to the south'*. The map appears to support the officer's view, showing a path running northwards from Kenton's Lane at a point adjacent to the main entrance to Hennerton House and approaching the walled garden from the south.
- 2.9 Indeed, the only access to the walled garden shown on this map is that from the south and a further path from Wargrave Road to the west, forming a driveway to the north of the walled garden. Although separated from Hennerton House by Kenton's Lane, the walled garden was located far closer to that building than to any of the houses within Park Place and was separated from the nearby parkland, as it is now, by surrounding woodland. Moreover, the walled garden is labelled on later 20th-century OS maps (e.g. the 1962 1:2500 scale OS map - not reproduced) as 'Hennerton Gardens'. As such, the Built Heritage Officer's assertion about the historic ownership and function of the application site appears to be sound and correct.



Fig.6. Google Earth satellite images. Left, December 2010. Right, March 2012. The approximate location of the application site has been indicated with a red dot

- 2.10 It is also worth noting in relation to the 1898 map (**Fig.5**) that the existing entrance into the parkland from Kenton's Lane and the related path climbing the slope to the north (**plates 2 & 3**) is not shown (this entrance and path were

likely formed in the late 20th century in order to approach Bell House from this side; the stretch of the path running northwards and the associated circuit on the high ground to the north of this were not formed until 2010-12, as evidenced by satellite imagery – **Fig.6**). Indeed, the modern path cuts through the location of the field parcel to the east of the walled garden (labelled '117' on the 1898 map), the planted boundaries to the north and east of which have been removed. Rather, the entrance to the parkland from Kenton's Lane was historically slightly to the east, at Kenton's Lodge. This has since been converted to a separate residential use with its own well-defined curtilage (**plate 4**) but elements of the tree avenue still remain to the north-east of the lodge and are clearly legible on satellite images.

- 2.11 As this all indicates, the application site lies within woodland that lies outside the historic extent of Park Place (as highlighted by its exclusion from the designated area of the Registered Park & Garden) and, crucially in the context of the application proposals, is visually distinct and discrete from surrounding parkland.
- 2.12 Looking westwards from the modern path that climbs the slope northwards from the access on Kenton's Lane, the thick woodland around the site means that the walled garden cannot be seen from the parkland (**plates 5 & 6**).
- 2.13 This remains the case from the higher ground of the plateau to the north (**plates 7-9**), where thick tree planting within Fir Wood and along the boundaries of the Lower Field, combined with the sharp downwards slope towards the site of the walled garden, mean that (on the basis of my two site visits) the application site cannot be seen or otherwise experienced from within the parkland.
- 2.14 This is also true when attempting to look back towards the site from the footpath to the north of Strowdes Estate, on the southern edge of the valley between Strowdes and Temple Combe, where thick boundary planting prevents any visibility into Strowdes (**plate 10**).
- 2.15 This is all, of course, consistent with the views of the Council's Built Heritage Officer on the previous application ref.152499 that the walled garden has a '*largely hidden location and lack of connection with the historic park and garden*'

and the Case Officer on application ref.240847 that, *'the site is enclosed by trees and existing landform...[and] it is clear that views of the site will be limited'*.

- 2.16 Moving away from the Registered Park & Garden and looking at the application site itself, this is approached from the east via a curving pathway and gaps in tree planting (**plate 11**). It comprises the remains of a walled garden, which slopes sharply downwards from north to south (**plate 12**). This was presumably historically laid out as a kitchen garden to Hennerton House but, despite recent clearance work, is now overgrown with long grass, weeds, and self-seeded shrubs (**plate 13**), quite distinct from what historically would have likely been an ordered and well-maintained regime of planting within a working garden. The tall, brick walls survive to their full extent on the southern and western sides (**plates 14 & 15**). To the south, this includes the doorway relating to the footpath from Kenton's Lane (**plate 16**) visible on the 1898 OS map (**Fig.5**).
- 2.17 While it is possible that garden walls date from the early 19th century (e.g. contemporary with the 1817 construction of Hennerton House), the cartographic evidence suggests a later date, i.e. mid-late 19th century. They are constructed in red brick laid in Flemish bond with a thick gauged, penny-joint pointing (**plate 17**). The top courses have been replaced throughout, including simple brick capping, which also incorporates creasing tile coping in some areas (**plate 18**).
- 2.18 The eastern stretch of the garden wall does not survive except at its southern end (note, this surviving southern stretch was not visible during my original June 2024 site visit but has been uncovered by recent vegetation clearance and could be seen on my September 2025 visit), while the northern has been truncated at its eastern end, where a laurel hedge traces its former position (**plates 19 & 20**). It seems probable that this part of the wall was demolished to provide the front parking yard to the late 20th-century Bell House, which was located immediately to the north-east of the garden. Bell House was demolished after 2011 but had separate access from Wargrave Road to the west, which approached the western elevation of the house, with the driveway widening in front of the house, as demonstrated by the existing laurel hedge. The modern gate and piers survive to the north of the walled garden (**plate 21**), although the driveway is now very overgrown.

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- 2.19 The thick woodland around the walled garden means that as well as not being seen from within the surrounding parkland, it is also obscured when looking into Strowdes Estate from Kenton's Lane (**plate 22**).

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.1 The purpose of this section of the report is to assess the significance of the application site in built heritage terms. This will provide a 'baseline' against which the application proposals can be assessed at Section 4.0.

Intrinsic significance

- 3.2 The application site comprises a former walled garden and a modern access drive from Kenton's Lane. It retains 19th-century garden walls to the south, west, and partially to the north and east.
- 3.3 The intrinsic heritage interest of this site is confined to the surviving garden wall. While not a complete circuit, the status of the site as a former walled garden remains legible through the surviving stretches of historic garden wall, which retain a limited degree of architectural interest.
- 3.4 The significance of the site as a historic walled garden has otherwise been diminished, not only through the loss of parts of the eastern and northern stretches of wall or the loss of the historic glasshouses but also through the loss of any semblance of the historic character of the interior of the garden, which is now overgrown with grass and weeds rather than forming a well-ordered kitchen garden.

The setting of nearby heritage assets

- 3.5 Having carried out two thorough site visits, following the guidance set out in Historic England's GPA3 ('The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition; December 2017)'), I have given consideration to heritage assets in the vicinity that much have the potential to be affected by development on the application site. In doing so, I have considered the National Heritage List for England and I have also examined Wokingham Borough Council's Planning Policies and Constraints Map, which identifies structures that have been identified as Buildings of Traditional Local Character (i.e. non-designated heritage assets in the parlance of the NPPF).

- 3.6 Following this exercise, I am firmly of the view that the only heritage asset with the potential to be affected by development of the nature currently under consideration is the Park Place Grade II* Registered Park & Garden. In reaching this view, I have given consideration to the listed buildings within the Registered Park & Garden but these are sufficiently separated from the application site by distance, topography, and various layers of planting that they clearly do not have the potential to be affected by development on the site. This is consistent with the Council's determination of previous applications and its formal pre-application advice on this scheme that, *'it is not considered that the proposed changes to the built form of the main dwelling or the landscaping changes would have any impact on the significance of any nearby listed buildings within the RPG'*.
- 3.7 The Registered Park & Garden is a large designated area that comprises several distinct elements (see Historic England plan at **Fig.1** above). As set out in the statutory list entry (**Appendix 1**) this includes gardens and pleasure-grounds around Park Place (house) and Happy Valley (house, on the site of the earlier Temple Combe), as well as wider parkland laid out around the gardens and the predecessors to these houses in the late 18th century. The portion of the designated area closest to the application site is open parkland with occasional tree planting. This climbs upwards from Kenton's Lane to a plateau to the north, which forms a large portion of Strowdes Estate (under existing consents, Strowdes House is to be constructed to the east of this plateau, with parkland retained to the west). This plateau is itself enclosed to the north by boundary planting, which separates it from the valley that falls away to the north towards Temple Combe.
- 3.8 The application site is located within Fir Wood, which is an area of woodland outside the designated parkland. Within the parkland, the woodland is experienced only from the low ground just north of Kenton's Lane and to a lesser extent from parts of the western end of the plateau to the north. The northern part of the woodland can also be seen from within Lower Field to west, which falls within the designated area.
- 3.9 Fir Wood forms an attractive, naturalistic boundary to the designated parkland and, in this respect, forms a positive aspect of the setting of this heritage asset,

with the parkland element closest to the application site forming a naturalistic 'landscape garden'.

- 3.10 That said, except for the access path from Kenton's Lane, the application site itself is not widely experienced from within the Registered Park & Garden, with topography and thick planting meaning that from within the designated area one is not aware that there is a walled garden to the south-west. Similarly, from within the walled garden site, the parkland to the north and east is not discernible.
- 3.11 This is presumably as historically intended, considering the distinct histories of use and ownership between the walled garden site ('Hennerton Gardens') and the nearby parkland of Park Place. This was historically a separate site used by the owners of an adjacent property (Hennerton House to the south), with the surrounding woodland offering a degree of separation and privacy to the distinct owners.
- 3.12 As such, while I am of the view the presence of tree planting around the edges of the site (i.e. Fir Wood) does form a meaningful and positive element of the setting of Park Place, I am not of the view that the application site itself (i.e. the former walled garden) makes any meaningful contribution to the significance of Park Place as part of its setting.
- 3.13 In preparing this assessment, I have taken into consideration the view provided by the Berkshire Gardens Trust on applications ref.240832 and 240847 (letter dated 10th June 2024) but, I am afraid, disagree with several aspects of the analysis set out there. For instance, based on two site visits (June 2024 and September 2025), I do not agree that the walled garden is an important part of the setting of the designated parkland or '*is perceived as part of the Park*'. While this may appear to be the case from Google Earth images, these naturally disguise the effects of screening and topography as experienced 'on the ground', which in this case succeed in creating a clear character of separation between the site and the designated parkland.
- 3.14 Indeed, I note the advice from the Berkshire Gardens Trust that, '*Views from the elevated footpaths to the east of Park Place and those from the Strowdes Estate and other parts of the parkland should be examined*'. This work has been carried

out and, generally, the site has an enclosed, insular character that has no potential to be visible from footpaths elsewhere within the designated area, particularly those parts of it beyond Stowdes Estates. For instance, views from the plateau to the north are immediately curtailed by the drop in ground levels and the thick planting of Fir Wood, while those from immediately to the north of Stowdes Estate are blocked by boundary planting on the edge of the estate (and if this was not present, would be curtailed by the topography in any case) (see paragraphs 2.11-15 above).

- 3.15 That said, during the determination of application ref.240847, the applicant's Landscape Consultant did identify a brief glimpsed view of the site from the elevated footpath to the north-east (south-west of Worleys Farm) from where there is potentially a partial glimpse of the proposed buildings. This is addressed in the application submission (see paragraph 4.8 below).
- 3.16 I disagree with the view of the Berkshire Gardens Trust that, '*Historically the site was woodland and open grassland, common to much of the immediate setting to Park Place*'. Historically the site was surrounded by woodland, which remains the case to this day, but the walled garden was clearly not historically grassland (it is now regrettably overgrown) but would have been a working walled garden (likely a kitchen garden), as suggested by the glasshouses at its north-eastern corner shown on the 1898 map (**Fig.5**). The presence of grass within the garden is in fact the result of the loss of its historic character and use rather than a function of it.

4.0 THE APPLICATION PROPOSALS & THE HERITAGE ISSUES

- 4.1 Section 3.0 established the significance of the site in built heritage terms. Having considered this, the purpose of this section of the report is to analyse the application scheme against that significance in order to establish the potential effects of the proposals in built heritage terms.

Pre-application advice

- 4.2 A pre-application submission was made to the Council in August 2025 to explore design changes to the proposals consented under ref.240847. The design rationale for the revised proposals centred around improved accommodation layouts, alongside landscaping changes. Crucially, the latter sought to reinstate a functional use to this former kitchen garden, in line with its historic character, including food-growing areas and a productive greenhouse.
- 4.3 In addition to reinstating part of the walled garden's former function, the pre-application submission also explored reinstating the lost elements of the garden wall to the east and north-east, albeit on a revised line in the north-eastern area to provide space for a functional kitchen garden.
- 4.4 The pre-application proposals also simplify the design of the proposed new buildings, offering more traditional forms. Notably the tall, conical seamed zinc roofs of the consented scheme are to be replaced with simple pitched roofs, offering a design that, while still legible as a product of its time, is lower key in its appearance. The buildings are shown as clad in stone, with simple modern chimneystacks. The use of these natural materials allows the buildings to sit comfortably alongside the brick garden walls while being clearly legible as a distinct phase of development.
- 4.5 The buildings remain set away from the retained and reinstated garden walls, located within communal gardens, the exceptions being greenhouses set close to the walls in the manner of the historic glasshouses one would expect within a walled garden (e.g. see glasshouses against the northern-eastern part of the wall as shown on the 1898 map at **Fig.5** above). The retained areas of wall are to be repaired and repointed as required.

4.6 The landscaping proposals are depicted as more naturalistic than under the existing consent, with planting shown amongst sinuous paths running through the walled garden and around the dwellings. At the north-eastern corner, in an area enclosed by the reinstated walls, something of a 'garden within a garden' is proposed, with a low wall separating this productive garden from the leisure gardens. This working space will reinstate part of the historic character of the walled garden as a kitchen garden.

4.7 On heritage matters, pre-application advice from the Council was highly supportive. While the starting point is, of course, that the principle of staff accommodation within this walled garden is acceptable, having been established by existing consents (during the determination of which the Council found no adverse heritage impacts), the Council's Built Heritage Officer found the pre-application proposals to represent a material improvement on the existing consent:

'The changes in the form, finishes and arrangement of the new dwelling along with the intention now to add new lengths of walling to the NE and NW sides to make the former walled garden to fully enclosed are all very much appreciated change.'

'This revised staff village scheme is from a heritage perspective very much a positive and welcomed change that is more appropriate and harmonious scheme than that of the approved scheme.'

4.8 The officer noted that stone cladding was not common in the locality, but he had no objection to the use of this wall finish, while quite reasonably noting that *'there is an expectation for the stone used to be representative of the stone traditionally found in this region of England'*.

4.9 Officers also confirmed that they felt the proposals would not, *'have any impact on the significance of any nearby listed buildings within the RPG'*.

4.10 Officers also, again quite reasonably, requested that a revised and up-to-date Heritage Impact Assessment accompany the application submission, bearing in

mind the comments of the Berkshire Gardens Trust on application ref.240847, initially submitted without an up-to-date heritage assessment.

The application proposals

- 4.11 This submission builds upon the principle established by the recent consent ref. 240847 (and the lapsed consent ref.152499). Considering the positive feedback received on the pre-application proposals, which Council officers identified as being a material improvement on the existing consent in heritage terms, only minor changes have been made to the proposals since that stage and the description provided under the sub-heading 'Pre-application advice' above remains valid.
- 4.12 The only substantive exception is that the amount of parking proposed has been reduced since pre-application stage. At that stage, parking was shown to the north of the walled garden (consistent with the consented scheme), alongside an area of parking to the south-east. The submitted scheme omits the parking to the north, showing only that to the south-east. This is enclosed by existing planting here, with further tree planting also proposed to minimise any visual impact from outside the site.

The heritage issues

- 4.13 As established by previous consents, the Council's pre-application advice, and the assessment at Section 3.0 above, the principal heritage issue in this case is the effect of the application proposals on the contribution that its setting makes to the significance of the Park Place Registered Park & Garden.
- 4.14 The proposals do not materially affect the area outside Fir Wood. The proposed access paths are largely as per the existing consent, branching off the main north-south path to the east (albeit from a point slightly to the north of the existing consent) and approaching the walled garden from this side. The southern branch, approaching the eastern wall of the garden, is essentially as per the existing consent, while at the northern side the path is to be straightened and set slightly to the north of its existing position to account for the reinstatement of the northern garden wall. Additional tree planting is proposed to the east of the walled garden.

- 4.15 The surrounding topography, the retained garden walls, and boundary planting mean the modest buildings proposed (which lack the conical roofs found on the consented scheme) will not be widely seen even immediately outside the walled garden. Moreover, topography and the presence of the surrounding Fir Wood mean that the walled garden itself is not experienced from the surrounding designated parkland, as highlighted by the Case Officer during the determination of application ref. 240847. The only view outside the site where a potential for visibility has been identified (the view from south-west of Worleys Farm identified by the Landscape Consultant on previous application ref.240847 see paragraph 3.15 above) has been mitigated through proposed planting, screening the proposed buildings in a manner appropriate to their green, planted setting.
- 4.16 The result of this is that the contribution that Fir Wood makes to the significance of the designated parkland as part of its setting will be unaffected by the proposals (as I note at Section 3.0 above, the site itself currently makes no contribution to the significance of the designated parkland as part of its setting).
- 4.17 Certainly, while the proposals differ in detail, Wokingham Borough Council's Built Heritage Officer's comments on the previous application ref.152499 remain wholly relevant to this revised submission: *'Given its largely hidden location and lack of connection with the historic park and garden, the scheme is not considered to have a material impact on the character of the Registered Park'*.
- 4.18 Similarly, Wokingham Borough Council's Case Officer's comments on the existing consent ref.240847 are also relevant: *'it is clear that views of the site will be limited. While there may be some visual impact, it is considered that the buildings compliment the existing walled garden and the impact on the park and garden as a whole will be very limited. The proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard'*.
- 4.19 In this context, I also note the views of the Council's Built Heritage Officer at pre-application stage that the current proposals are a material improvement in heritage terms on the existing consent, which Council officers already considered to be compatible with the walled garden and to result in no negative heritage effects. I concur with the Built Heritage Officer's views in this regard.

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- 4.20 As such, I am not of the view that the proposals would result in any harm to the significance of the Park Place Registered Park & Garden through the change to its setting.
- 4.21 Moreover, it is worth noting that these proposals would result in some heritage benefits through the restoration of the remaining elements of the garden walls and the reinstatement of an active use to the garden securing the long-term conservation and maintenance of these historic walls. These benefits are more substantial than those secured under the previous scheme, as they also include the reinstatement of lost elements of the wall and the inclusion of a productive garden, more in keeping with this historic use and character of this walled garden.
- 4.22 While these benefits are not to the significance of the Registered Park & Garden, bearing in mind that this site makes no real contribution to that designated area's significance as part of its setting, they remain laudable in the context of the historic garden walls.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report has assessed the significance of the application site in heritage terms, notably in the context of the setting of the Park Place Registered Park & Garden.
- 5.2 It has then assessed the effects in heritage terms of the proposed development. In doing so, I have drawn on my previous (July 2024) assessment but have revised this to take into account the findings of a further site visit (September 2024) and the detail of the new application proposals.
- 5.3 For the reasons set out in full in the main body of this report, I remain of the view that the application proposals would not result in any harm to nearby heritage assets through the effect on their settings.
- 5.4 This is consistent with the views of the Council's specialist officers on the existing consent (ref.240847) and as expressed at pre-application stage.
- 5.5 As such, it is my professional opinion that the proposals are compatible with both local and national policy and guidance on the conservation and enhancement of the historic built environment, including the guidance set out in the NPPF and its accompanying PPG and, as such, there is no reason in heritage terms to withhold planning permission in this case.

PLATES

All date from June 2024 unless otherwise stated



Plate 1. Looking northwards from the path along the northern boundary of Stowdes Estate across the valley separating it from Temple Combe



Plate 2. The estate path from Kenton's Lane climbs the slope towards the plateau to the north



Plate 3. The entrance from Kenton's Lane



Plate 4. Kenton's Lodge



Plate 5. Looking towards the application site from the estate path leading northwards from Kenton's Lane; the application site is located beyond the tree planting towards the centre of this image



Plate 6. Looking in the direction of the application site from the top of the estate path leading northwards from Kenton's Lane; the walled garden is set within the woodland and at the bottom of the slope, and not experienced from the parkland



Plate 7. Looking in the direction of the application site from the plateau to the north; the walled garden is set within the woodland and at the bottom of the slope, and not experienced from the parkland



Plate 8. Looking in the direction of the application site from the plateau to the north; the walled garden is set within the woodland and at the bottom of the slope, and not experienced from the parkland



Plate 9. Looking in the direction of the application site from the plateau to the north; the walled garden is set within the woodland and at the bottom of the slope, and not experienced from the parkland



Plate 10. The path running along the northern boundary of Strowdes Estate; the parkland to the south is set beyond the planted boundary to the right of this image



Plate 11. The pathway approaching the application site from the east



**Plate 12. The walled garden (looking towards its south-western corner)
(September 2025)**



**Plate 13. The walled garden (looking towards its north-western corner)
(September 2025)**



**Plate 14. The walled garden (looking towards the western wall) (September
2025)**



Plate 15. The walled garden (looking towards the southern wall)



Plate 16. The walled garden (doorway in the southern wall) (September 2025)



Plate 17. The walled garden (detail of southern wall) (September 2025)



Plate 18. The walled garden (western wall)



Plate 19. Laurel hedge at the north-eastern corner of the walled garden, where the boundary wall has been truncated (September 2025)



Plate 20. Laurel hedge at the north-eastern corner of the walled garden, where the boundary wall has been truncated



Plate 21. Modern gates and piers to the north of the walled garden, marking the western driveway to Bell House from Wargrave Road (to be removed as part of the proposals)



Plate 22. Looking towards Fir Wood from Kenton's Lane

APPENDIX 1

Statutory Registered Park & Garden Entry

Official list entry

Heritage Category:

Park and Garden

Grade:

II*

List Entry Number:

1000588

Date first listed:

29-Sep-1987

The scope of legal protection for listed buildings

This list entry identifies a Park and/or Garden which is registered because of its special historic interest.

[Understanding registered parks and gardens](#)

[Corrections and minor amendments](#)

Location

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District:

Wokingham (Unitary Authority)

Parish:

Remenham

District:

Wokingham (Unitary Authority)

Parish:

Wargrave

National Grid Reference:

SU 77850 81998

Details

Park Place, a C19 country house on the site of an earlier house, surrounded by C18 and C19 gardens and pleasure grounds and landscape park, with work in the mid to late C19 by Robert Marnock. A second, smaller estate, Temple Combe, developed during the late C18, lies enclosed within the Park Place estate.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1719 Mrs Elizabeth Baker sold land called Park's Place, also known as Strowdes, to Lord Archibald Hamilton, who at some time after this erected a Palladian mansion called Park Place on a new site (VCH 1923). In 1738 Park Place was sold to Frederick, Prince of Wales (1707-51) (ibid). Following Frederick's death in 1751 the estate was bought by General the Hon Henry Seymour Conway (1720-95), cousin of Horace Walpole, who enlarged the parkland during the 1760s-80s, embellishing it with various ornamental structures and buildings and developing the area known as Temple Combe. Following Conway's death in 1795, the estate was sold in 1797 to Lord Malmesbury who further expanded the park to the east, and entertained Pitt, Canning and other notable men of the day there. Following its sale in 1816 the estate passed through several hands during the C19. The house was rebuilt c 1871, following a fire, for John Noble of Noble's Paints and Varnishes (who had bought the estate in 1867), together with a new stable block. The grounds were subject to extensive 'landscape gardening' carried out under Robert Marnock (1800-89) c 1869, who planted thousands of specimen trees and shrubs, 'as far as possible every known variety!' (Noble 1905). In 1949 the estate was sold out of the Noble family into divided ownership, the house becoming a school during the later C20, and being now (1998) in private ownership. A golf course has been constructed in the north-east corner of the park, with a second, smaller one in Happy Valley, and the estate remains in divided ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Park Place estate lies adjacent to the north bank of the River Thames, east of Henley-on-Thames. The 240ha site is bounded to the south-west partly by the river and partly by the A321 Henley to Wargrave road, to the east by a lane linking the A4130 Henley to London road with the A321, and to the north by the A4130 itself. The site occupies a plateau above the Thames valley lying towards the southern end of the Chiltern Hills, including, to the south-west, the undulating hillside leading down to the adjacent river. The setting is largely rural, with views from the western edge of the site over the river towards Henley to the west, and towards the countryside to the south and west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance, standing 800m north-west of the house, is approached off the A4130 half-way up White Hill, and is flanked by two white-painted gate piers. From here the drive curves up the steep hillside through woodland, with views west across the river towards Henley, opening out at the top, 400m north-west of the house, into parkland lying on the plateau. Some 100m from the north front the drive turns south, passing between two pairs of stone obelisks (C18, listed grade II, erected mid C19 having been moved from Stanstead Hall) standing 60m from the house, and beyond this entering a tarmac forecourt leading to a porte-cochère on the north front. A spur leads off the east side of the forecourt to the stable yard entrance, marked by an archway set in the wall.

Several further drives give access to the house, crossing the parkland from the east, south-east and north-east, entering off the A4130 and the lane to the east of the park. Several of these entrances are marked by C18 and C19 lodges at the edge of the park. The drives converge 350m east of Park Place house, continuing west as one east drive to join the west drive where it turns south 100m from the house.

In the mid to late C18 (Rocque, 1761; Pride, 1790) a straight drive flanked by a double avenue of trees gave access to the house directly from the Henley to London road to the north. The entrance off the road was set back in a curved sweep; the present flint and stone Tower Lodge (C18, listed grade II) standing 550m north of the house was possibly associated with that entrance.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Park Place (Thomas Cundy 1870, listed grade II), built of rendered brick in French Renaissance style, stands on the site of an C18 building which was badly damaged by fire c 1870, possibly incorporating parts of the C18 work. It is entered via a porte-cochère on the north front, with the west front giving access to the gardens via an iron staircase down from the ground floor, and, standing on the east front, the foundations of a former conservatory (demolished mid-late C20).

The stables (c 1871, listed grade II), standing 30m north-east of the house, are also of rendered brick, arranged in three ranges around a yard, with the fourth, west side formed of a closing wall with an entrance archway giving access from the forecourt.

GARDEN AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens surround the house to the west, south and east, with pleasure grounds leading away to the south towards the river.

Below the west front of the house, and reached by steps down from the garden door, lies a formal, rectangular terraced garden, separated from the house by an upper terrace running along the west front bounded at the west edge by stone balustrading. From the upper terrace a double flight of stone steps leads down a stone retaining wall to the centre of the garden terrace below, the steps being flanked by two alcoves set into the retaining wall. A perimeter path encircles the terrace, with two circular panels of lawn at the north and south ends flanking a central panel in which has been placed a tennis court enclosed by chain-link fencing. Formerly (OS 1913; 1938) a ride extended south-east

from the south end of the terrace garden through woodland. The terraces overlook a lawn to the west, bounded to the west by mature trees, originally (OS 1913; 1938) with open views west towards Henley and the hillsides beyond (OS 1883; Harris 1979).

Adjacent to the south front lies a large tarmac rectangle, formerly (OS 1913) laid to lawn and surrounded by a perimeter path. South and east of this feature lie open lawns planted with many specimen trees, including large cedars of Lebanon (reputed to have been planted by Frederick, Prince of Wales) and enclosed by woodland. A path leads east from the tarmac area to the west entrance to the walled kitchen gardens. The lawn east of the house merges into an area of open woodland and shrubbery enclosing an informal pond with two islands, largely surrounded by a grass path. Beyond this to the north, separated by the east drive, lie the remains of further ponds set in woodland.

In the mid C18 the house, set in a garden enclosure, overlooked the scarp edge to the west, with views across the River Thames to the countryside beyond, as shown on a view of the early 1740s, which also shows several formal garden terraces below the west front. At this time the south front of the house led directly into an enclosed wilderness crossed by two intersecting straight paths, one set on an axis with the house (Rocque, 1761; Harris 1979).

The informal and partly wooded pleasure grounds extend south from the lawns around the house. The remains of a sunken feature including dry waterways and a terrace to the east (probably C19) extend south alongside the west wall of the kitchen garden, leading to an overgrown area 300m south-east of the house in which lie several entrances to a network of ruinous C18 caves and tunnels cut into the chalk. Some of these entrances retain their flint archways, but most have lost their architectural features. From here a tunnel leads c 170m south to the Happy Valley hillside, emerging near the top of the valley in the dilapidated Grotto (C18, listed grade II), a long, vaulted gallery with niches for statues cut into and built of chalk beneath the slope at the head of the valley, the outer face having a series of six arches facing down the valley to the river. At each side of the Grotto stand ruinous flanking brick and flint structures originally representing Grecian ruins, reputed to be designed by James Stuart (listed building description). Formerly a gothic or rustic cottage (now gone) stood 400m south-east of Park Place house, above the Grotto at the head of Happy Valley.

The view down the grassy Happy Valley (now, 1998, a golf course) is flanked by mature trees, mostly beeches, with Conway Bridge (architect Thomas Pitt, first Lord Camelford, engineer Rev Humphrey Gainsborough, brother of Thomas Gainsborough, 1763, listed grade II) standing c 375m south of the Grotto, framing a view of the river beyond. This road bridge, carrying the Henley to Wargrave road, is built of cyclopian blocks in imitation of rockwork, and frames the river such that from the Grotto the river appears to lie immediately beyond the bridge, whereas in reality the river bank separates the bridge from the river by 50m. The bridge gives access to an open riverside lawn to the south, flanked to the north-east by the road, from which it is screened by mature trees, sloping down to the river to the south-west, with an early C19 boathouse by the waterside. From here views extend south-east across the river to water meadows and the hills beyond. Walpole wrote in 1763 'the works at Park Place go on bravely; ... the bridge [will be] sublime, composed of loose rocks that appear to have been tumbled together there, the very wreck of a deluge' (quoted in Jacques 1983).

North-west of Happy Valley lie the remains of a further area of C18/early C19 pleasure grounds, covering an area towards the top, north-east side of Mill Bank. Within this area, 300m south-south-west of the house, lies a south-west-facing, rustic, semicircular flint alcove (mid-late C18, listed grade II) set into the hillside within woodland. It stands at the edge of a terraced path running north-west to south-east along the contour of the hillside. Close to the south-east end of the hillside path, 350m south of the house, stands a Chinese-style wooden summerhouse (rebuilt C20). The summerhouse stands on an

artificial, south-facing promontory overlooking Happy Valley to the south and east, located at the south end of a path running along the top of a substantial raised bank which emerges from the woodland to the north.

South of Happy Valley lie the grounds of the former Temple Combe, a house erected during the later C18 at the top of the scarp, enjoying panoramic views of the Thames Valley. The original house, lying 700m south-east of Park Place house, was demolished in the C20, to be replaced in 1963-4 by a low, curvaceous modern house on the same site (Pevsner 1966), known as Happy Valley. This small estate, enclosed within the Park Place estate, is largely composed of woodland surrounding open lawns and paddocks, its principal feature being the Druidic Temple (erected 1787, listed grade II). The Temple stands at the top of the hillside 100m south-west of Happy Valley house, comprising a circular collection of forty-five granite megalithic stones set vertically into the ground with other stones as lintels. The Temple, found near St Helier, was presented to General Conway by the inhabitants of Jersey during his period as their Governor. Horace Walpole described the temple as 'very high priestly' (Pevsner 1966) and named it 'Little Master Stonehenge'. From the Temple views extend south-west across the river to the water meadows and the distant hillside.

PARK The extensive park, largely laid out during the later C18 by General Conway, surrounds the inner core of the gardens and pleasure grounds. Areas of open parkland, many containing clumps and specimen trees, are enclosed by belts of trees and woodland, the latter particularly found to the west of the site. The north-east section, incorporated in the C19, has been overlaid by a golf course (late C20), the remainder being a mixture of arable and pasture. An obelisk (late C17, erected 1837, listed grade II) stands 250m north-east of the house, part of the spire of St Bride's, Fleet Street (London) designed by Sir Christopher Wren, re-erected here by Mr Fuller-Maitland to commemorate Queen Victoria's accession.

KITCHEN GARDEN The 1ha brick-walled kitchen garden, probably dating from the mid C18 (Pride, 1790) lies 300m south-east of the house, on the plateau above Happy Valley, bounded to the west by the northern arm of the pleasure grounds.

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1883 2nd edition published 1900 3rd edition published 1938 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1913

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