

High Hesket

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

TCMS.2141

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Appendix A: Original Plans of High Hesket.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Heritage Assessment has been prepared as part of an outline planning application for the construction of 4 dwellings within the plot of High Heskett, located at 19 Parkside Road, Tilehurst, Reading. The land included within the redline is described as “the Site” within this report.
- 1.2. High Heskett has been identified by the local planning authority as a potential non-designated heritage asset and is currently being considered for inclusion in the local list. This position is not yet formalised, however this assessment has been prepared on the basis of the property being a non-designated heritage asset, as defined by the NPPF.
- 1.3. The building was constructed in the 1930s with the original plans included at Appendix A to this report. The plans were prepared by Conrad Birdwood Willcocks (1887 – 1972), a Reading-based architect who worked extensively in the local area, often in the Arts and Crafts style. However, Gold attributes the building to Joel Williamson Perrin¹.



Plate 1: The principal elevation of High Heskett, viewed from the property boundary.

- 1.4. The building is a non-designated heritage asset and its setting will undergo changes as a result of the current application. The proposals have been subject to pre-application discussion. This report has been prepared to describe the significance of the heritage asset, with consideration given to any contribution made by its setting, including the Site, to this significance.
- 1.5. This report meets the requirements of paragraph 207 of the NPPF and has been prepared in accordance with the “5-step” process set out in *GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (see paragraph 2.8 for further information) and provides sufficient information, with regard to built heritage matters, to determine this planning application.

¹ Gold, S *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading* (1999)

2. Methodology and Approach

- 2.1. The **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** sets out the government's national planning agenda. It defines conservation as:

The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

- 2.2. Paragraph 216 states that (with my emphasis below):

*The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, **a balanced judgement will be required** having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*

- 2.3. The NPPF is clear that protection should be afforded to heritage assets and their settings.

- 2.4. Significance is defined in the NPPF as:

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. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

- 2.5. The **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)** provides further information regarding those interests and defines them as follows:

Archaeological interest: As defined in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework, there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skill, like sculpture.

Historic interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

- 2.6. The relevant local plan policy is set out in the **Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)**. Policy EN4 is relevant to this assessment. The relevant parts of the policy are included below:

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.

- 2.7. Historic England provide guidance related to assessing change within the setting of heritage assets within **GPA3: The Setting of Heritage Assets**. The methodology requires the following:

Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected

Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated

Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on that significance or on the ability to appreciate it

Step 4: Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

Step 5: Make and document the decision and monitor outcomes

- 2.8. The settings assessment provided at Section 5 follows the 5-step process set out above. Further explanation of each of these steps is provided in GPA3.
- 2.9. For Steps 2 and 3, the document also provides a list of certain characteristics, or matters that should be considered when undertaking the assessment. This includes, for example, consideration of land-uses, historic associations, views, the orientation and aspect of the asset, noise, odours and other non-visual effects.
- 2.10. The guidance document is clear (see paragraph 9) that:
- Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation [...] Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or to the ability to appreciate that significance.*
- 2.11. To understand the contribution that an asset's setting makes to its significance, it is first therefore important to understand what significance the asset holds.
- 2.12. Paragraph 9 also notes that:
- Settings of heritage assets change over time. Understanding this history of change will help to determine how further development within the asset's setting is likely to affect the contribution made by setting to the significance of the heritage asset.*
- 2.13. Paragraph 10 notes that setting is often expressed in terms of views, but that setting also incorporates additional non-visual elements of setting.

3. Site Description and Historic Development

Historic Development

- 3.1. High Heskett was built in 1935 as part of the gradual development of Parkside Road. As noted at paragraph 1.2, there is some doubt regarding the architect. However, the building was evidently constructed in accordance with the surviving original plans by Willcocks (Plate 2 and Appendix A) and is typical of his style. It is possible that Willcocks designed the building with Perrin responsible for overseeing the construction works and any adaptations required.
- 3.2. In 1935, Willcocks had recently terminated his partnership with Joseph Reginald Greenaway (known as Willcocks & Greenaway) and was practising alone. Although his workload did decrease following the termination of his partnership, it is possible that he utilised other architects to assist with the workload and in realising his commissions, allowing him time to take on new works and dedicate more time to research, which remained one of his key interests throughout this life.

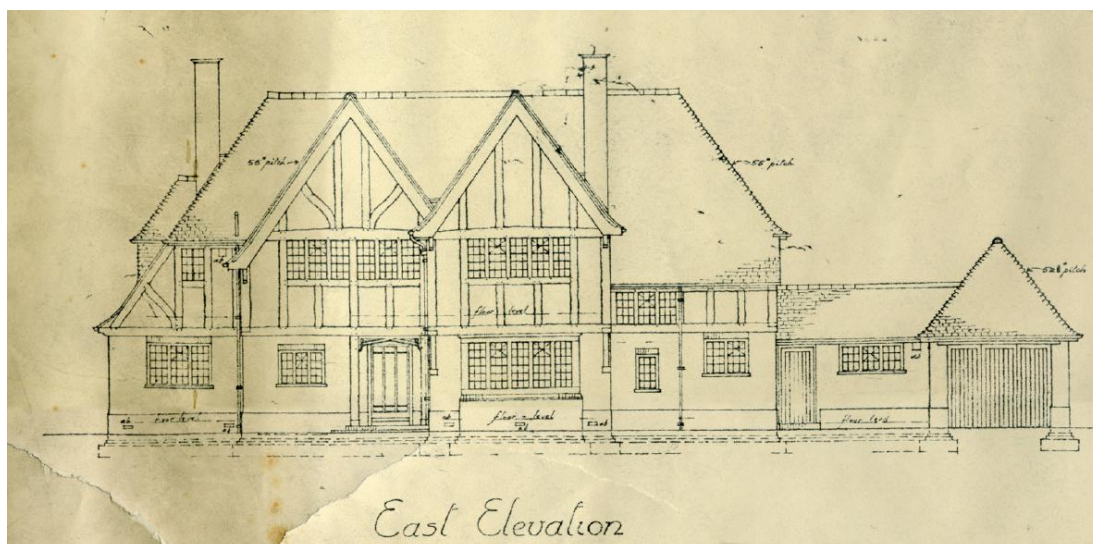


Plate 2: Willcocks' original plans for the principal elevation of the building.

- 3.3. The Royal Berkshire Archives holds an extensive collection for Willcocks and a detailed bibliography of him. It lists plans associated with numerous works, although these do not include plans for High Heskett². The Archives website does, however, note that:

He kept all the plans and papers relating to nearly every project that he ever worked on. His register of drawing plans shows that there are a handful of projects not included in the collection and it is probably that in these cases the papers and plans were given to the owner of the property or another interested party

- 3.4. Willcocks was deeply interested in local history and the preservation of historic buildings, with his work also influenced by traditional construction styles. He worked extensively in the Arts and Crafts style (particularly early in his career) and often utilised traditional materials and construction methods in his designs. Willcocks was meticulous in his approach, not only ensuring that the buildings were aesthetically pleasing from the outside, but also that they functioned well for the residents. He often designed integrated furniture within his dwellings.
- 3.5. High Heskett has undergone little change since its construction in the 1930s. However, the local area and the setting of the building have seen considerable change. Parkside Road was laid out by the late 19th century and lay to the east of Prospect Park (also known as Prospecthill Park).

² <https://ww2.berkshirenclosure.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=DEWK>

The Park formerly formed part of the wider Calcot Estate, but was separated in the 18th century. The Site and the remainder of Parkside Road historically formed part of the estate, before the local area was gradually sold off and developed in the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th century.

- 3.6. The area initially developed as a series of large dwellings, set in spacious plots. This is illustrated by the 1898 OS (Figure 1) which shows the local road layout and sporadic development alongside it. This includes some semi-detached dwellings along Westcote Road and a number of larger, detached dwellings.
- 3.7. The first half of the 20th century saw further development, including the construction of High Hesket and the neighbouring dwellings, as shown on the 1959 OS (Figure 2). A tennis court is also shown within the garden at this time. There is some contrast in the scale of development, with larger dwellings fronting Parkside Road and smaller, denser development to the rear, notably on Kearsley Road. More recently the construction of Ashdene Gardens has further increased the density of development in the local area.

Site Description

- 3.8. The Site is enclosed by a red brick boundary wall with two pairs of railings to Parkside Road, with an entrance drive and parking area beyond. This provides access to the building and to an attached garage, which was part of the original design. High Hesket is set beyond the boundary wall and planting but is partially visible from the street. Externally, it has seen little change since its construction and is in good condition.
- 3.9. The rear garden includes a terrace area to the immediate west of the building, which provides access to a large lawn (which historically included the tennis court) accessed via steps. The lawn area in turn gives way to an area of planting and various domestic ancillary buildings. It is enclosed by close boarded fencing to both the north and south sides.
- 3.10. The landholding is unchanged from the original construction, although additional dwellings have been constructed to the north on Shire's Head Close and south on Ashdene Gardens. The building retains a relatively large associated garden and is one of the few buildings in the local area that has not seen alteration to its rear plot.

4. Setting Assessment

Step 1: Identify which heritage assets and their settings are affected

- 4.1. High Heskett is described more fully above and comprises a 1930s dwelling constructed in an Arts and Crafts style. It remains substantially as built, with only minor alterations made to the building, together with ongoing maintenance and repairs.
- 4.2. The significance of the building as a non-designated heritage asset is drawn from its historic interest as a good example of a large Arts and Crafts dwelling, illustrating architectural fashions in the inter-war period and the popularity of more traditional forms of design and construction, which grew from the end of the 19th century. Although there is some doubt regarding the architect, the building has clearly been constructed substantially in accordance with plans by Willcocks and appears to have been designed by him. This provides further associative interest, of a local level, due to his importance in the Berkshire area as a prolific architect.
- 4.3. The building also possesses architectural and artistic interests, bound in the quality of its design and as a good local example of the Arts and Crafts style. Other contemporary buildings along Parkside Road have been constructed in a similar style.



Plate 3: The rear garden of High Heskett, which includes a large lawn area. neighbouring properties are visible to the north and south from within the garden. This includes recent development at Shire's Head Close, as shown above.

- 4.4. The setting of the building comprises its frontage to Parkside Road, which includes primarily 20th century dwellings, some of which also date from the inter-war period, and its large garden plot to the rear. This is enclosed by housing constructed in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Its contribution to the significance of the building is discussed below.

Step 2: Assess the degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance of a heritage asset(s) or allow that significance to be appreciated

- 4.5. The building forms part of the streetscene to Parkside Road, with the boundary wall and mature planting notable features which complement the spacious, suburban character of the road. Although views of the building itself are limited by the planting, it is possible to partly appreciate its architectural interest from here, while the set back of the building and its spacious plot illustrate the historic development of the local area.
- 4.6. The rear garden plot of the building also contributes to the historic interest of the building, illustrating its design and use as an attractive Arts and Crafts property set within a generous plot. However, the recent neighbouring development is appreciable from within this plot, which has reduced the sense of space and relative isolation that the building historically enjoyed, with little development to the rear when it was constructed. However, this surrounding development has not notably diminished the ability to appreciate the architectural and historic interests of the building.



Plate 4: A view from the lawn looking east towards the rear elevation of High Hesket and the area of the proposed access. Neighbouring development at Ashdene Gardens is also visible.

- 4.7. The garden plot continues to allow for an appreciation of the building's attractive rear elevation, contributing to its architectural interest, and relates to its function as a private dwelling. The greatest appreciation is provided from the eastern part of the plot (that which sits closest to High Hesket). Views from further west and from the north-west part of the Site are obscured by intervening planting and structures.

Step 3: Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance or on the ability to appreciate it

- 4.8. The proposed development comprises the construction of four dwellings within the western part of the rear garden plot of the building. Two dwellings would be accessed from a new access road running to the south of High Hesket, with two accessed from the existing access from Kearsley

Road to the rear. The eastern part of the garden would be retained as the residential curtilage to High Hesketh.

- 4.9. The application is made in outline, with the development illustrated by the Proposed Development Layout. Matters of design, appearance, materiality and landscape are therefore reserved for future determination. However, the illustrative layout provides an indication of the potential scale and layout of development, with the dwellings remaining notably smaller than, and subservient to, High Hesketh.
- 4.10. High Hesketh will be retained within a large garden area, with a new boundary constructed across the existing lawn. It is proposed to construct a red brick boundary, similar to that found to the front and side elevations of the property, which would be most appropriate and would reflect the current setting of the building. This would provide an appropriate, enclosed private setting to the building.
- 4.11. The building would be retained within a substantial plot, with the eastern part of its rear garden maintained and little change to its important setting to the east, from where its architectural interest is best appreciated. The reduction in its garden and the provision of a new access to the south of the building, which would require the removal of the existing railings, but no alteration to the boundary, would both change the setting of the building. This would affect its historic interest due to the provision of additional development within its setting (continuing the trend established in the late 20th century). The proposals would, however, retain the ability to appreciate the building's architectural interest, particularly from within the eastern part of its existing garden plot and front driveway, from where the significance of the building is best appreciated.
- 4.12. The proposals would result in a degree of harm to the significance of High Hesketh as a non-designated heritage asset. The retention of key elements of the building's setting and an appropriate design (discussed further below) would ensure this harm remains limited.

Step 4: Explore Ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm

- 4.13. The proposals have been developed iteratively with feedback from the Council provided at pre-application stage. This has led to amendments to the number, location and scale of the proposed dwellings.
- 4.14. The development will provide four new dwellings which are subservient to High Hesketh and set well back from the property, minimising their impact, while retaining a large amount of its existing garden setting.
- 4.15. The application is also made in outline and future reserved matters applications will enable the opportunity to refine the proposal and further reduce any potential harm. This will be achieved through the design of the dwellings, providing a complementary form of development utilising traditional materials. The landscaping and means of enclosure will also be an important consideration.

Step 5: Make and document decision and monitor outcomes

- 4.16. The proposed development will result in a limited level of harm to the significance of High Hesketh. Paragraph 216 of the NPPF requires this harm to be weighed, in a balanced judgement, with regard given to the non-designated status of the building and the limited impacts arising from the development, which will retain the key elements of the building's significance.
- 4.17. This planning balance is provided within the Planning Statement prepared by Woolf Bond Planning which accompanies this application.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. High Hesket is a non-designated heritage asset and a good example of domestic Arts and Crafts architecture associated with an important local architect. The building remains well preserved and has seen little alteration from its original construction. The setting of the building has, however, seen significant changes with the gradual development of the local area, including development to the rear within historic garden plots.
- 5.2. The proposed development will continue this trend and provide new dwellings within the garden plot of High Hesket. This will include the provision of a new access to the immediate south of the building.
- 5.3. The development will lead to further changes within the setting of the building and alter its historic garden plot. This will affect the historic interest of the building and slightly diminish the ability to appreciate its architectural interest. However, the core elements of its significance will be unchanged, with the proposals representing a limited degree of harm as a result. The planning balance required by paragraph 216 of the NPPF is undertaken in the Planning Statement that accompanies this application.

FIGURES



Figure 1: Extract from 1898 OS map showing Parkside Road and the local area prior to the construction of High Heskett.

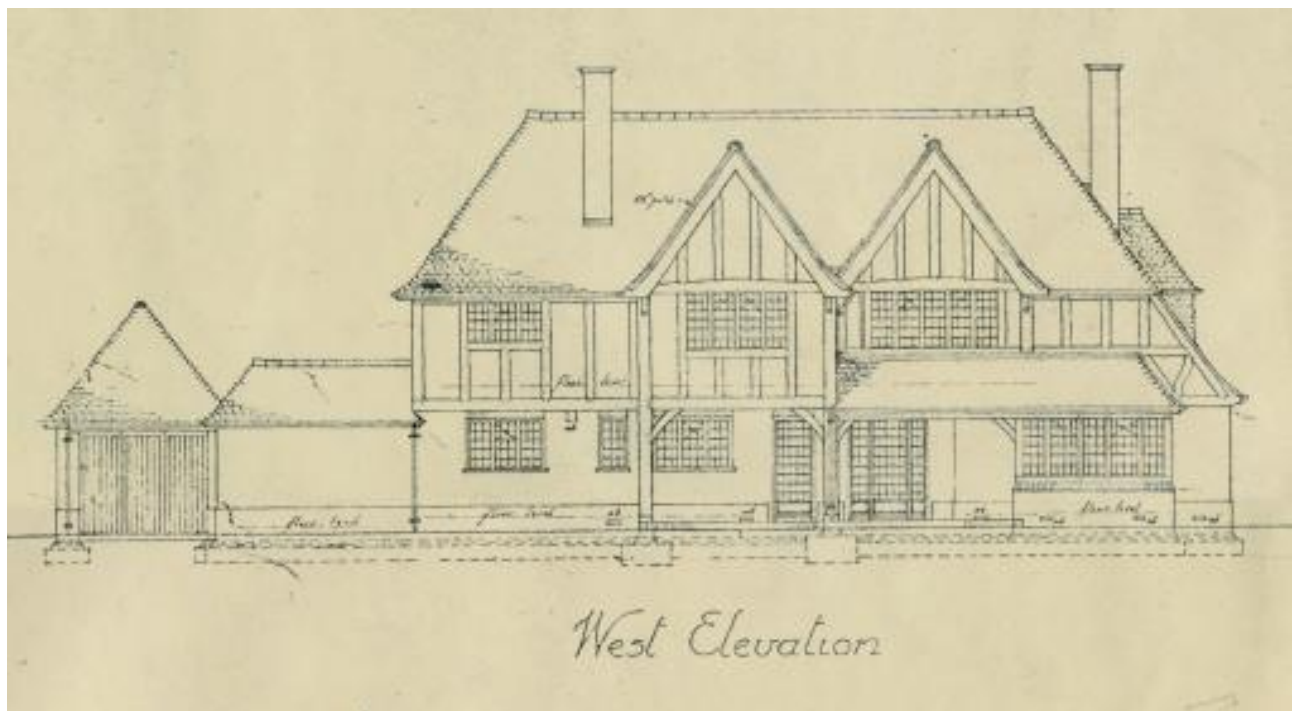


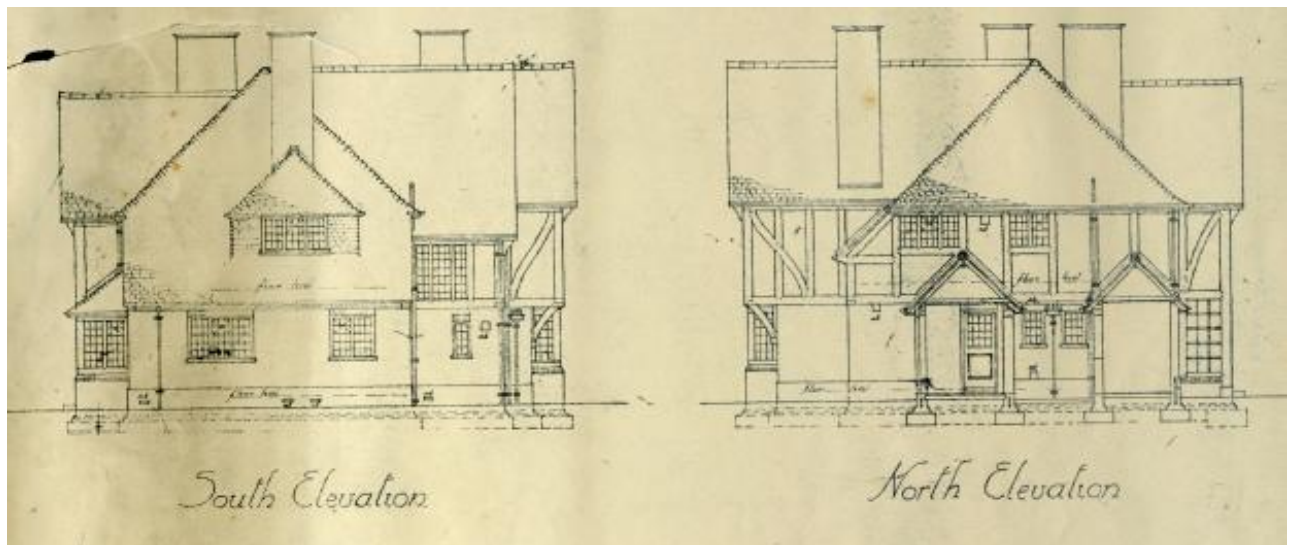
Figure 2: Extract from 1959 OS showing High Heskett and the surrounding development. A tennis court is recorded in the garden of High Heskett.



Figure 3: 2003 Aerial Photograph showing High Hesket and the local area prior to the construction of new dwellings on Shire's Head Court and Ashdene Gardens.

APPENDICES





High Hesketh

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