

HIGH CHIMNEYS, North

Davis St, Hurst, Berks RG10 0TH

Heritage assessment



1. Introduction

- 1.1. This heritage assessment is written in accordance with paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) “to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. 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.” The building has been inspected and the National Heritage List consulted as well as the Berkshire HER, historic maps and local histories.
- 1.2. High Chimneys is a large C17 building owned for much of its life by the locally powerful Barker family and now sub divided into two. The house was Listed Grade II on 26 January 1967 as High Chimneys; on 17 Oct 1983 the list description was altered to High Chimneys & North Wing High Chimneys to reflect the existence of two houses.

- 1.3. Dating to 1660/1¹, it is a 3 storeyed triple gabled, brick, H- shaped building under a tiled roof with attics and a basement. Timber-framing is evident inside and the roof has tie beams, 2 tiers of butt purlins and queen struts; and tenoned rafters. The north end has a 2-storey two-bay extension of c.1890 and a single storey lean-to built by 1898, connected to a timber stable block, rebuilt in 1985.
- 1.4. Flanking, symmetrical chimneys with diagonal shafts and offset heads give the house its name; one is inscribed "GC 1661" for George Coles who is assumed to have built the house². The house resembles Hinton House not far away of which the VCH said, "The chimneys are unusually high and much resemble those at High Chimneys, described below, both houses probably having been built about the same date in the late 16th or early 17th century." The late date of construction possibly stems from the political shenanigans surrounding the early C17 in this decidedly Royalist locality.
- 1.5. Brick details include plinths with a splayed and moulded capping, first floor string, and a dentil course at the base of the gables.
- 1.6. The East (garden) front is triple gabled, the outer gables projecting, each with a small 2-light leaded attic casement window and 2 bays on lower floors. The central gable has a similar attic light and 3 bays below the centre upper blocked over an original 8 panelled double door - the 4 upper panels now glazed - in a contemporary heavy stop-moulded frame under an early C18 flat moulded hood on large carved brackets. All lower windows are tall 4-light wood mullioned and transomed with leaded lights.
- 1.7. The West front is similar except that the outer bays of the gabled wings are blocked and on the inner face of these is one bay of narrow blocked windows. The central door is original and unglazed and is under similar hood and approached by 6 stone steps. Basement windows in outer bays of the centre part and on inner faces of projecting wings have wood mullions and three narrow lights.
- 1.8. The South end has 3 bays of narrow windows with a tall projecting chimney between the right hand and centre bays and a panelled door between the left hand and centre bays.
- 1.9. The original North end has a similar chimney concealed within the C19 extension which is of brick and in similar style to the C17 original. The later wing comprises 2 bays over 2 with a large window to the west front. This is widely thought to be an

¹ INDEX OF TREE - RING DATED BUILDINGS IN ENGLAND: COUNTY LIST approximately in chronological order, revised 2016: Berkshire VA Ref:44.85; EH ref: RGHC/03/12. Date range 1660-1.

² "The fine old house known as "High Chimneys" bears on a brick the initials "G.C. 1661". It is an unusual date for such a house; there was not much money about just after the Restoration. I wonder if the builder were one, George Cole, Gent., who first appears in the Baptism Register in 1665. Three years later he buried his wife and an infant son; presumably his residence here was short, for there is no further trace of him..." A History of the Parish of Hurst etc... John CF Wimberley, 1937.

- 2.2. It was acquired by the Barker family by 1723; Rev FH Barker received 19a at Inclosure in 1812. By 1840 it was tenanted as a farm house. It was sold to the Haines Hill estate by 1880.
- 2.3. The first OS maps show a large farmstead attached to the house. A granary or similar outbuilding is present in the west forecourt, opposite the stable and there is a large pond to the west. A well is positioned between the house and the stable to the north. There is a walled garden to the east beyond which are fields.

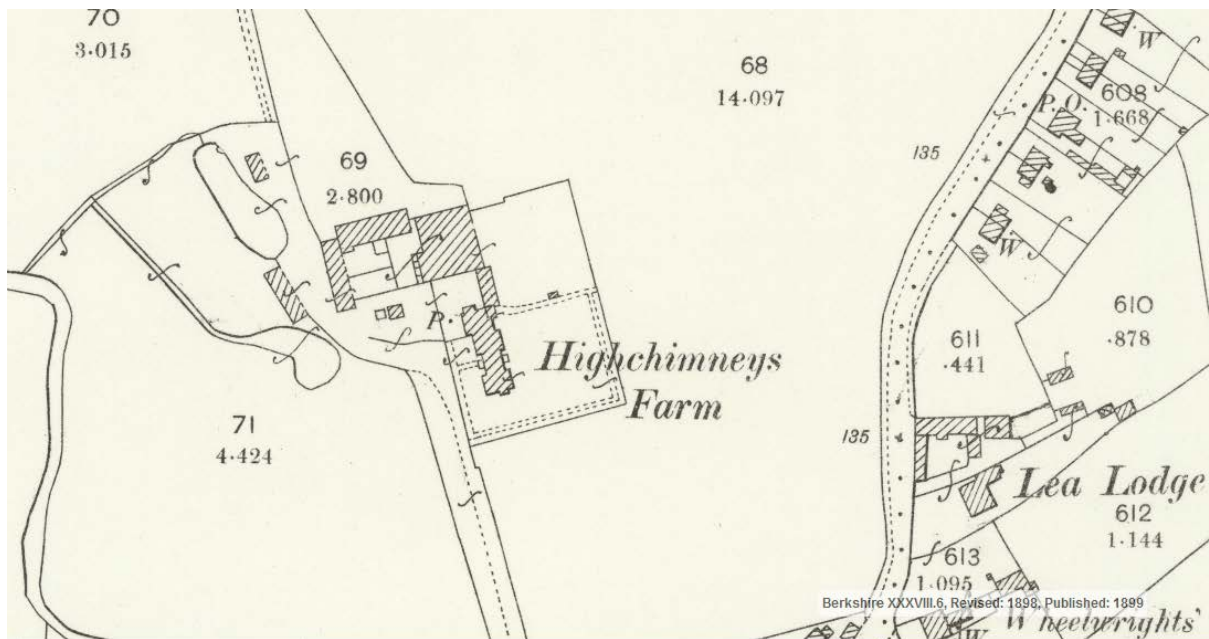


1871 OS map



1873 OS map

- 2.4. The 1873 map similarly shows the stable to the north of the house and a huge animal shed beyond. By 1898, the northern extension has been built and the attached leanto built. A small link connects the house to a realigned stable block. The garden has also expanded to the east:



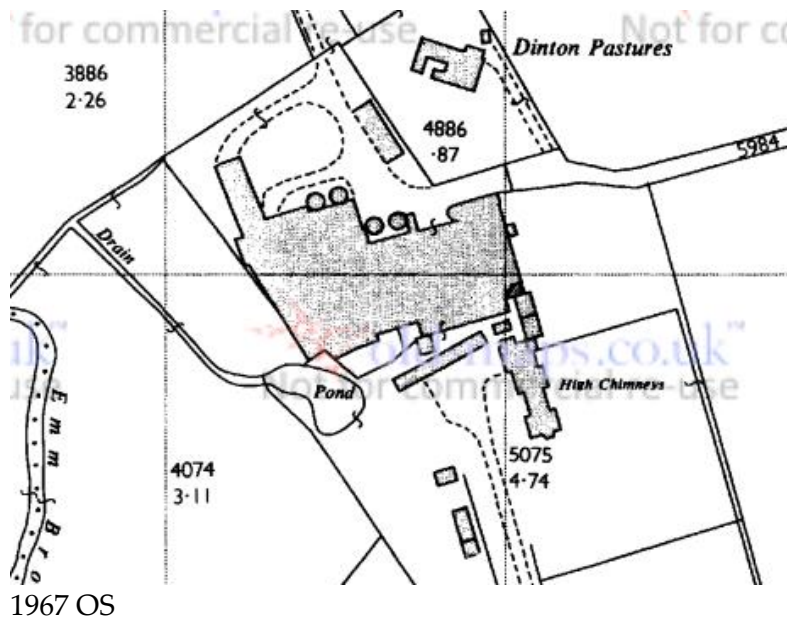
1898/9 OS

- 2.5. By 1938 the 'granary' has increased in size and moved close to the current location of the garage. The house is now called High Chimneys and that to the north High Chimneys Farm:

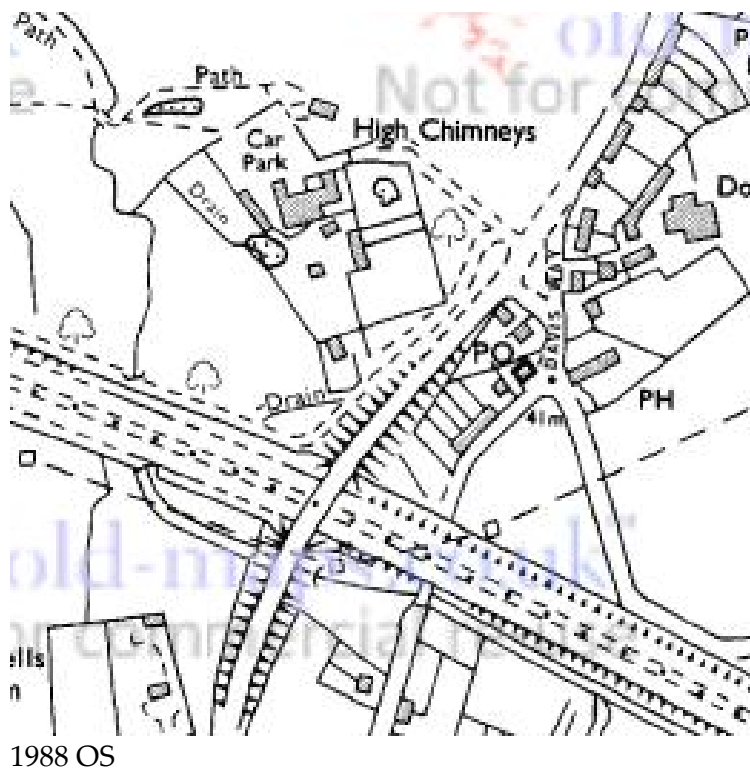


1938 OS

- 2.6. By 1967 there is a new long stable where the garage now stands to the NW and the area of farm under cover is massively increased to the north. The farm has been renamed Dinton Pastures and presumably the large covered area belongs to it:



- 2.7. By 1988, a pond in the east garden is shown on the OS map for the first time but not the main stable which records show was demolished (and apparently rebuilt then). The two garages are shown. The A329 (M) (which appears between 1967 and 1974) is shown just to the south:



3. North House

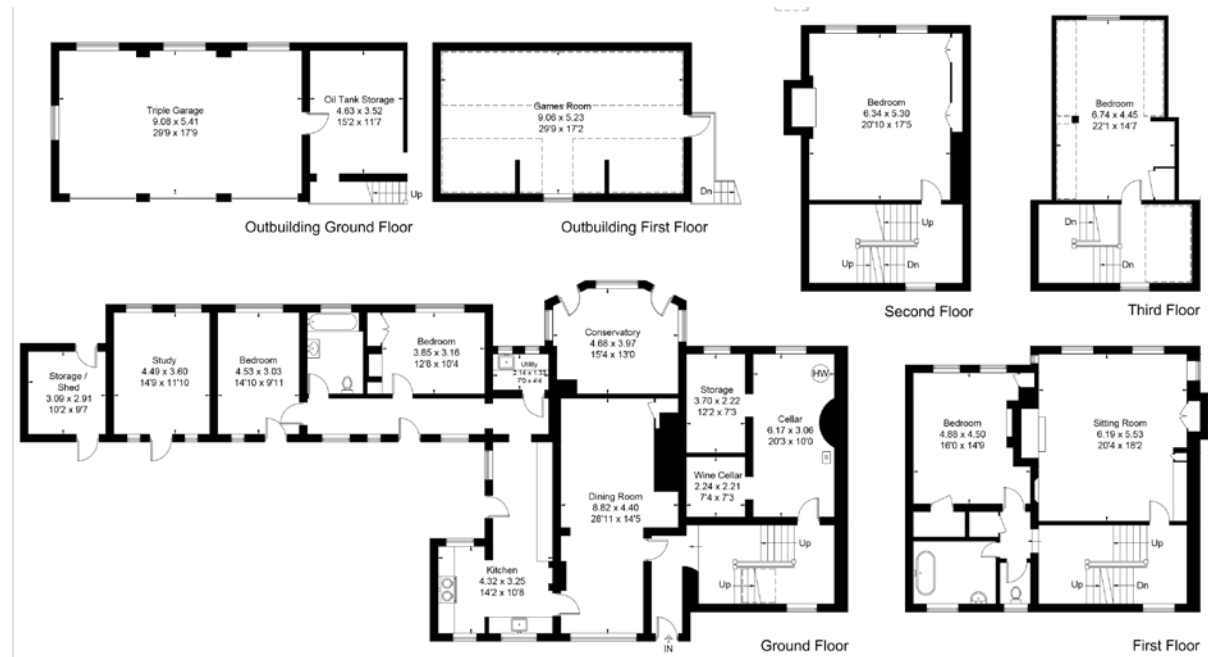
3.1. The North house comprises the north wing of the C17 house, the Victorian wing and the lean-to, the last of which has had a further extension. A small Edwardian brick link with a pitched roof connects the house to a single storey boarded bedroom wing, originating in the C19 but rebuilt in the 1980s. A triple garage and attached plantroom and external stair are located immediately to the NW at the head of the forecourt off the drive.



Timeline: N house:

- 1660-1: Style and roof design suggests c. 1600 but chimney is inscribed 1661 and timbers dated to 1660/1. Built/restored after Commonwealth. Royalist sympathies would explain the late date.
- 1723: Called 'Mr Barker's House' on John Dalby's map.
- 1840: the house and more than 110 acres were owned by Elizabeth Rose Barker and occupied by Charles Scarborough
- By 1873 north animal shed built
- By 1880 – sold to Haines Hill estate (Captain Godsal) who let the house to tenants 1883 - 1899 north extensions as a result.
- 1919 - the Winnersh portion of the Haines Hill estate was sold by auction.
- 1924 William Hugh Browning was living in the house.
- 1960s Much of the farmland formerly attached to the house was used for gravel extraction when the M4 motorway was extended towards Bristol, and the A329M was built. Now the land forms part of Dinton Pastures Country Park.
- 1966 House offered for sale
- 1967 Listing at Grade II
- 1969 Subdivision into 2 houses [outline pp 5-9-68 O144/68] [122/68 full PP 2-1-69]
- 1975 conservatory [31-1-75 BR 2011 + 02032 20-2-75]
- 1975 detached garage [30-1-75 BR 1987 + 02031 20-2-75]
- 1980 repairs [roof tiles, guttering, repointing 13-3-80 12435] grant-aided by HBC grant 1979-80.
- 1985 permission to rebuild outbuildings for residential accommodation [BRA 3626 and 23365/9 (LBC) 19-6-85]
- 1998 permission to convert garage loft to living accommodation 98/67601/ LA and 67602/F 5-10-98

NORTH HOUSE PLANS:



Interiors

3.2. The stair hall is a striking survivor with its oak staircase with decorative ball newels and splats and heavily moulded doorways. Doors vary from 2 panels on the ground floor to 6 on the first. The timber structure of the walls is exposed with the framing divided into large squares.

3.3. The drawing room has old oak floorboards and an exposed oak ceiling structure. The stone chimneypiece is Tudor in style and thus consistent with the rest of the house.

4. Significance

4.1. The NPPF advises that applicants must describe the “significance” of a heritage asset affected by development (the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest). The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting – the surroundings in which a ‘heritage asset’ is experienced. Setting may enable a heritage asset to be appreciated or obscure it.

4.2. The NPPF does not propose a means of stating heritage value but the international standard comes from ICOMOS, the International Council for Monuments and Sites, the body that designates World Heritage Sites. Values are usually rated Exceptional, Considerable, Some, and Little with “Some” being the threshold level for inclusion on most heritage lists. The building and its setting have been assessed as follows:

a. Architectural

The house, in association with its neighbour is recognisably of the C17, its strong H form and brick detailing unchallenged by various additions, the subdivision and modern windows and division of setting. Overall, architectural value is **considerable**.

b. Historic

The 1979 Grant description described the house as "Remarkably unaltered early 17th century red brick house on an H-plan with a recessed and gabled hall section." The house is of special historic interest because it is a pre-1700 building whose form and plan survive, alterations generally comprising extension rather than re-ordering. All such houses are listed.

Intactness: the basic mid C17 plan is discernible as are many of its details.

Association: the house is associated with the gentry of Berkshire.

Overall the historic value is **considerable**.

c. Artistic

None

d. Archaeological

None known apart from the obvious evidential interest inherent in the plan form

e. Contribution of setting.

The east garden is much divided by tall walls which prevents this space contributing to significance in the way it was intended.

The west setting is changed from the time of listing. The large outbuilding and the two smaller ones have gone as has the farmyard, replaced by a gravelled forecourt and a woodland garden containing the remnants of the old buildings. The space to the west of the rebuilt stable is confined by a boarded fence.

The house clearly reads as two, divided by staddle stones and pots and a small roundabout in the forecourt. This is reinforced by the presence of an additional garage to the west of the central door in the main house. The drive and its context is unrecognisable from its farmland setting owing to the M4 changes to the wider setting and the establishment of the Dinton Pastures park. In short, the setting does not contribute to the significance of either house.

Summary

High Chimneys is a good minor gentry house, Elizabethan in style but built in the time of Charles II. Its heritage significance lies primarily in its H-plan form with its triple gables and tall chimneys as well as the intactness of its internal layout despite later additions and subdivision. Association with the Barker family adds to significance. The setting is much altered from its historic form and does not contribute to its significance.

Ian Dieffenthaler RIBA SCA