February 2024

Landscape & Visual Appraisal



Caversham Park

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Beechcroft
DESIGNED WITH RETIREMENT IN MIND

Foreword

We are pleased to provide this Landscape & Visual Appraisal to accompany the planning application for development at Caversham Park. This will comprise the conversion of the main Listed house and existing buildings along the main access road, together with the construction of a care home and the erection of new homes, both within and outside the Registered Park and Garden. The proposals provide an excellent opportunity to manage and enhance the parkland associated with the development, respecting its important historic legacy whilst providing opportunities for it to be enjoyed again for its recreational and aesthetic assets.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Savills has been commissioned by Beechcroft Developments Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Landscape Strategy to accompany a planning application for:

- Assisted living units (Class C2) for the over 55's through the conversion of Caversham Park House,
- A 64 bed care home (Class C2),
- 45 age-restricted retirement dwellings, including conversion of the existing Bursars House and The Lodge (Class C3)
- 22 affordable dwellings (Class C3), and
- 5 DMS dwellings (Class C3)
- refurbishment and extension of the existing pavilion to provide changing facilities, café/studio/interpretation hub and sports provision comprising 1 no. croquet lawns, 1 cricket ground and refurbishment of the existing tennis court and associated parking.

The site is situated at Caversham Park, Peppard Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8TZ hereafter known as 'the Site.'

This report considers the potential landscape and visual effects of the development. It describes and evaluates any changes to landscape character, features and visual amenity that may arise due to development.

The main objectives of the appraisals are as follows:

- Establishment of the baseline landscape and visual conditions, including the sensitivity/value of receptors.
- Identification and assessment of the magnitude of any potential effects.
- Appraisal of the significance of any effects.

The report also includes a Landscape Strategy drawing, which illustrates how the external spaces will be conserved and enhanced. This pays particular attention to how the historic park and garden will be respected as well as creating new opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and informal exercise and recreation.

Figure 1: Aerial view of Caversham Park, looking south-west



1.2 Methodology

The appraisal has been informed by the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition (*Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013*) ('GLVIA3'). The guidelines suggest that impacts are assessed from a clear understanding of the development proposed and any related landscape mitigation measures.

The GLVIA3 calls for an understanding of the visual form of the existing landscape, its quality and sensitivity to change, considering the nature of the development. It further calls for an evaluation of the value of the views and susceptibility to change (overall sensitivity) of the potential landscape and visual receptors (viewers). For there to be a visual impact, there is the need for a viewer (receptor). Visual receptors include users of residential properties, workplaces, recreational facilities and other outdoor sites used by the public, roads, railways and footpaths, which would be likely to experience a change in existing views as a result of the construction and operation of the proposed development.

Desk-based Surveys

The desk study included a review of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps for the area, GIS data, aerial photographs, and relevant landscape related designations and published landscape character assessments. The documents reviewed included:

- National Character Areas within the study area.
- Reading Borough Council Local Plan (November 2019)
- Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)

Site Visits

Site visits were undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect and Urban Design Group Recognised Practitioner. The site visits confirmed the information arising from the desk study, produced a photographic record of the site, highlighted any landscape features not already apparent from the desk study and enabled views into and out of the site to be appraised.

A site visit was undertaken on 30th November 2021. The weather was bright and sunny. The visit enabled the site and wider area to be seen in early winter conditions (with very limited foliage on the trees and hedgerows). The visit confirmed the information arising from the desk study, produced a photographic record of the site, identified any landscape features not already highlighted by the desk study and appraised views into and out of the site.

Photography

Photographs were taken with a Canon EOS 5D digital full frame SLR camera with a 50mm lens and a Samsung mobile phone, as relevant. This is compliant with Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Photographs are presented as "Type 1" Visualisations, namely Annotated Viewpoint Photographs, together with associated panoramas to provide the wider context. Locational data was surveyed with a Garmin GPS.

Landscape Appraisal Evaluation Methodology

The appraisals are based on an evaluation of the 'sensitivity' of the landscape and visual receptors and the 'magnitude' of the changes. These are clearly defined within the tables set out in Appendix 1.

The sensitivity of the landscape receptor is based on an evaluation of their 'value' (Appendix 1, Table A) and their 'susceptibility to change' (Table B) caused by the proposed development, enabling their overall 'sensitivity' (Table C) to be gauged. The 'magnitude' of the impact of the proposals on the receptors is then judged (Table D). Finally, the overall 'significance' of the effects is judged by considering both the magnitude of the change and the sensitivity of the receptor together (Table E). As recommended by the GLVIA3, the rationale for this decision-making process is also based on professional judgement and the rationale described, rather than relying solely on matrices.

Once the potential landscape receptors were identified, the magnitude of change likely to result from the implementation and use of the development was identified and, in turn, the significance of these effects, based on the sensitivity of the receptors. For the purposes of this assessment, impacts of moderate and above are considered to be significant.

Visual Appraisal Evaluation Methodology

Like the landscape appraisal, the visual appraisal was based on the identification of potential visual receptors, evaluating their sensitivity, and considering this in combination with the magnitude of the changes to their views.

The preliminary survey work highlighted the main areas where impacts could occur. The 'value' of the views was judged, based on the definitions set out in Appendix 1, Table F and the 'susceptibility to accept change' of the visual receptors was based on the definitions set out in Table G. These were then combined to give an overall indication of the 'sensitivity' of the receptors, based on the matrix set out in Table H as well as professional judgement.

The anticipated magnitude of change to the views of the identified receptors, was then considered, based on the definitions set out in Table I which has been adapted from GLVIA3 methodology. Magnitude of change considers the extent of development visible, the extent of the existing view that would be occupied by the development, the influence of the development within the view and the viewing distance from the receptor to the development. The visual prominence of the proposals would vary according to weather conditions. The assessment has therefore been carried out in accordance with best practice, by assuming the "worst case" scenario; that is, on a clear, bright day in winter.

Consultation

The emerging design and the approach to the landscape and visual impact appraisal was discussed with Steve Vigor, Principal Planning Officer at of Reading Borough Council.

In an email dated 26th November 2021, Mr Vigor referred Savills to Policy EN5 of the local plan, and made reference to the following potential areas of visibility which should be examined:

- Policy EN5 – View 8 View towards Caversham Park House from the A329(M), railway and surrounding streets
- A329(M) actually A3290 at this point) – start of view north from point adjacent to Brighton Road.
- Railway" – clearest view 'worst case'
- Surrounding street such as the B3350 Church Road and Pitts Lane, roads such as Anderson Avenue, Eastcourt Avenue and Palmerstone Road. The top of Whitegates Lane (junction with Culver Lane)
- Upper Redlands Rd and Elmhurst Rd
- McIlroy Park
- Views across the cemetery immediately to the south
- Glimpses from Lowfield Road.
- Higher ground exists further out to the north east with open land between Dunsden Green/Littlestead Green offering views in the direction of Caversham Park.
- Thames Valley Park and the lakes to the north.

Further to the submission of the planning application, Savills met with planning and natural environment officers of Reading Borough Council Planning 10th October 2022 to discuss the approach to revising the scheme. This enabled the Council to visit the site and provided input on the management and protection of trees and the historic parkland. This included suggested enhancements to the orchard, the protection of veteran trees and importance of conserving a visual buffer to any development to the north-east of the listed house.

2. Planning Policy and Designations Review

2.1 Planning Designations

The planning policy context for the site is covered in depth in the accompanying Planning Statement and Environmental Statement. This section summarises policies and designations relating to landscape and visual amenity.

Figure 2 shows that the site lies within the Caversham Park Registered Park and Garden (NHLE UID: 1000524) and also includes four Grade II listed buildings:

- Caversham Park (BBC Records) + curtilage listed structures (thought at this time to comprise Nos. 1 and 3 Caversham Park Drive as well as an early twentieth century squash court) (NHLE UID: 1113560.)
- Entrance Gates and Gate Piers to Caversham Park (NHLE UID: 1113559)
- Inner Park Walls at Caversham Park (NHLE UID: 1113561)
- Temple to West of Caversham Park (NHLE UID: 1302853)

To the south-west the 'Walls at Former Kitchen Garden at Caversham Park' area also listed (NHLE UID: 1302854).
The Historic England Official List Entry (1000524) for Caversham Park is provided at Appendix 2 below.and further information on the heritage assets is provided in the Montagu and Evans Heritage Assessment.

All trees within the site are covered by an area Tree Preservation Order (22/16 'BBC Caversham Park'. This means it is illegal to:
(a) cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy; or
(b) cause or permit the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting, wilful damage or wilful destruction of any trees within the site.

In addition, consultation with the Reading Borough Council Arboricultural officer on 6th March 2017 (relating to a previous design for the site) highlighted a number of key trees that the Council particularly wished to see retained.



Figure 2: Heritage Designations

Caversham Park Registered Park & Garden

Listed Building

2.2 Planning Policy

Of relevance to landscape and visual matters, the site is covered by Policy EN5 'Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest' within the Reading Local Plan (Adopted 2019). This states that new development should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to views of acknowledged historical significance. In particular, it highlights View 8: 'Views towards Caversham Park House from the A329(M), railway and surrounding streets' (see Figure 3).

Caversham Park is also covered by Policy CA2: 'Caversham Park'. This described the house and gardens as 'key features of the heritage and landscape of Reading and that the assets will be conserved. The policy requires that any development or conversion proposals should open as much of the park as possible up to public access, including reinstatement of any historic public footpaths where possible and appropriate. The policy also states that there may be scope for some limited development on previously developed land within the site, which must comply with the criteria below:

- No development will negatively affect the significance of heritage assets and their setting;
- Development will not detract from the character or appearance of the important landscape; and
- Development will not negatively affect significant trees or areas of biodiversity importance.

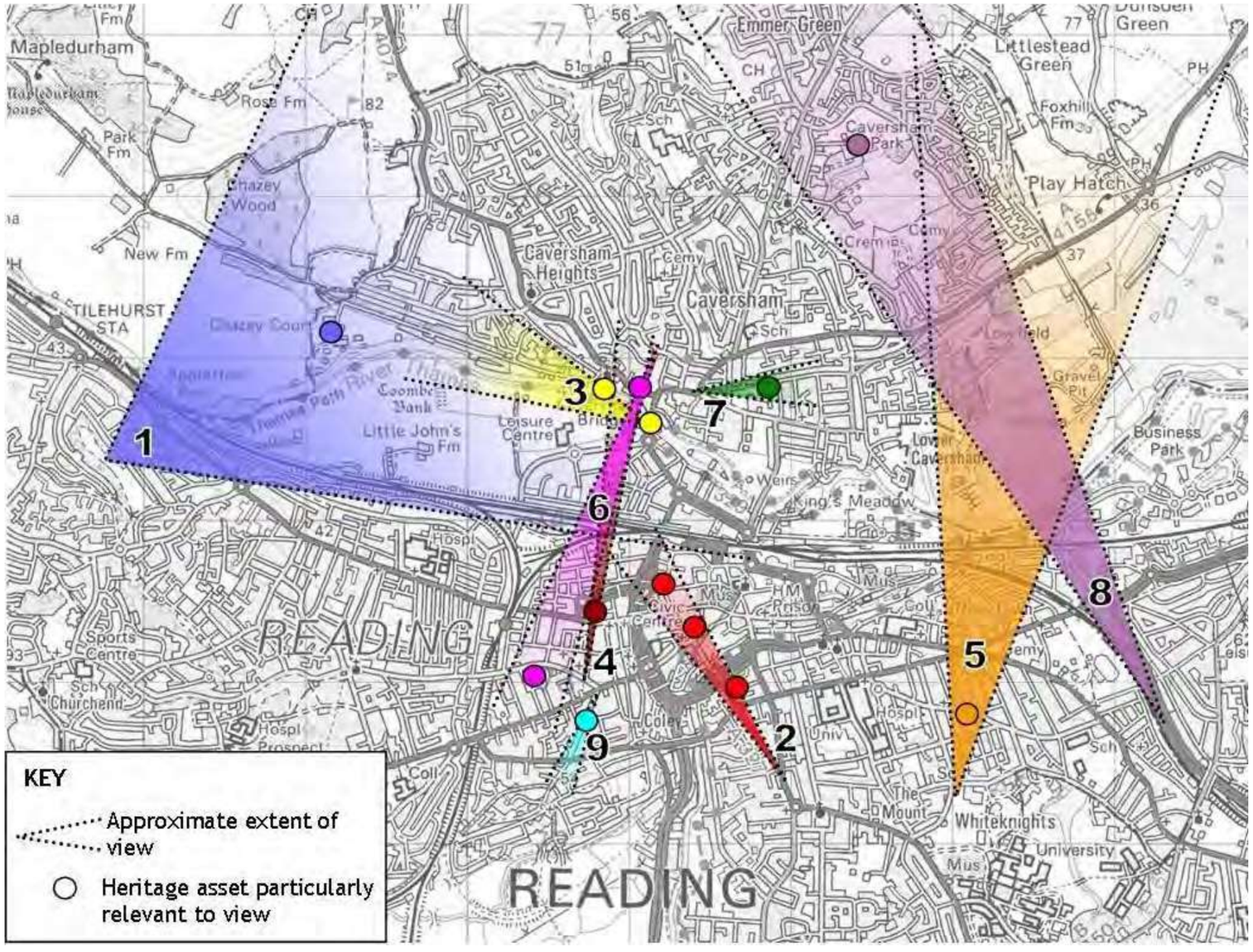


Figure 3: Reading Borough Council Local Plan: Figure 4.2 Policy EN5 Map

In addition the Local Plan also covers development in historic settings in Policy EN6 (see adjacent box). This requires that new development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development.

Whilst the Local Plan does not have a policy specifically relating to Historic Parks and Gardens, the supporting text for Policy CA2 states:

> *"8.3.9 Caversham Park is a Registered Historic Park and Garden. The Historic England website states that: "Historic parks and gardens are a fragile and finite resource: they can easily be damaged beyond repair or lost forever. Whether in town or country, such places are an important, distinctive, and much cherished part of our inheritance and we have a duty to care for them.*
>
> *8.3.10 It goes on to say that: "The main purpose of this Register is to celebrate designed landscapes of note, and encourage appropriate protection. … Registration is a 'material consideration' in the planning process, meaning that planning authorities must consider the impact of any proposed development on the landscapes' special character."*

The Local Plan requires that any proposal that includes additional development would need to be accompanied by compelling evidence that such development will not have a detrimental impact on the many features of importance within the site, "including areas of important habitat, significant trees, the House and other listed structures, views in and out of the site, and the overall significance of the park itself, as well as on considerations such as access." (Paragraph 8.3.11) In more general terms, landscape is covered in Policy CC7 'Design and the Public Realm'. This requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The policy states that the various components of development form, including landscape, will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- *"Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm; ...*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping."*

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS

Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.

Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.

3. Concise History of Caversham Park

The history of Caversham Park is covered more fully in the accompanying Montagu Evans Heritage Statement and the Historic England Official List Entry (1000524), which is provided at Appendix 2 below. This list description summarises it as *"A country house with the remains of an early C18 formal garden by Stephen Switzer flanking mid C19 formal terraces, surrounded by the remains of a landscape park laid out in the 1760s by Lancelot Brown."*

Caversham Park has been the site of a manor and park since the late Medieval period , and hosted a Medieval deer park for approximately 700 years, although this is no longer discernible. A house has existed on the Site since the 16th century and the current grounds includes remnants of the 18th century formal terraced garden (designed by Stephen Switzer) and the landscape parkland laid out by Capability Brown (1760s). Whilst the integrity of the features of the park and garden has eroded over time, its elements illustrate its past uses and design from the 18th century onwards.

The gardens are focussed on Caversham Park House, which is located at the top of the south facing hillside to benefit, at the time, from views towards the Thames. Wooded pleasure grounds, dating from the 1720s layout flank each side of the house, and a canal also dating from this period remains to the south-west of the house. Formal terraces in this area were removed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in the 1760s, illustrating the more naturalistic approach to landscape design at this times.

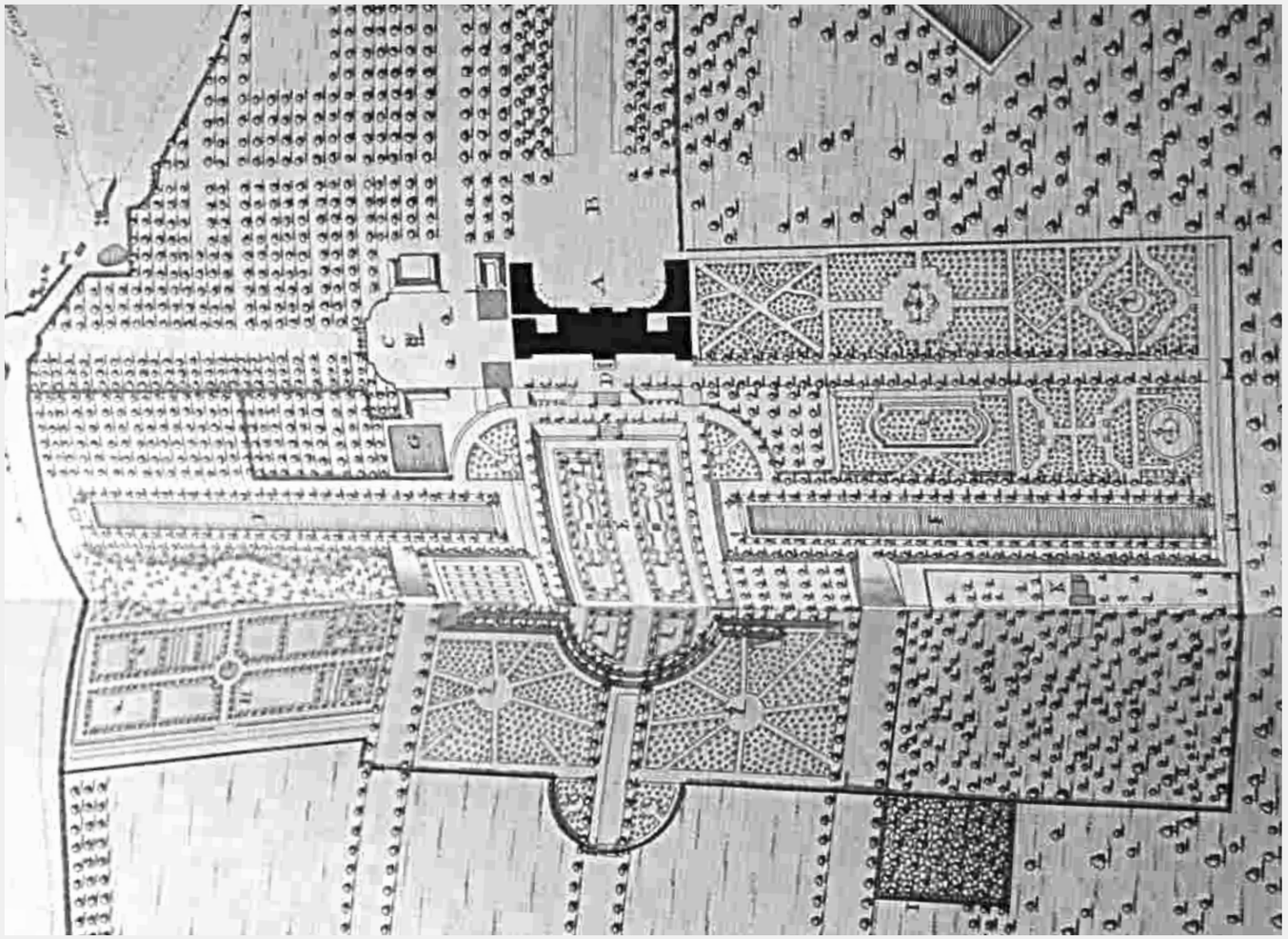


Figure 4: 1725 Vitruvius Britannicus Map

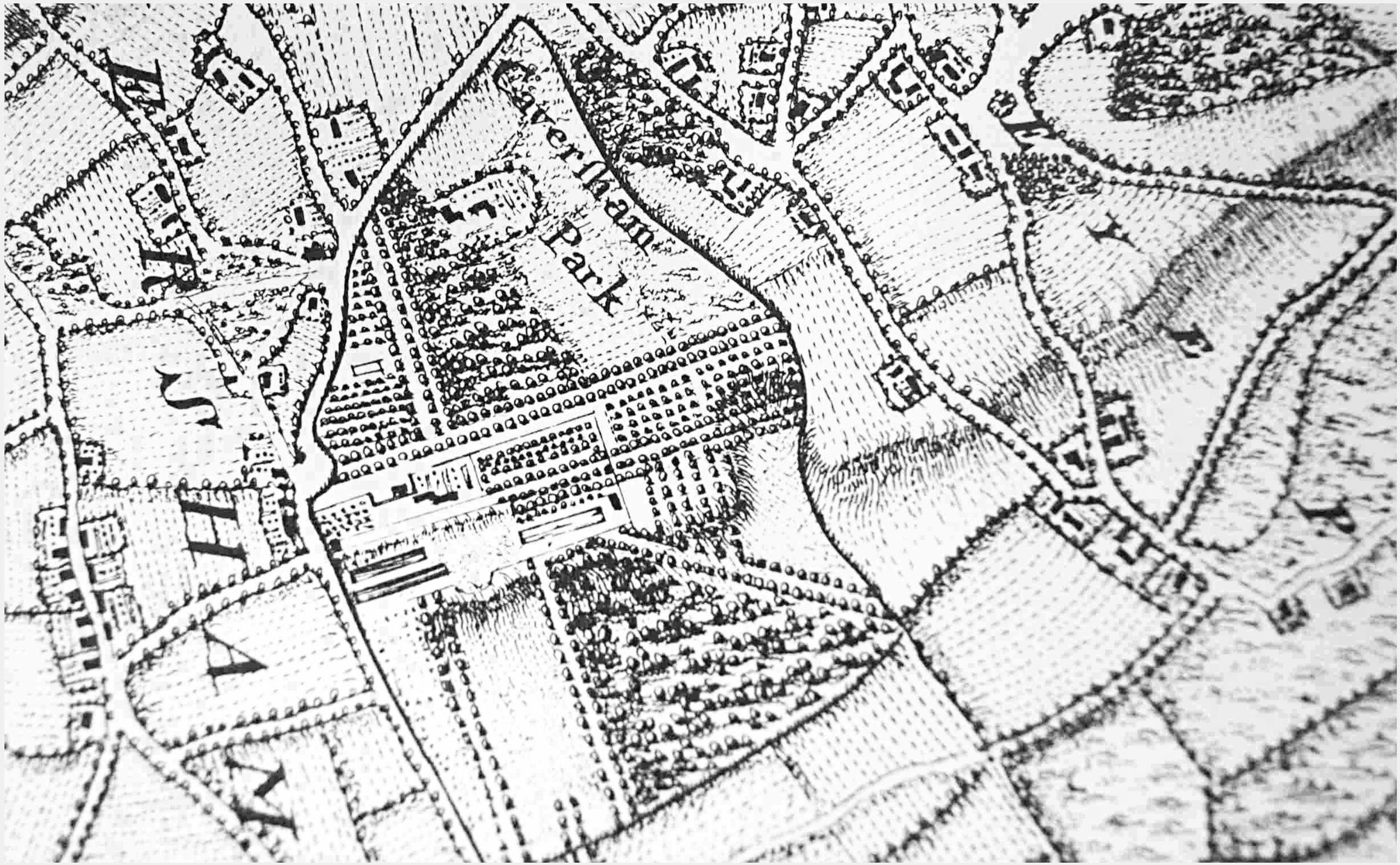


Figure 5: 1761: Map of Berkshire, John Rocque

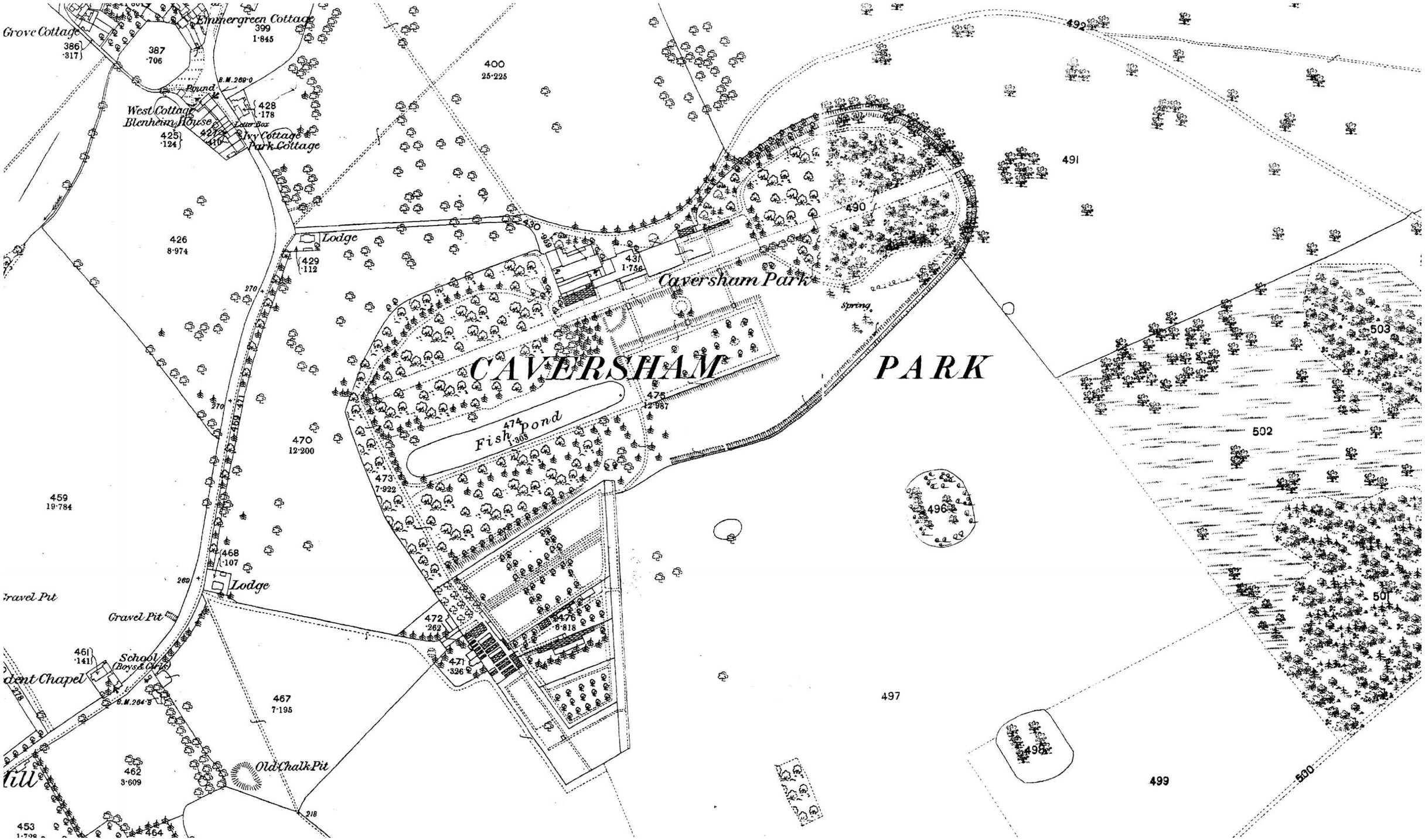


Figure 6: 1880 Map

During the twentieth century the wider parkland significantly reduced in size, with areas sold off to accommodate new housing at Caversham Park Village. The use of the house as a school (1920-WWII) and the BBC (WWII-early 21st century) resulted in alterations and additions, including a cricket pitch, ancillary buildings, satellite receivers and extensive areas of car parking. New buildings both adjacent to the site at Caversham Park Village and within Reading to the south have also altered the views out from the house and park during this time. These changes detract from the structure and features of the parkland and the ability to appreciate or experience the historic interest of this designed landscape.

4. Landscape Strategy: Mitgation Proposals

A landscape strategy for Caversham Park in its entirety has been prepared Savills Landscape Architects and Montagu Evans Heritage Consultants. This illustrates how the grounds of the house and its wider parkland to the north and south will be enhanced. Key features and objectives are:

Northern Parkland

- The rationalisation of extensive areas of parking areas and removal of cycle stores and late 20th century shrub and tree planting to the north and north-east of the house and replacement with open grass and ornamental shrubs, strategically located to minimise the visual impact of vehicles and allow clear views between the house and parkland to the north.
- The removal of hard standing and late 20th century shrub beds at the main entrance to the house and replacement with new lawns and planted areas around the northern elevation
- The creation of a new courtyard garden at the western end of the house.
- Manage the young woodland to the north and north-east of the parkland to enhance its wildlife value as well as a visual screen.
- The retention of the mown parkland/cricket pitch to the north of the house and incorporation of a new croquet lawn.
- Enhance biodiversity of grassland to the north of the house through the creation of extensive areas of wildflower meadow.

1. Orchard area restored and planted.
2. Proposed local area for play.
3. Existing deciduous woodland managed to maintain its longevity, including the removal of non-native species and unsafe limbs/ trees. Opportunities will be taken to gradually expose the original Stephen Switzer terracing within the south-western woodland, allowing access and interpretation, and retaining the routes of the historic paths through the woodlands.
4. Existing young woodland/scrub area managed to enhance wildlife value and continue to provide a visual buffer.
5. Condition survey of the oversize urn at the west end of the fishpond to be comissioned and any recommended necessary works to be undertaken
6. Enhancements to 20th century pond garden, including new planting and seating.
7. Edwardian summer house to be refurbished.
8. Retention of largest satellite dish dating from BBC occupancy with interpretation board reflecting the importance of the corporation's important role at Caversham Park in WWII and later.
9. Potential reduction in tree height to allow views through to Caversham Park House, subject to agreeement with Reading Borough Council Natural Environment team.
10. Proposed seating area.

- Existing trees retained
- Proposed trees
- Existing orchard managed and enhanced including additional traditional orchard tree planting
- Proposed private gardens (including patios)
- Proposed ornamental shrubs
- Existing semi-improved grass managed as wildflower meadow
- Existing/ proposed amenity grass
- Proposed bowling & croquet areas
- Reinstated historic path linking the remaining three paths leading south off the main terrace walk
- Pedestrian paths (hard surfacing): residents access only
- Pedestrian paths (hard surfacing): public access during daylight hours
- Reinstated/managed woodland paths (hoggin): residents access only
- Existing/proposed path (hoggin): public access during daylight hours
- Proposed path (mown grass)
- Existing pool managed to enhance biodiversity
- Existing ditch retained and managed
- Existing and proposed buildings
- Existing wall restored and scrub vegetation removed



Figure 7: Landscape Strategy: North



- Existing trees retained
- Proposed native trees planted in 'Brownian-style' clumps and shelter belts
- Proposed native hedgerow
- Existing semi-improved grass managed as wildflower meadow
- Existing/ proposed amenity grass
- Existing/proposed path (hoggin): public access during daylight hours
- Proposed path (mown grass): public access during daylight hours
- Existing pool managed to enhance biodiversity
- Existing ditch retained and managed
- Existing wall restored and scrub vegetation removed

TARGET NOTES:

3 Existing deciduous woodland managed to maintain its longevity, including the removal of non-native species and unsafe limbs/trees. Opportunities will be taken to gradually expose the original Stephen Switzer terracing within the south-western woodland, allowing access and interpretation, and retaining the routes of the historic paths through the woodlands.

5 Condition survey of the oversize urn at the west end of the fishpond to be comissioned and any recommended necessary works to be undertaken

9 Potential reduction in tree height to allow views through to Caversham Park House, subject to agreeement with Reading Borough Council Natural Environment team.

10 Proposed seating area.

Figure 8: Landscape Strategy: South

- Management of existing woodlands to the west of the house to encourage understorey species.
- Built development to respect the alignment of the existing terrace/axis to the immediate south of the house.
- Restore, replant and extend the existing orchard area to the west of the house.
- Provide a circular walk around the northern and southern parkland. This would be accessible from Peppard Road/ Caversham Park Drive and be open to members of the public during daylight hours thereby allowing public access into an area that is currently restricted.
- Retain important parkland trees and supplement these with new groups of native parkland species around the edges of the former cricket square.
- The area of open grass to the north of the house would continue to form an integral part of the parkland setting, incorporating bowling and croquet leisure opportunities for residents. Similarly the associated pavilion would be retained, and extended to provide further space for a cafe and interpretation hub.
- The northern entrance to Caversham House and its associated parking area would be rationalised and softened, with new lawns, shrub planting and hedgerows.
- New housing would be associated with small open spaces, including a small play area (LAP) and extensive opportunities for formal shrub and hedgerow planting.

Western and Eastern Woodlands Area

- The restoration/enhancement of existing hoggin paths through the areas of woodland to the south-west and south-east of the house. The path through the western wood would also be available to members of the public during daylight hours.
- Woodland management/restoration within the western and eastern woodlands to the south of the house. This will include the removal of any unsafe elements as well as species such as laurel. Whilst the overall structure of the woodlands will remain, the management of the south-western woodland will seek to open up views of terracing that are believed to date from the Stephen Switzer parkland design. The precise aspects of this woodland management will be subject to a detailed proposal as a condition of planning consent.

Southern Parkland

- The introduction of a mown grass path around the southern parkland. This path will allow public access into a landscape that is currently inaccessible and will therefore be a beneficial landscape asset.
- Re-create an historic pedestrian path connecting the existing paths on the terrace to the south of Caversham Park House.
- Repair works to the 'ha ha' wall to the south of the parkland and removal of scrub species here to open up views.
- The management of the parkland and field to the south of the 'ha ha' as a wildflower meadow.
- The planting of new hedgerows around the southern part of the parkland, adjacent to the Cemetery. This will provide visual separation to both land uses and help restore the parkland character of the area.
- The planting of clumps of forest-scale trees within the southern parkland. Whilst there is no known mapping of the Capability Brown designs for this part of the park, the aim will be to reflect how the parkland may have been designed at this time. Tree species will be native, primarily comprising oak and beech. Figure 8 shows approximately 1.6ha of new native planting in this area. Based on an average of one new standard tree per 65 sq.m, this indicates a commitment to approximately 250 new parkland trees.
- The retention of the large satellite dish within the north-eastern corner of the southern parkland. This will reflect the history of the BBC's occupation of the site and will be accompanied by interpretation.

5. Landscape Appraisal

5.1 Published Landscape Character Assessments

Published Landscape Character Assessments
The site lies within National Landscape Character Area 110 'Chilterns'. Due to its designed parkland character and wider urban setting the site does not exhibit characteristics considered to be typical of the wider rural Chilterns landscape. Two of the 'key characteristics' for NCA110 however are 'Remnants of various historic land use types…. including Registered Parks and Gardens' and 'Numerous parkland landscapes define large, historic estates. Designs by Humphrey Repton and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown are represented, and the houses, follies and wooded features provide local landmarks.' Designed parklands and large gardens are described as being prominent, covering 3 per cent of the area and as a recognised characteristic of the area it is important that this is conserved. 'Statements for Environmental Opportunity 1' covers the management of wooded landscapes and parklands, and stresses the importance of enhanced management to these assets.

There is no locally produced landscape character assessment covering the site.

5.2 Site Landscape Character and Features

In terms of the detailed landscape character of the site, there are a number of distinct areas, relating to how the parkland has been used and evolved over time. These are described below, focussing on the areas that will be subject to change as a result of the proposed development.

South of Caversham Park House
To the south of the house, open lawns occupy a hillside location, with a terrace walk, formal lawns and beyond this a paddock and wider parkland separated from the lawns by a degraded ha-ha. The majority of these areas have far reaching views towards the urban skyline of Reading, however mature trees within the parkland provide partial screening in some areas. Areas of mature woodland also flank the lawned area to both the west and east, screening views in and out of the parkland from these directions. To the south-west of the house, a canal extends to the west, with mature woodland to both the north and south. Lawned areas around this canal allow informal access and at its western end a statue contributes to its semi-formality.

The terrace immediately to the south of the house forms part of a longer axis that runs to both the west and east of the house. According to the Registered Park and Garden List description, an axial terrace has been present within the gardens since the early eighteenth century, and has remained as a visible element despite the construction of a succession of replacement houses and the re-design of the garden by Lancelot Brown in the mid eighteenth century. At its western end the path terminates at the listed temple, which is situated on the site of a previous building. At its eastern end, the path terminates in the belt of mature trees adjacent to Lowfield Road. Both of these extensions to the terraces comprise wide grass 'paths' and have clipped laurel hedgerows to both the north and south. Whilst these hedgerows probably dated from the 20th century, they contribute to the historic, more formal structure of this part of the garden.

The lawn to the south of the terrace includes three sets of steps connecting it with the terrace, a circular bed with seasonal bedding and an area with a pond and willow trees in its south-eastern area. The latter appears to be a late twentieth century addition that detracts from the wider structure of the lawns. The ha-ha along the southern edge of the lawns is in a relatively poor state of repair and has a regenerating hedgerow along its length, detracting from its original function to provide a seamless visual transition between garden and adjacent fields.

Figure 9: Site Character Areas


North of Caversham Park House
East of Caversham Park House
West of Caversham Park House
South of Caversham Park House

Images: South of Caversham Park House



View from canal to south of house.



Vista along terrace towards listed temple, looking west.



Twentieth century pond and willows to south-east of house.



Remnant Lancelot 'Capability' Brown parkland to south of house.



Vista along terrace away from listed temple, looking east towards proposed development area.

To the south of the lawns, grazing land within the park continues down to Reading Cemetery and Crematorium to the south. To the south-west, the site of an historic walled garden is occupied by a mobile home park (beyond the listed garden wall).

In summary, the area of parkland to the south represents an important open setting to Caversham House and is an important area of remnant parkland and gardens, however its quality and strength of character appears to have been continually eroding over recent decades (see Montagu Evans Heritage Assessment for further details).

From paddock to south of the lawns, with degraded ha-ha in foreground.

Images: West of Caversham Park House



Urn at western end of canal.



Canal to south-west of house, looking west towards woodland pleasure grounds.



Paddock to the south of the lawns, looking north-east towards woodland pleasure grounds.



Listed temple to south-west of the house.



Boundary of BBC Written Archives Centre, adjacent to western boundary of the site.



Site of proposed care home to the west of the historic house.





Woodlands to the west of the house and the proposed care home site.



Site of proposed housing to the west of the historic house. The roof of the BBC Written Archives Centre is visible beyond the hedgerow.



Site of proposed housing to the west of the historic house. The upper storeys of housing on Peppard Road can be seen beyond a mature boundary hedgerow.



Early twentieth century cottages on Caversham Park Drive will have their settings enhanced.



Southern elevations of early twentieth century cottages on Caversham Park Drive.

West of Caversham Park House

To the west of the house, the landform is more level than the sloping hillside to the south. Adjacent to Caversham Park House there is area of low rise buildings and associated parking dating from the 1980s century which detract from the visual setting of the house. Further west, an area of mature woodland is an attractive landscape area that also provides visual separation between the house and buildings to the west, including the BBC Written Archives Centre on Peppard Road and the proposed affordable housing area adjacent to Peppard Road. To the north of this woodland, and south of the access drive, there is an area of open grass with poorly managed orchard trees, together with an avenue of trees adjacent to the drive itself. West of this, also on the drive, are the lodge and early twentieth century houses.

The proposed development area lies adjacent to the western boundary of the park, with its western boundary comprising a hedgerow adjacent to Peppard Road. The area itself comprises semi-improved grassland with a mixture of scattered trees. Trees in this area are generally young and do not contribute to the historic character of the parkland.

In summary, the area to the west of Caversham House includes a mixture of land uses predominantly dating from the 20th century that do not contribute to the historic character of the park. Important areas for retention include the woodland to the west of the ancillary buildings and also the trees and buildings associated with the driveway that leads to the house. Visually, this area is relatively well concealed by the woodland to the west and south, Caversham Park House to the east and the lodge houses and parkland trees to the north.

North of Caversham Park House

To the north of the house, the landform is again more level than the hillside to the south and was set out as a cricket pitch during the twentieth century. The associated pavilion remains to the west of this area, together with associated car parking. To the west of the pavilion, and north of the access drive there is an area of open grass, with a variety of trees, including some veterans. Many of these are large specimens that contribute to the historic character of the parkland, although views through to 1960s housing on the edge of the park erodes the strength of its overall landscape character.

To the north of the house there is an open, grassed area occupied by a cricket pitch which complements the setting of the house to the south, and continues to appear as an integral part of the parkland.

To the north and east of the former cricket pitch there is an area of trees and rough grassland. These appear to date from the time of the adjacent 1960s development of Caversham Park Village to the north and comprise a mix of native and ornamental species. Whilst they are not an historic feature they form an important visual screen from the housing area immediately beyond.

To the immediate north and north-east of the house, the access driveway expands into a long parking area that extends almost to the site boundary. This is also associated with mid twentieth century landscape planting beds and cycle stores as well as scattered tree planting that also appears to date from the late twentieth century. These features all detract from the northern frontage of the house, although an area of scrub/young trees immediately to the north of part of the parking area does function as a visual screen.

At the eastern end of this parking area, mature trees provide further visual enclosure to the north, east and south and provide a more established leafy character to the area.

In summary, the area to the north of Caversham House is level in character and generally well enclosed by existing mature trees, although there are glimpses of the late twentieth century housing beyond. Features associated with the twentieth century uses of the park have eroded its integrity, especially adjacent to the house, including extensive areas of parking, a*d hoc* ornamental shrub and tree planting and buildings such as cycle stores. Whilst the area of the former cricket pitch dates from the twentieth century, its open grassy nature complements the parkland character.

Images: North of Caversham Park House



Northern approach to Caversham Park House, looking east.



Site of proposed housing to the north-east of the historic house, looking south-east.



Northern elevation of historic house. Entrance dominated by hard-standing.



Parking to north of Caversham Park House, looking north-east towards proposed housing area.



Mixed tree planting within parkland to north of Cavesham Park Drive screens views to/from adjacent housing.



Mixed tree planting on north-eastern side of park screens views to/from adjacent housing.



Former cricket pitch, to north of Cavesham Park House, looking south-east.



Former cricket pitch area to the north-east of Cavesham Park House, looking south.



Parkland to the north of Caversham Park House.







Images: East of Caversham Park House



Area for proposed development to east of house, looking south-west. Woodland to south provides visual enclosure.



Area for proposed development to east of house, looking south-west. Woodland to south provides visual enclosure.



Area for proposed development to east of house, looking east to mature vegetation adjacent to Lowefield Road



Mature planting to north of eastern development screens views



Area for proposed development to east of house, looking west.



Area for proposed development to east of house, looking west.



Area for proposed development to east of house, looking west.



From lawns to south of house looking north-east towards the eastern development area. Mature vegetation screens views.



Looking northeast along vista towards disused gate by Lowfields Road. The lefthand side of this path and hedge form part of the eastern development area.



Looking south-west from pathway to the south of the development area along axial path leading to the listed temple.



Looking northeast along vista towards the eastern development area. The hedgerow and adjacent trees woudl be removed.



From the eastern end of the terrace looking northeast along vista towards disused gate by Lowfield Road. Foreground trees partially screen the development area.

East of Caversham Park House

To the east of Caversham House, the landform is also generally level. This area comprises a grassed area surrounded by shrubs and large mature trees. Whilst the maturity of the trees contribute to its historic character and setting, the area includes tree planting that dates from the twentieth century as well as a series of satellite dishes, and a large twentieth century greenhouse that all erode its historic character. To the south of this grassed area lies the green pathway and associated hedges which forms the physical and visual axis which terminates with the temple to the west of the house. To the east, this pathway also leads towards a redundant gateway which joins Lowfield Road, however the presence of mature vegetation within this area shows that the connection of the path and gateway appears to have been overgrown for many years. Prior to the 1960s when Lowfield Road was laid out, this gateway would have led into the wider parkland beyond and historic mapping does not show it connecting to any footpaths or lanes in this area. South of the axial pathway lies an area of relatively dense scrub and woodland which extends down the hillside to the east of the lawns. Whilst this area lies in close proximity to both Caversham Park House and housing on Lowfield Road, the large trees around all of its edges provide a good degree of visual enclosure, giving the area a secluded feel.

5.3 Townscape Character of the Surrounding Area

Beyond the boundaries of the park itself, the built environment of Caversham and Reading forms an urban context which is very different from the rural setting that would have existed until the late twentieth century (see Figure 10). To the north, west and east, there is late twentieth century, low-rise housing that can be glimpsed from some parts of the northern area of the park.

Townscape Character to the West

At Peppard Road, to the west, housing predominantly comprises detached, low-density two storey properties set behind hedgerows and relatively generous front gardens. The eastern side of this road, comprises the large, low rise built form of the BBC Written Archives Centre and The Hill Primary School. These are set within generous grounds with mature trees along their road frontages, giving this part of the street a leafy character. The western frontage of Caversham Park also contributes to this street frontage, with a mature hedgerow along its western edge and the listed gate posts at the entrance to the park contributing to the street character. Whilst the Peppard Road area it is not a Conservation Area, however the setting of the listed gate posts are of importance. The western part of the Caversham Park site which fronts Peppard Road is not covered by the Registered Park and Garden designation (see Figure 2).

Beyond Peppard Road, the built form of Caversham extends to the north and west, with its medium density suburban housing within an undulating landform.

Townscape Character to the South

Whilst the parkland to the south of the historic house forms a more extensive open setting, the distant views towards the skyline of Reading town centre have compromised the original rural character of this part of the parkland as well as blocking views of the River Thames. In this wider area adjacent to the open parkland, there is a mobile home park (Harveys Nurseries, set within a walled Victorian garden associated with Caversham Park Registered Park and Garden), allotments (Henley Road Allotment) and a cemetery (Reading Cemetery and Crematorium). Whilst these land uses are open in character, they are all associated with an urban fringe location and form a transition zone between Caversham Park and suburban housing along the Henley Road corridor and Lower Caversham to the south.

Further south, the River Thames flood plain creates a distinct open corridor between Lower Caversham and Reading town centre. Here the landscape is dominated by extensive areas of disused gravel pits, now used for leisure purposes and bounded by business parks to the south. Beyond this, Reading town centre occupies an area close to the river, surrounded by a a relatively dense grid of residential streets



Low density residential and institutional uses along Peppard Road to the west of Caversham Park



Urban fringe uses to the south of Caversham Park: allotments, mobile home park and cemetery