

# DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

for

FORMATION OF NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS FOLLOWING REMOVAL OF  
EXISTING CLOSE-BOARDED FENCE & ERECTION OF POST & RAIL BOUDARY  
FENCE AND HEDGE WITH TIMBER GATE.

at

NORTHAW PLACE, COOPERS LANE,  
NORTHAW, HERTFORDSHIRE

on behalf of

MR & MRS HOLT



## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This Design & Access Statement is submitted in support of a Householder planning application for provision of new vehicular access including removal of existing 1.9m high close boarded boundary fence and erection of post & rail boundary fence with timber gate to the Grade II\* Listed Northaw Place.
- 1.2 This application seeks to reinstate the original access from Coopers Lane close to the historic alignment which was altered and diverted in conjunction with the change of use and residential conversion to create four dwellings, granted in the 1980s.
- 1.3 The proposed route for the access driveway is close to the location of the historic access and former lodge, which are indicated on the 1867 plan of the Northaw Place Estate extracted from the Historic Building appraisal prepared by BEAMS in December 2009, and 1898 Ordnance Survey extract, attached at Appendix A.
- 1.4 Significant works to restore and improve the Listed building to a very high standard have been undertaken by the current owners.
- 1.5 The historic setting of this fine Grade II\* Listed Building dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century and subsequently remodelled, has been further eroded over the years with the earlier lodge house now in separate ownership following comprehensive redevelopment in the 1980s.
- 1.6 This application follows the refusal of application G/2019/0918/HOUSE in June 2019 for similar proposals on the following grounds:
1. By virtue of its scale and appearance, the development spreads built form into what was previously undeveloped land and, as such, fails to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, contrary to paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. The formation of a driveway would also harm the openness and appearance of the Green Belt in this location. The proposal is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Very special circumstances to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt do not exist as the harm to the Green Belt and other harms, are not clearly outweighed by other considerations. Accordingly, the development is contrary to Policies GBSP1 and GBSP2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005; Policy SP3 and SADM34 of the Council's Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission 2016; and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
  2. The development of this site is considered to result in an unacceptable erosion of the demonstrable physical attributes within the Landscape Character Area and would neither conserve, maintain, enhance nor strengthen the character of the wider surrounding area. As such, the proposal is not considered to comply with Policies D1, D2 and RA10 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005; Policies SP9 and SADM16 of the Council's Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission 2016; and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

3. Insufficient information has been provided as part of this application to enable the Local Planning Authority to fully assess the highway risks arising from the proposed development and to demonstrate that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. Accordingly the proposed development poses a risk to highway safety, contrary to [sic] proposed development would not accord with Policy SADM2 of the Emerging Local Plan 2016 and the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

1.7 Our current application, therefore, seeks to address the above.

## 2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the emerging Local Plan and contains a fine Grade II\* Listed Building of outstanding historic interest and national importance.

2.2 Access to the Listed Building is currently via a shared driveway installed at the time of the conversion and reversion to residential use in the 1980s and removes the historic sense of arrival, depriving visitors views of the imposing north front as intended by the previously removed, historic driveway.

2.3 Northaw Place is set back from Coopers Lane at a significant distance of some 130m and views into the site from the main road are obscured by the existing 1.9m high close-boarded fencing and established tree screen.

2.4 Significant investment has been made by the current owners to improve the accommodation and condition of the Listed Building securing its longer-term future, and they now seek approval to re-establish the original access to restore the historic approach, reinstating an important feature to this fine Grade II\* Listed country house.

2.5 The refusal of application G/2019/0918/HOUSE considered the scale and appearance and the spread of development into what was determined to be previously undeveloped land fails to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment contrary to paragraph 134 of the NNPPF.

2.6 Prior to the above application, more extensive proposals to reinstate the historic access together with formal entrance piers and gates and a lodge were submitted under Pre-Application advice application SG/2015/1443/PA which were supported by English Heritage in their letter dated 6 May 2015, a copy of which is included at Appendix C. This advised the historic setting of Northaw Place has been eroded over the years both by the construction of a new access route in the 1980's and the alienation of the lodge, and considered the reinstatement of the original drive would be sympathetic to the character of the place with the remainder of the proposals being both fitting and unobtrusive in character.

- 2.7 Following the response to the above Pre-Application Advice, the applicants agreed to scale down the proposals to provide a much lower key approach which is considered entirely appropriate in this rural setting.
- 2.8 It has been noted previously the land around the proposed reinstated access is within the curtilage of the listed building and officers have previously suggested this may not fall within the residential curtilage of the dwelling.
- 2.9 For clarity, the land has been used in conjunction with the listed building by the applicants since the completion of the refurbishment as a children's play area & den and as a composting area in association with the upkeep and maintenance of the extensive gardens and grounds
- 2.10 The applicants have obtained a copy of the Land Registry Title Plan of Northaw Place prior to its subdivision and reversion to residential use, which is attached at Appendix D. This clearly shows the location of the original entrance and drive adjacent to the lodge (now in separate ownership) showing all of the land up to the boundary with Coopers Lane within the curtilage of Northaw Place.
- 2.11 Our current proposals include a narrower driveway with a passing place to reduce the amount of new gravel surface required to reinstate the original access, reducing the impact on the Green Belt.
- 2.12 Paragraph 143 of the NPPF advises development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 2.13 Paragraph 144 of the NPPF advises 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposals, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 2.14 In addition to the support from English Heritage included at Appendix C, to the more radical Pre-Application Advice proposals, the Council's Heritage consultation response to application G/20190/0918/HOUSE confirmed the historic driveway ran alongside the lodge and approached Northaw Place from the east, providing visitors with a long view of the principal and most prominent elevation of the house. The revised boundary along Coopers Lane was considered to maintain the rural appearance of the lane with the access and driveway being in keeping with the setting of the listed building and not harming its significance.

The consultation raised no objection to the proposals on the basis "the reinstatement of the historic line of the driveway (or close to) serves to enhance the significance of the house by revealing historic viewpoints of the principal elevation of the house". A copy of the full consultation response is attached at Appendix E.



2.15 Contrary to the consideration of very special circumstances in the Officer's Report to the previous application, we would submit the strong support from English Heritage in restoring the historic setting of this fine Grade II\* Listed building through the current proposals and the support of the Council's own Heritage consultant to the previous application which enhance the significance of the house do represent 'very special circumstances' sufficient to outweigh any potential harm by reason of inappropriateness.

### 3.0 DESIGN

3.1 This submission seeks to reinstate the traditional historic access to the Listed Building directly off Coopers Lane with the provision of a simple post & rail fence backed by a native species hedgerow with 5-bar timber gate, which we consider is entirely appropriate in this rural setting. Removal of the existing 1.9m high close-boarded boundary fence represents a visual improvement which also improves the setting of the Grade II\* Listed country house.

3.2 The location of the reinstated entrance driveway is designed to minimise impact on the existing trees and amenity of the adjoining occupiers of the former lodge building now in separate ownership.

### 4.0 LANDSCAPING

4.1 An Arboricultural Method Statement was prepared by Elizabeth Greenwood CMLI FArborA at the time of the above Pre-Application Advice submission and largely remains relevant to our current application and is, therefore, submitted in support of our application.

4.2 The line of the proposed reinstated access drive and entrance gate has been carefully considered to minimise impact on the existing trees within a wooded area of the extensive gardens surrounding Northaw Place and to reinstate as closely as possible the line of the original entrance from Coopers Lane, clearly visible on the 1867 and 1898 Ordnance Survey extracts attached at Appendix A.

4.3 The Officer's Report to application 6/2019/0918/HOUSE advised the Council's Landscape Team were consulted and raised no objection to the proposals on the basis of the information provided with the Arboricultural Method Statement.

4.4 Proposals for additional landscaping to reinforce the existing tree screen and replace lost trees with native species and provide indigenous hedge planting to enhance the setting of the re-formed entrance and approach to the Listed Building beyond, can be secured by the inclusion of an appropriate condition on any planning consent granted.

- 4.5 The second reason for refusal of the above application advised the proposals would neither conserve, maintain, enhance nor strengthen the character of the Landscape Character Area.
- 4.6 The Officer's Report to application G/2019/0918/HOUSE advised the site is within the Northaw Common Parkland Landscape Character Area, which is characterised by parkland features within landscapes that have been created through the historic development of these parklands and estates. The area is predominantly rural in character with formal parkland and estate entrances being the norm. The recommended strategy for the area includes ensuring that historic hedged field boundary patterns are retained and that any new planting improves the area.
- 4.7 The reason for refusal on landscape grounds were noted on the Officer's Report as, "The proposed development would create a new entrance within an existing defined boundary treatment which would negatively alter the character of this section of Coopers Lane by punching a hole [sic] in this defined mature boundary treatment along this part of Coopers Lane".
- 4.8 The existing boundary between Northaw Place and Coopers Lane is characterised by a dilapidated 1.9m high close-boarded fence in excess of 50m in length backed by mature tree planting.
- 4.9 A 2.0m high horizontal close boarded acoustic timber fence, at around 140m in length, has been installed more recently to the highway boundary of the former lodge house to Northaw Place to the south of the site (now No 2 Northaw Place in separate ownership) following approval of application G/2016/0153/HOUSE.
- 4.10 This, rather incongruous, boundary treatment has altered the character of this rural area through the introduction of an urban feature of significant impact.
- 4.11 Replacement of the existing 1.9m high close-boarded fence to the highway boundary of the application site can be made at any time without the need for planning consent and its replacement with a post and rail fence and native species hedge as currently proposed is entirely appropriate in this setting and will enhance the appearance of the rural area.
- 4.12 Rather than "punching a hole" in the established mature tree screen, as suggested in the officer's Report to application G/2019/0918/HOUSE, it is clear from the submitted drawings 747/10 and 747/11A, there will be no discernable difference in the existing well defined mature boundary treatment and, therefore, would not negatively alter the character of the area as suggested previously. Any gaps created by removal of some of the inferior trees can be filled by new native tree planting which, as noted above, can be secured by condition to any forthcoming consent in the normal way.

- 4.13 Our submitted proposals therefore maintain and enhance the character of the Northaw Common Parkland Landscape Character Area and continue the tradition of estate entrances to formal parkland whilst retaining the boundary pattern and introducing improved planting
- 4.14 The Officer's Report to the earlier refusal also suggested the proposed gated entrance from Coopers Lane would give clear views into the site negatively altering the character of this section of Coopers Lane.
- 4.15 As noted above, the recently introduced acoustic boundary fence to No 2 Northaw Place has negatively altered the character of this section of Coopers Lane and it is clear from the offset route of the proposed driveway included within drawing No 747/SP3, there will be no clear views into the wider site as the Officer's Report suggests.

## 5.0 ACCESS

- 5.1 Access to Northaw Place is currently provided through the shared vehicular and pedestrian gated entrance from Coopers Lane, refer to photographs Appendix B. Vehicular access for refuse and service vehicles will continue to Northaw Place via this existing shared access.
- 5.2 The proposed location for the reinstated entrance has been carefully considered and is close to the line of the original historic entrance shown on the attached 1898 Ordnance Survey extract, at Appendix A.
- 5.3 The Highway Authority raised an objection to the previous application G/2019/0918/HOUSE on the basis insufficient information had been provided to enable them to make a decision on whether the proposed development would have an acceptable or unacceptable impact on highway safety.
- 5.4 The applicants have, therefore, commissioned Transport Consultants KMC to provide transport advice for the proposed reinstatement of the historic access to serve Northaw Place.
- 5.5 A speed survey has been undertaken on Coopers Lane in association with application G/2019/0217/MAJ for the conversion of Northaw House opposite, and the provision of 14 dwellings which records the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed in the vicinity of the proposed reinstated access at 36mph.
- 5.6 Visibility splays required in accordance with the Manual for Streets guidance are therefore 2.4 x 59m.

5.7 Our current application includes the highways consultant's General Arrangement drawing KMC 18051-001A, Proposed Visibility Splays drawing KMC 18051-002A, Swept Path Analysis drawing KMC 18051-003(1)A and a Technical Note addressing the comments raised by the Highway Authority consultation response referred to in 5.3 above.

PNA

April 2020



# APPENDIX A

cleaning them, it was found that many years ago an attempt had been made to remove the thick coat of coloured varnish ... The operator was unsuccessful and contented himself with repainting certain portions with more energy than discretion, (adding) a liberal coat of copal varnish.'

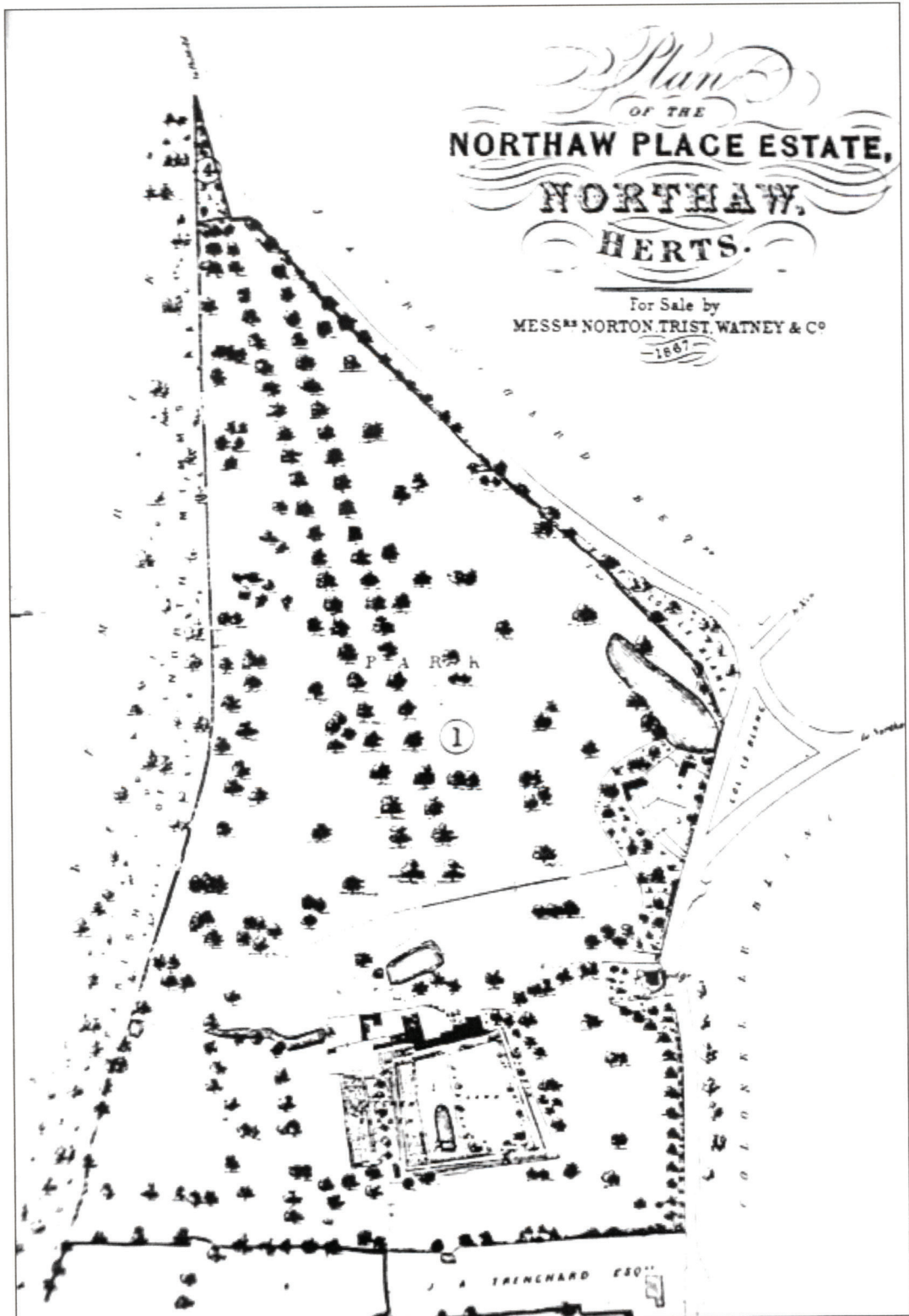
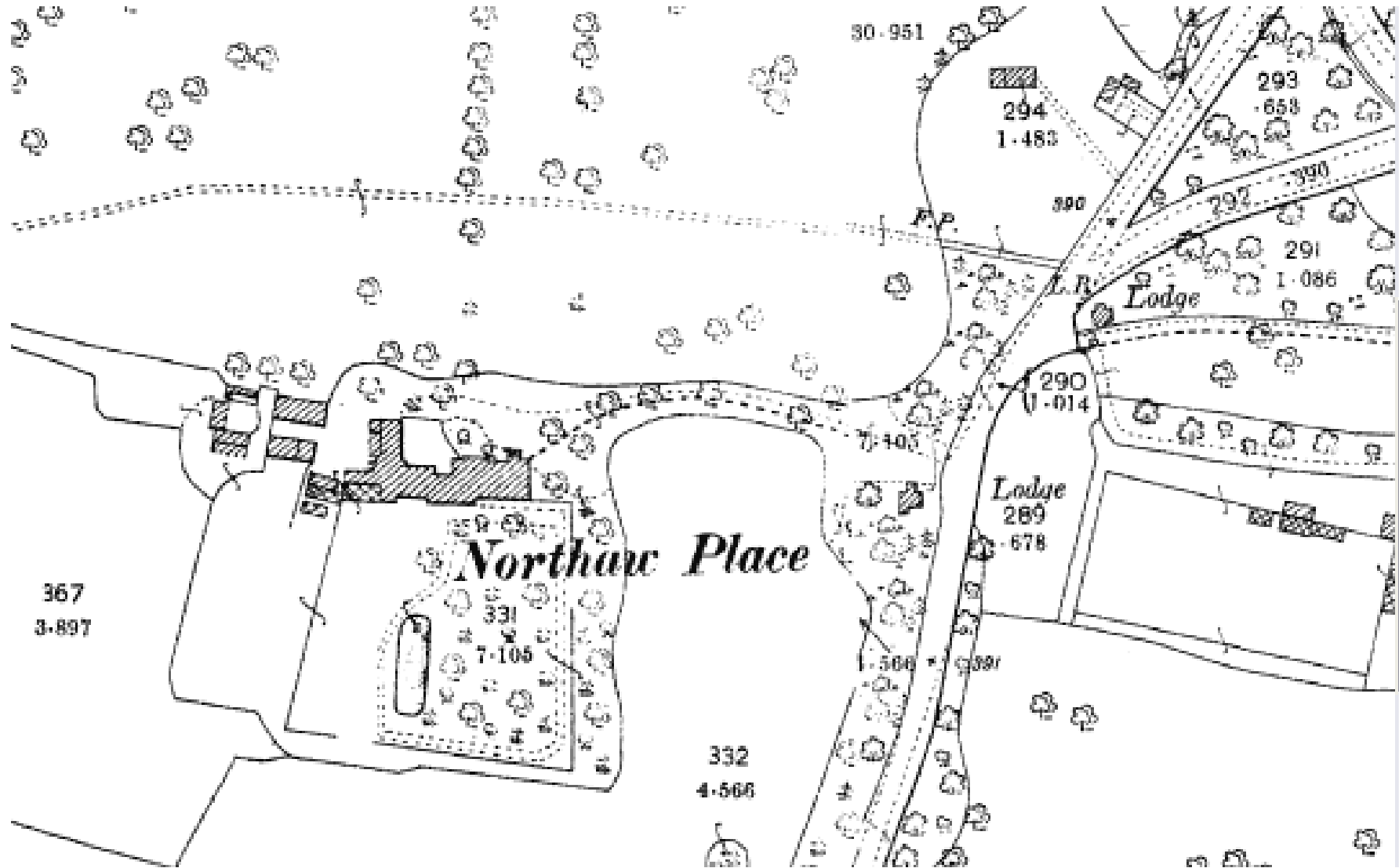


Figure 8. Plan of the Northaw Place Estate in 1867 (HALS)

OS Extract 1898



# APPENDIX B



Existing Shared Entrance



Proposed Driveway Location

# APPENDIX C





Historic England

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

8 MAY 2015

Mr Robin Uff  
Central Bedfordshire Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands, Shefford  
Beds.  
SG17 5TQ

Direct Dial: 01223 582719

Our ref: PA00373420

6 May 2015

Dear Mr Uff

### Request for Pre-application Advice

### **NORTHAW PLACE, COOPERS LANE, NORTHAW, HERTS**

Thank you for consulting Historic England about the proposed re-alignment of the drive at Northaw Place and the construction of a new lodge. It was very interesting to see the house fully repaired after first seeing it in the condition it was when your clients acquired it.

Northaw Place is a handsome house dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and remodelled and enlarged at various times in the subsequent centuries. It is of particular note for its very fine painted staircase hall of c. 1700 painted in the manner of Verrio. The house is listed at grade II\* on account of its special architectural and historic interest.

Your clients wish to create a new drive from Cooper's Lane to the house, broadly on the route of the historic approach, and to build a small lodge to improve security. Over the years the historic setting of Northaw Place has been eroded both by the creation of a new access route and by the alienation of what I understand to have been an earlier lodge.

The reinstatement of a drive close to the historic alignment would in itself be sympathetic to the character of the place. While the construction of a "second" lodge might be a little odd, what is proposed is both fitting and unobtrusive in character. Provided that it is built with traditional materials and details it would not be inappropriate. To this end I suggest the design be amended either by the omission of the plinth or by the specification that it be of brick, like the walls above.

I hope these comments are helpful.



24 BROOKLANDS AVENUE, CAMBRIDGE, CB2 8BU

Telephone 01223 582749  
HistoricEngland.org.uk



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*Historic England will use the information provided by you to evaluate any applications you make for statutory or quasi-statutory consent, or for grant or other funding. Information provided by you and any information obtained from other sources will be retained in all cases in hard copy form and/or on computer for administration purposes and future consideration where applicable.*



Historic England

EAST OF ENGLAND OFFICE

Yours sincerely

*John Neale*

**John Neale**

Principal Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

E-mail: [john.neale@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:john.neale@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

cc Paul Symonds, PNA



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# APPENDIX D



MB 25

# H.M. LAND REGISTRY

TITLE NUMBER

## HD 144575

ORDNANCE SURVEY  
PLAN REFERENCE

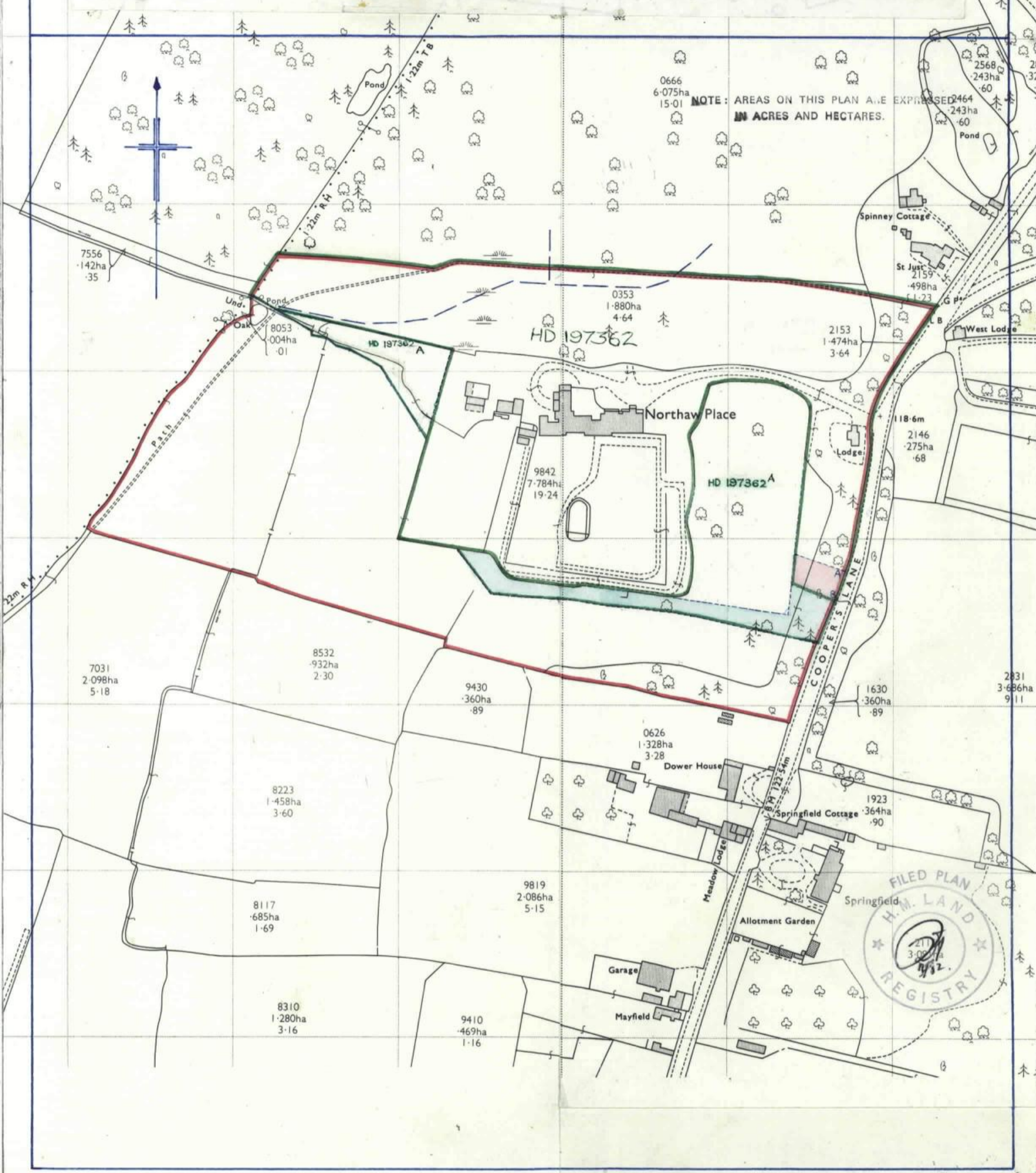
TL2702

Scale  
1/2500

COUNTY HERTFORDSHIRE

DISTRICT WELWYN HATFIELD

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# APPENDIX E



FAO: Planning Department,  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Ref: 6/2019/0918/HOUSE  
Date: 10/05/2019

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION ADVICE

Dear Sir / Madam,

**RE: *Northaw Place, Coopers Lane, Northaw***

The application is for the formation of a new vehicular access following removal of existing close boarded boundary fence and erection of post and rail boundary fence and hedge with timber gate.

Northaw Place is a grade II\* listed house (list entry no. 1100972) dating to c.1690 with alterations made throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is an imposing three storey neo-classical mansion with a large, square porch supported on Doric columns. The rear, garden elevation is red brick and the front elevation clad in c.1860s cement render. The former outbuildings associated with the house and the former gate lodge along Coopers Lane are now in separate ownership.

The proposed driveway roughly follows the line of the historic driveway as depicted on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps. The current driveway appears to date to the 1980s when the lodge and other outbuildings became separate dwellings to the main house. The historic driveway ran alongside the lodge and approached Northaw Place from the east providing visitors with a long view of the principal and most prominent elevation of the house. As described within the accompanying Heritage Statement, the proposed scheme intends to reinstate this approach and provide the house with its own access.

The boundary along Coopers Lane will be finished with a timber post and rail fence with native hedging and a timber five-bar gate. This maintains the rural appearance of the lane which is characterised by dense planting. The simple fence and gate do not compete with the existing entrance to Northaw Place which has a far more formal character with brick piers and gates.

The proposed access, driveway and boundary treatment are considered to be in keeping with the setting of the listed building and will not harm its significance. The reinstatement of the historic line of the driveway (or close to) serves to enhance the significance of the house by revealing historic viewpoints of the principal elevation of the house.

No objections are raised to the granting of planning permission and it is recommended that a condition requires photographic details of the new gravel hardstanding of the driveway to be submitted and approved.





Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. R. Kitts". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letters being larger and more prominent.

Maria Kitts BA (Hons) MA PGCert  
Senior Built Heritage Consultant  
Place Services

*Note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter*