



**Brick Barns, Remenham Hill
Wokingham, RG9 3HN**

Landscape Statement

November 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is provided on behalf of John [REDACTED] Bateman (the ‘Applicants’) in support of development proposals on land to the south of Brick Barns, Remenham Hill, Wokingham. This statement encompasses the requirements for a Design and Access Statement and a Heritage Statement.
- 1.2 This application is intended to represent the closing chapter in a period covering approximately 8 years, that concerns land to south of Brick Barns, which was acquired by the Applicants as part of an overall vision of restoring the landscape value and character of the land in keeping with the historic park within which it is located, and to also enhance the land’s biodiversity. That vision, and the works undertaken to achieve it, were done honourably and with good intent, and were considered at the time, to be entirely acceptable given various permissions for development and landscaping works that had been issued for properties in the immediate vicinity of Brick Barns and within the wider park.
- 1.3 The application seeks planning permission for the following:
- a) retention of part of the unauthorised drive in a modified form, to enable the delivery of goods required for the maintenance of the land and to allow a vehicle to empty the cess pit without preventing closure of the lane to other traffic and neighbours during the required servicing;
 - b) retention of Building 4 for use in connection with the maintenance of the land and for a bat roost to replace that in Building 2; and
 - c) retention of one and a half raised, timber flower beds within the cottage garden, that fall outside of the residential curtilage to Brick Barns.
- 1.6 The proposals do not involve or require a material change of use of the land. The use of the land will remain that which existed since before the purchase of the land by the Applicants.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 John Bateman first became involved with the Park Place Estate in 2007, when he was appointed Managing Director of Development for Spink Property, the property company that saved the historic interest of this historic estate. Between 2007 and 2017, John oversaw the restoration of the estate and implementation of the company’s objective to bring the principal house back to life after years of under-investment and lack of attention, and to restore as much of the rest of the estate as possible. The estate had witnessed significant harmful interventions during the 20th century, including the formation of a golf course and numerous inappropriate alterations and extensions to dwellings, and then in the 21st century, the creation of a large polo centre, which contains polo pitches, stabling and pavilions. The former main house had become a school in the early 20th century, operated by the London Borough of Hillingdon. After it closed in the late 1980’s, a series of absentee landlords and property speculation led to the estate falling into a derelict condition. This situation was turned around from 2007 by Spink Property who restored and refurbished the then “at risk” estate.
- 2.2 During the latter period of his work at the estate, the opportunity arose for the Applicants to purchase Noble Barn and Brick Barns, as well as an area of land attached to them. At the time, Noble Barn was a vacant

agricultural building, which had formed part of the Park Place Farm and which was listed Grade II in 2010. The listing of Noble Barn recognised its architectural and historic interest and increased the need for it to be put to a new viable use, to ensure its long-term conservation. At that time, Brick Barns was known as the Bungalow and had been used as a dwelling since the 1940s. A certificate of lawfulness to confirm that the Bungalow (now Brick Barns) is a lawful dwelling was issued on 12 January 2023 (WBC Ref: 223387).

- 2.3 At this time, use of the golf course had ceased and the land adjoining the two barns appeared to be part and parcel of the same unit, with previous tenants of the Bungalow advising that they used this land as part of their enjoyment of living there. The Applicants, not unreasonably, assumed that continuation of such a use would not be inappropriate. At the same time, the polo club was being implemented, resulting in the erection of new buildings and the formation of an immaculately level new polo pitch, “dropped” into the landscape. The polo consent included planting hundreds of screening trees along the western boundary to re-establish the former trees that had been lost. Various works at the polo club are now the subject of applications for lawful development certificates.
- 2.4 Prior to his acquisition of Brick Barns, Spink Property obtained permission to convert the adjacent barn, Noble Barns to a dwelling house, including the laying out, planting and moulding of the grounds across the plots, as can be seen today. From their acquisition of the property in 2016, the Applicants implemented the conversion of Noble Barn, restoring the building to its current good condition and then sold it to the current owners. At the same time, they started to address their own intentions for the use of the land adjoining Brick Barns. On the basis of the consent for Noble Barn, which included extensive new landscaping as part of its residential curtilage, they implemented a similar landscape proposal, which had been designed in concert with the scheme for Noble Barn, and which is shown on the plans that accompany the Noble Barn permission.
- 2.5 The Council served the enforcement notice on 14 June 2023. The notice alleged that there had been an unauthorised change of use of the land to residential garden including the erection of five buildings, changes to ground levels and formation of a hardstanding. An appeal against the notice was considered at a planning public inquiry in November 2023. The Inspector’s decision, issued on 9 February 2024, dismissed the appeal and upheld the notice with corrections and variations. The plan attached to the notice was also deleted and substituted with a new plan. The Inspector’s changes to the notice included a number of amendments to its requirements.

3.0 The Proposed Works

- 3.1 This statement is provided in support of a planning application to undertake or retain the following:
- (a) retention of part of the unauthorised drive in a modified form, to enable the delivery of goods required for the maintenance of the land and to provide access for the emptying of the cess pit to Brick Barns;
 - (b) retention of Building 4 (as identified on the application plans) for use in connection with the maintenance of the land, and modified to provide replacement bat roosts; and
 - (c) retention of the timber plant beds within that part of the cottage garden that lie outside of the residential curtilage of Brick Barns.
- 3.2 The proposed works need to be considered in the context of what is the lawful use of the land. This matter was not extensively or definitively addressed during the course of the appeal. A ground (d) case was

presented by the Appellants, but this related to the erection of buildings, not to the use of the land. The Appellants argued that the majority of the site, the subject of the notice, had an established use associated with the informal recreation typical of a country estate and historic park. The Council set out clearly within their evidence, that the majority, but not all, of the land fell outside of the residential curtilage, as defined by the physical features that are shown in aerial photographs included within the Officers' planning reports. The Inspector considered that the land, the subject of the notice, formed part of the same planning unit for Brick Barns, but that the planning unit contained two different uses; one being residential and the other not. In issuing the amended enforcement notice, she failed to amend the boundary of the land subject to the notice on the associated plan, which was required in order to take into account the Council's evidence on residential curtilage. A formal request was made to the Council on 17th September 2024 to amend the plan accordingly, under Section 173A of the Act. At the time of submitting this application a considered response is yet to be received.

Proposal: Retention of part of unauthorised drive in a modified form

- 3.4 The appeal decision has resulted in two serious problems that are risk the future use and condition of the dwelling and the land that is the subject of the notice. The first issue is that the unauthorised drive, which the notice requires the complete removal of, provides access for the vehicles used by the company that empties and services the cess pit for Brick Barns.
- 3.5 The vehicles used are too large to be manoeuvred onto the hardstand to the north of the house, via the new access. Without the existing drive, the only option is for the servicing lorry to stand in Dairy Lane during the process of emptying the pit. This can take on average 20 to 30 minutes to complete. During this time, the vehicle would completely block Dairy Lane, thereby preventing access to the residents of the Dairy Lane that lie to the south. This amounts to a considerable and unacceptable inconvenience to those residents and, in any event, the Applicants are bound by a restrictive covenant that prevents any blocking of the road.
- 3.6 The Inspector (para.107) did not explore whether the cess pit could be suitably serviced following the removal of the unauthorised drive and merely acknowledged that the Council had no objections in principle to a new means of access being formed to the property, off Dairy Lane, to the north of the dwelling. The actual practicality of this new access in terms of servicing the cess pit was not addressed in the appeal decision. The new access will not allow access to the servicing vehicle as the entry into it is too restrictive. The width of the road at the point of access is fixed by estate fencing on its western side and established hedging and fencing on the eastern side. These matters were not before the Inspector and were not taken into account when she was considering the issue of the driveway. This is clear from paragraph 88 where the Inspector states:
- 'As stated below, in other considerations, a replacement vehicular means of access appears to be possible, and Brick Barns is in residential use. Therefore, the residential use of Brick Barns does not appear to be dependant on retaining the development.'*
- 3.7 The proposal is to reduce the width of the existing driveway to the minimum necessary to facilitate access for service lorry to the cess pit. It should be noted that the bell mouth of the existing access lies outside of

the notice and is not required to be removed. This access has been proven to be acceptable for allowing the service lorry to access the site and leave the highway. An agricultural farm gate has been hung at the access.

- 3.8 The Applicants have already sought to comply with the requirements of the notice, as they relate to the access drive, and have removed the wide strip of flints, the metal edging, fencing and lighting columns and fittings. The laurel hedging, which exists for a short distance at the entrance of the drive, is in the process of being removed.
- 3.9 The surface of the retained gravel drive will be seeded with grass. The overall effect of these works will be to radically alter its appearance, from a domestic, almost suburban-looking driveway to a simple countryside track, that is typical of access roads in the area (**Fig.1**). The works already undertaken have significantly changed its appearance and the low intensity level of usage is likely to result in it largely disappearing, as the embedded grass establishes itself in the gravel and earth surface.

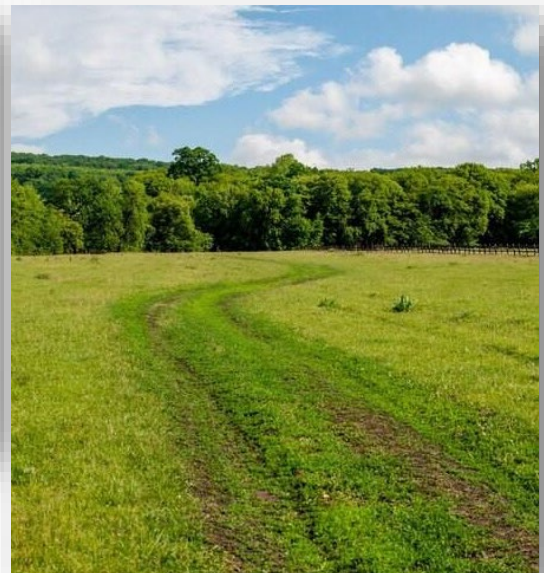


Fig. 1: The appearance of the driveway as before (above) and an image that reflects the character of the track as proposed (right)

Proposal: Retention of the remaining landscape structures of the cottage garden

- 3.10 The third element of this application seeks permission to retain the timber planters that exists within that part of the land that forms part of the planted 'cottage garden' area but which lies outside of the residential curtilage of the dwelling.
- 3.11 There have never been any concerns or objections raised by the Berkshire Gardens Trust, or any other landscape organisation or specialist, to the area that lies immediately to the south of Brick Barns, which has the appearance of a cottage garden. The reason by this area of land has the appearance of a traditional cottage garden, is the Applicants' intention that it contain a rich biodiversity of plants, which in turn, has resulted in an increase in the number and variety of wildlife species present in the area.

- 3.12 This cottage garden area consists of several raised planting beds, that are simple structures made from timber railway sleepers, and other ground level planting beds. The majority of this 'cottage garden' area lies inside the residential curtilage. The cottage garden is not dissimilar to a garden allotment in terms of the plants that are grown there and reflects how farm workers' gardens were used historically, with the land around their homes used to supplement food and also to raise some additional income.
- 3.13 The Council's Landscape witness at the appeal, Mr Ryder, did not raise any concerns with regard to the cottage garden area either, which he identified in his evidence as the 'Original Garden'. He assessed that the immediate setting to the rear of Brick Barns had been enhanced with the first phase of garden planting contained in the rectangular raised beds, which he acknowledged had helped to achieve Objective W22 of the Estate Wide Conservation Plan.
- 3.14 The photographs below (**Fig.2**) show how the area of land that comprises the cottage garden appeared shortly after the Applicants moved into Brick Barns and how it appears today. The area has been planted with a wide range of indigenous plants, which produces a wealth of benefits to the local ecology. The quality of this environment has been recognised by garden interest groups and journalists, and it is intended that, if it is possible to retain this area, that the Applicants will join the Blue Garden Scheme, which means that it will be open to the general public for a minimum number of days per year.



Fig 2: The cottage garden over time

- 3.15 Retention of the structures and plants would enable the cohesive area of cottage garden to remain, thereby maintaining its overall contrition to landscape character and biodiversity. Retention of the raised beds outside of the residential curtilage will not convey any change of use of the land and would not extend the residential curtilage of Brick Barns. It would however, allow the continuation of a beautiful traditional garden, that has been recognised as a positive addition to the estate.

4.0 Landscape Considerations

- 4.1 The site forms part of an estate that has seen considerable change over the past 200 years, from agriculture, to grassed parkland, to golf course, and then managed by the Applicants with the intention of enhancing its ecological and habitat value. It should not be forgotten that the Applicants have received specialist, professional advice from the best ecologists and landscape architects available. They did not undertake the planting of trees and other vegetation in a naive way, but with professional advice, ensuring that the landscape that has been created is appropriate to its location and has full regard to the historic, landscape and ecological value of the park.
- 4.2 The land the subject of the notice was characterised at the inquiry to be woodland pasture. The Woodland Trust define this as land that has been managed by grazing. Some started as medieval hunting forests or wooded commons, and others – as at Park Place – designed landscapes from large estates. This type of landscape doesn't simply happen by accident; it requires careful planning and continual management. The Applicants continue to invest time and care into restoring and maintaining the land back to its pre-golf course appearance, with woodland extensions and woodland pasture. These proposals do not facilitate any increase in the residential curtilage of the property. There is no intention to change the use of the land within the site. The original enforcement notice required the removal of all ornamental non-native tree and hedge planting, including but not limited to the laurel hedging. The Inspector decided to omit this requirement from the amended notice.
- 4.3 A draft, site specific LEMP for the land at Brick Barns will be submitted to the Council as soon as its drafting has been completed, so that it can form part of the determination of this application, which will help to guarantee the landscape and ecological benefits that it will maintain and enhance over time. These proposals are very limited in their form and nature and they endeavour to address the requirements of the notice and the expectations of the Inspector. They will not result in any harm to any interests of acknowledged importance, but they provide an opportunity to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the site and the contribution that it makes to the landscape and heritage value of the Park Place Estate.

