

Heritage Statement

Yateley Hall, Firgrove Road, Yateley, Hampshire

Written by: Ignus Froneman B.Arch.Stud ACIfA IHBC **Date:** 20 April 2021
On behalf of: Hurst Lodge School **Ref:** 0304

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by Ignus Froneman, Director at Cogent Heritage, in consultation with Woolf Bond Planning and the Applicant, Hurst Lodge School. The Heritage Statement supports an application for a change of use of the buildings at Yateley Hall, from their present office use (formerly class B1, now class E) to a school (formerly class D1, now class F1).
- 1.2 The Applicant, and proposed occupier, is Hurst Lodge School. At this stage it is anticipated that Yateley Hall would be used by the school alongside their current premises at Fernhill Road, Blackwater, Camberley, GU17 9HU. However, Yateley Hall would offer a long term home for the school that is presently unavailable due to lease arrangements on the current site. A long term home has been needed for the school since they were required to vacate their previous premises located in Sunninghill in December 2017.
- 1.3 Yateley Hall is listed grade II* and the Stable Block to the NE of Yateley Hall is separately listed grade II. The cottage, located between Yateley Hall and the Stable Block, is not listed in its own right, but could be regarded as curtilage listed. The buildings fall in the Yateley Green Conservation Area, and the grounds of Yateley Hall is locally designated as a park and garden.
- 1.4 The application involves a change of use of the buildings to a school only. No physical alterations to the buildings are proposed as part of the change of use application. The proposal involves the creation of two disabled parking bays in the existing car park, and the addition of five Sheffield type bicycle stands, also on part of the present car parking area to the east of the cottage. These changes are assessed in terms of their potential effect on the setting of the listed buildings, on the basis that the effect is likely to be similar in terms of the conservation area and locally designated park and garden.
- 1.5 It is anticipated that there would be a forthcoming application for the installation of a school kitchen at the ground floor, with an adjacent a food & nutrition classroom, within a modern part of the building (added by a previous school, between the 1939 and 1963

Ordnance Survey maps). At the first floor it is proposed to convert two rooms to science laboratories, fitted with moveable benches and units, and with an associated prep/store room (in a room presently used as toilets), within a part of the building added by Norman Shaw in 1871-73. The rooms are largely without features and no historic features or fabric will be affected. The plan form of the building would remain unchanged. These minor alterations would be covered separately by a Heritage Statement in due course, although for the purposes of the change of use application, it can be categorically stated that the anticipated changes to the building, associated with the change of use, are minimal, reversible, and would leave the significance of the building unaffected.

- 1.6 There is a relatively recent precedent for school use at Yateley Hall. On 11 October 2012 permission was granted for a change of use of the buildings, from office space to residential school with an ancillary element of day school provision, associated alterations to the grounds including new railings and gates and new hard and soft landscaping, under reference 12/01318/MAJOR. This approval demonstrates that the change of use of the building to a school was relatively recently considered acceptable in principle. The building also has a history of school use in the 20th century, between 1947 and 1985.
- 1.7 This report was informed by a site visit, in March 2021, when the buildings were inspected and photographed, including the interiors. This report does not set out the Development Plan policies, or the National Planning Policy Framework, or the provisions of s.66 & s.72 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990, focussing instead on an assessment of significance, contribution and impact, before coming to an overall conclusion about the acceptability of the proposal in terms of policy compliance. At the time of writing, archives were closed due to Covid restrictions and desk-based research was undertaken.

2 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE AND CONTRIBUTION

Historic background

- 2.1 The following background was compiled mostly from material published by Richard H Johnston¹, who carried out a detailed historical and archaeological assessment of Yateley Hall, between 1986 and 1992, while the building was undergoing refurbishment and alterations.
- 2.2 In summary, Yateley Hall represents a complex and fascinating palimpsest of successive periods of overlaid work. The building has been modified or extended roughly every thirty or forty years, from the 16th century to the present day and this has resulted in

¹ *Yateley Hall - Brief History; Exterior Tour of Yateley Hall and Yateley Hall: A Brief Guide*, all produced by R H Johnston. See [Yateley Local History / Yateley Hall \(pbworks.com\)](https://www.pbworks.com/Yateley_Local_History/Yateley_Hall)

multiple layers of changes. Although very little of it can now be seen, aside from a few roof timbers fossilised within a later roof, according to Johnston the building contains the concealed timber framing of a high status timber framed hall house with two cross wings, dating from no later than the 15th century. The broad form of the hall and cross wings is still evident in the façade.

- 2.3 According to Johnston (archives were closed due to Covid restrictions at the time of writing), the earliest documentary evidence indicates that the property was owned in 1567 by Andrew Smythe, an armigerous gentleman, who held "*a messuage, garden and orchard, called Colcatt's containing 4 acres of land*". Oliver Gery owned the house from 1655 to 1658, and Mrs Gery continued to live there until at least 1679. A sales document, prepared for Mrs Gery between 1671 and 1682, refers to "*A new brick house, strongly built which cost above sixteene hundred pounds the building, surrounded by a large deep moat with a very strong new draw bridge*" [Yateley Hall - Brief History]. The document describes a comfortable and fashionable country house with pools and gardens.
- 2.4 Henry Foxcroft, a London lawyer, lived at Yateley Hall from 1702 to 1732; it was Foxcroft who rebuilt the exterior of the timber framed house in brick, and gave it much of its present appearance.
- 2.5 Rumney Diggle, another London lawyer, owned Yateley Hall from 1732 to 1754; Diggle was wealthy and was responsible for creating the parkland setting. His son, Thomas, also a London lawyer, lived at Yateley Hall until his death in 1794. It was either Thomas Diggle, or the subsequent Halhed family (1795-1841), that constructed the large airy ballrooms at the southern end of Yateley Hall. John Halhed closed a road to the west of the ha-ha in 1797 and changed the name to Yateley House.
- 2.6 The Halhed family was followed by the Collett family (1841-56), who were responsible for the avenue of oak trees on the drive. It was during this time that the name changed to Yateley Hall. The 1844 tithe map (**Fig 1**) is the first sourced map to record Yateley Hall, during the tenure of the Collett family. This records the alignment of the ha-ha, and the canal to the east (note that the tithe map is not orientated with north to the top, as is now the convention). The hall at this time comprised the central older part, with the original hall set back on the frontage from the two cross wings, and with a detached building to the north.

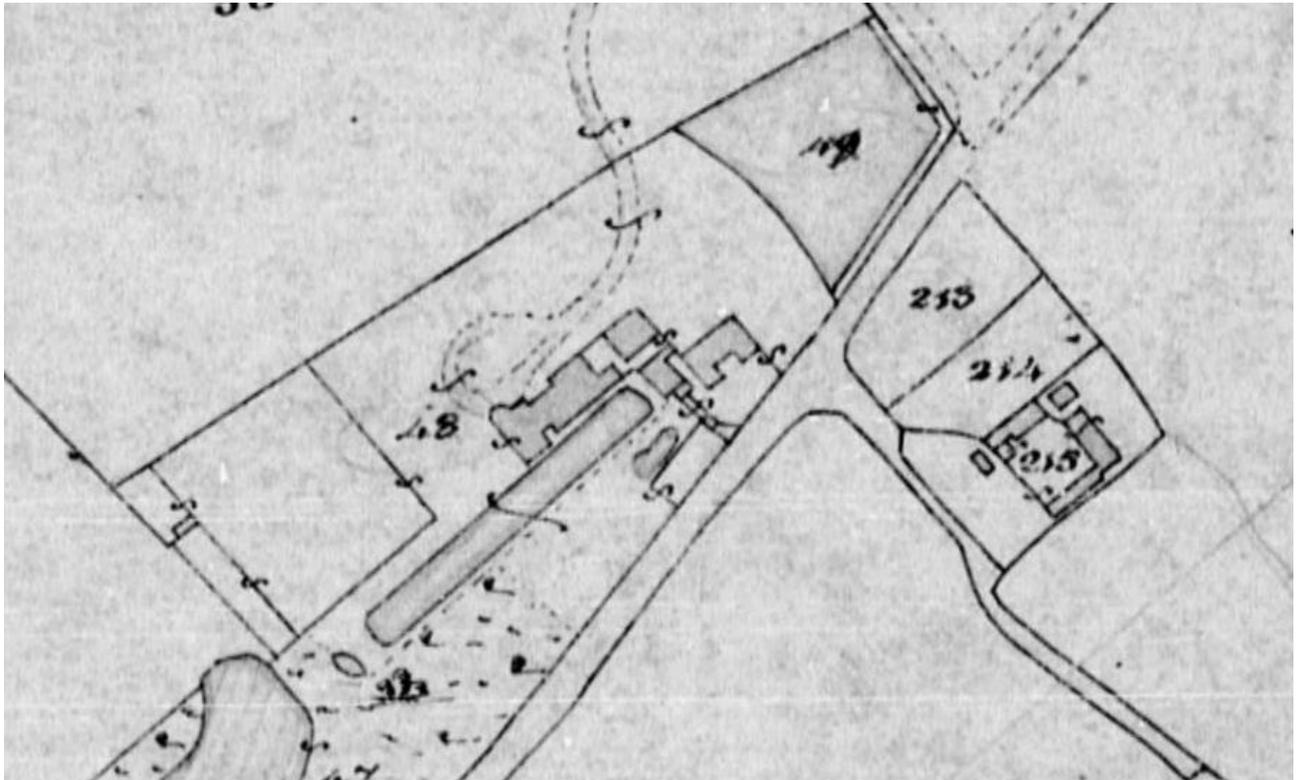


Fig 1: Extract of the 1844 tithe map (**Note:** the tithe map is not orientated with north to the top).

- 2.7 A series of short term tenants followed the Collett family's tenure. The writer A.C. Benson remembered visiting Yateley Hall in the 1860s with his parents, from Wellington College where his father (later Archbishop of Canterbury) was headmaster, to visit a Mrs Edwardes; he recalled the delights of fishing in the ponds, and tea on the lawn.
- 2.8 In 1871 Martin de Winton Corry leased Yateley Hall and commissioned the architect Norman Shaw to make alterations; the alterations were executed in the 'Queen Anne' style for which he would become famous². The first edition Ordnance Survey map, published the same year (**Fig 2**), records the footprint of the house before Shaw's interventions, very much the same as the 1844 tithe map.

² In fact, Shaw's first important commissions were extensions to Willesley outside Cranbrook (1864–5) for the artist John Callcott Horsley RA. Two houses at Groombridge, Sussex followed—Glen Andred (1866–8) for the painter E. W. Cooke and Leyswood (1868–70) for J. W. Temple. Leyswood was the first of Shaw's houses to be illustrated by "*seductive perspectives*" (as described in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography) at the Royal Academy exhibition; they were reproduced in the Building News, and they were to make Shaw internationally known. By 1870, when he began extending Craggside, Northumberland, for Sir William Armstrong, he had risen to join the ranks of the country's leading architects.



Fig 2: Extract of the 1871 Ordnance Survey map.

2.9 Mr de Winton Corry's daughter bought Yateley Hall from Collett's executors after his death in 1885. The 1896 Ordnance Survey map (**Fig 3**), records the house after Shaw's interventions, with square bays to front and rear, and with a conservatory at the south; the house as it was at this time is also recorded on two postcards (**Figs 4 & 5**).

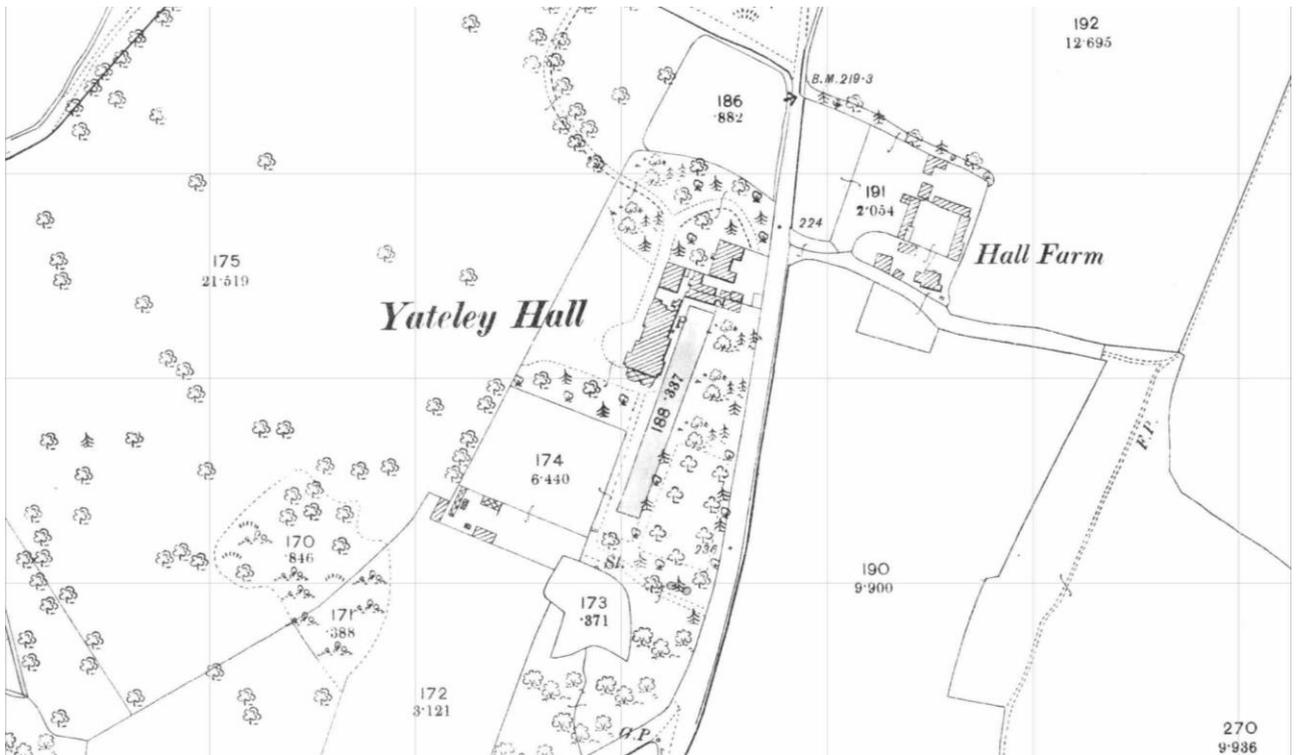


Fig 3: Extract of the 1896 Ordnance Survey map.



Fig 4: Extract of an undated early 20th century postcard of Yateley Hall, showing Shaw's remodelling and conservatory (right). Note the single storey element north of the main core of the house.



Fig 5: Extract of an undated early 20th century postcard of Yateley Hall, showing Shaw's remodelling and conservatory from the south.

2.10 After her mother's death in 1909, Miss de Winton Corry continued to live at Yateley Hall until her death in 1943. During her time, she made Yateley Hall and its ground a centre of village life; numerous celebrations, flower shows, fetes and sports meetings were held in the grounds. The 1911 Ordnance Survey map (not reproduced) records a new addition to link the once separate northern building with the main house, and this remained until the 1939 Ordnance Survey map (**Fig 6**).

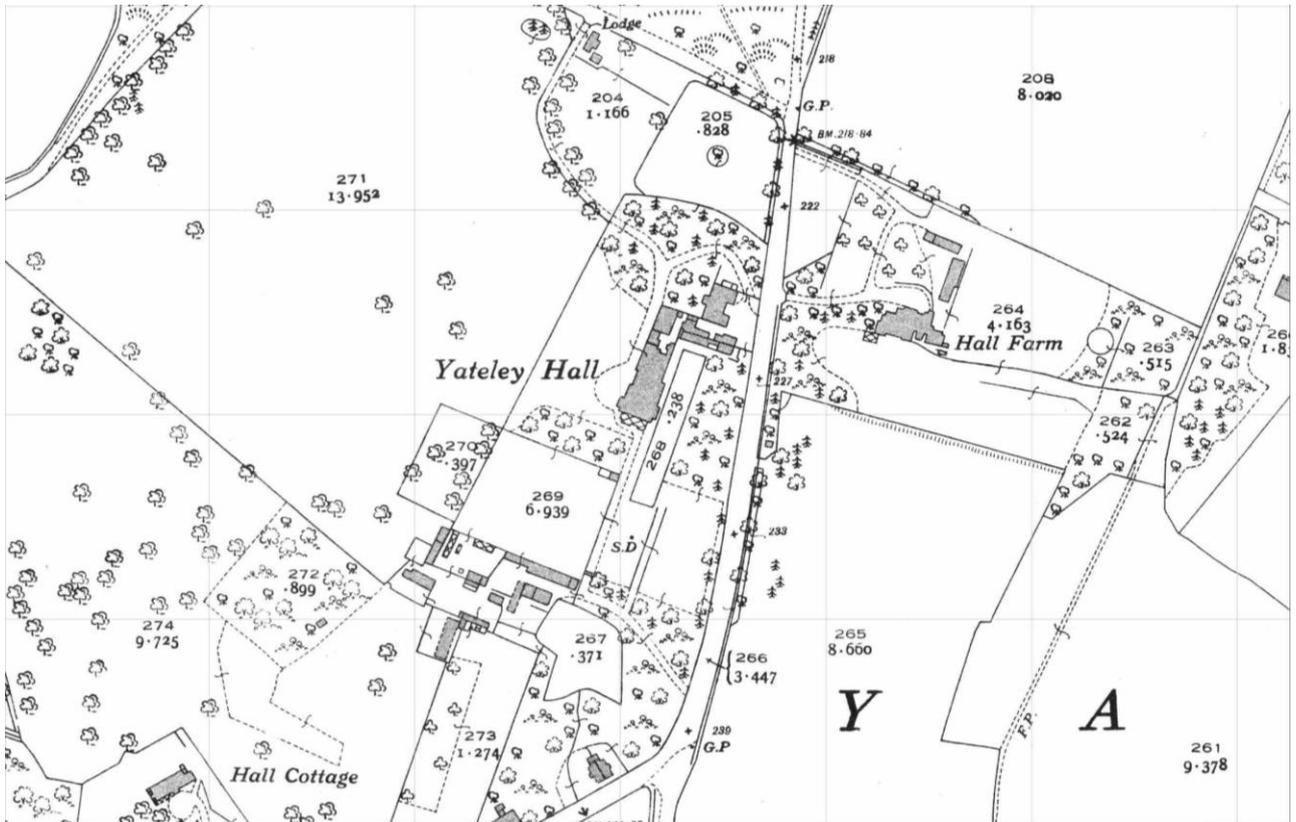


Fig 6: Extract of the 1939 Ordnance Survey map.

2.11 By 1947 the grounds of Yateley Hall had been reduced to a 40-acre park. The house was converted into a Convent School by the Farnborough Hill Convent. The school extended the building to the north and south to provide classrooms, and sold off parts of the grounds for development, or under compulsory purchase. The next Ordnance Survey map in the sourced sequence, published 1963 (**Fig 7**), records the extension to the south of the building, replacing Shaw's conservatory, and an extension to the north, in front of the stables, which has since been demolished. The Convent left in 1981, but the school continued to be run by parents until it finally closed in 1985.

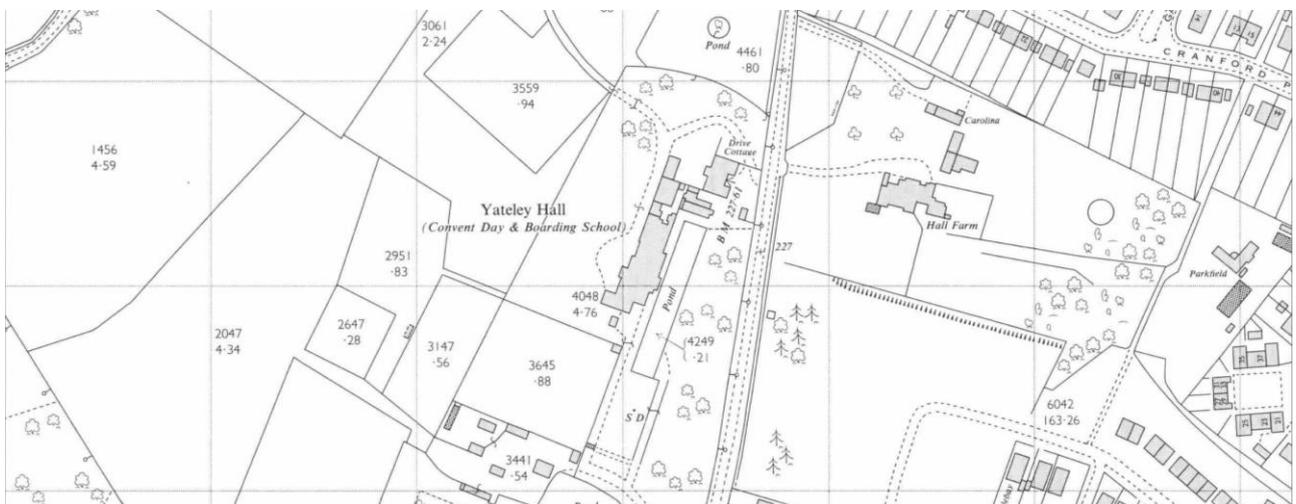


Fig 7: Extract of the 1963 Ordnance Survey map.

- 2.12 Mr John Behan of Lacken Construction Ltd bought the Hall in 1986, and over four years restored it from years of decay and neglect, and converted it to provide prestigious office accommodation. As part of this, additional accommodation was added at the northern end, over what were previously single storey elements (**Fig 4**). It was during this time that the flat roofed extensions, undertaken by the school, were fitted with new pitched roofs to complement the rest of the building.

Significance of Yateley Hall and the Stable Block

- 2.13 Yateley Hall was listed on 8 July 1952, and it appears that the list description, quoted below (from Historic England's National Heritage List) has not been amended since then:

"Early C18. 2 storeys and attic. The west front has a central part of 3 windows (2 dormers), with on each side a slightly projecting wing of 1 window; to the north an addition, formerly of 3 windows but only the centre remains. Red tile hipped roofing. Massive panelled brick stacks. The gables of the dormers have pediment mouldings. Modillion cornice. Walling is in Flemish bond brickwork (red with blue headers), Dutch flat arches, projecting 1st floor band. Sashes in exposed frames. The entrance is by a glazed double door in the south wing and this opens onto a panelled hallway. To the north an old wall is incorporated in a modernised range. The east elevation is irregular, with recent changes, but the main features are repeated. On this side of the building the medieval moat survives in part. There are modern extensions, in similar style."

- 2.14 The Stable Block was listed on 26 June 1987, with the list description quoted below:

"C18. A. symmetrical block with a short 2-storeyed centre flanked by longer 1- storeyed wings, projecting rearwards from a high masking front (west) wall of 3 bays. This 2-storeyed facade has a slightly-recessed centre with a low- pitched gable; a semicircular recess containing pigeon holes and a modern window above a roof which covers a modern forward projection. The sides have large semicircular recesses at the upper level, a 1st floor band, and semicircular windows below (one attached). To the rear the three parts have red tile roofs, hipped at the wings and 1/2-hipped at the centre. The semicircular windows are repeated at the sides (3 on each but with some alterations). The shorter centre section results in a paved courtyard with 2 wide openings beneath cambered arches and a hay-loft door above."

- 2.15 As a grade II* listed building, Yateley Hall falls into a category of "*particularly important buildings of more than special interest*"; only 5.8% of listed buildings are listed grade

II*³. Together with grade I listed buildings, grade II* listed buildings make up the 'top tier' of listing, comprising together only 8.3% of all listed buildings in the country.

- 2.16 **Historic Interest:** Historic England's *Conservation Principles* is helpful in explaining historic interest as derived from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected, through the shared experience of a place, to the present. It tends to be considered in two strands: illustrative or associative.
- 2.17 As explained at paragraph 41 of *Conservation Principles*, illustrative interest facilitates and assists in the interpretation of the past through the building being able to make connections with, and providing insights into, past communities (i.e. the historic development of Yateley in this case) and their activities (the evolution of Yateley Hall as a high status house) through a shared experience of the building.
- 2.18 The illustrative value of Yateley Hall is high, given that it is of early origins, despite having been much altered successively over a long period. This gives the building complexity and time depth, although conversely the building has lost some of its original fabric and authenticity. The building has a predominantly Georgian frontage, albeit it has evolved piecemeal over time, as a complex palimpsest of layers of development, including Shaw's south range, now in turn abutted by the school extension, which itself has been altered.
- 2.19 **Architectural Interest:** Yateley Hall is an imposing and distinctive building (**Photo 1**) with a great deal of architectural interest, and with a complexity of both fabric and style that is inherent to its lively evolution. The building in its present form is not of a single style, but an example of the way in which high status, desirable houses such as this changed hands and continuously developed to accommodate the needs, tastes, and social aspirations, of their successive wealthy owners. The house originated as a vernacular timber framed hall house (already of some considerable status at that time), but has been modified to a great extent over many years, with almost all of the timber framing now concealed or lost. It incorporates aspects of the distinct styles of the past centuries, with an overriding Georgian appearance around the older, vernacular core, and with later 'traditional' additions to both sides. Particularly notable is Shaw's distinctive 3-bay addition of 1871-73, now partially subsumed in the more modern school block at the south.
- 2.20 The changes to the building manifest internally in a sometimes complex plan form and a variety of features of different dates, sometimes intermingling in the same room, or in quick succession in different rooms, or sequences of spaces. Again, Shaw's modifications of 1871-73 add character to the building and have shaped the main entrance and stairs

³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/>

hall, though this is mixed with retained/re-used older features such as panelling (albeit often evidently adapted). Externally there is also a multi-layering of architectural styles and interventions visible, albeit with an overall cohesive appearance.



Photo 1: A frontal view of Yateley Hall, with the ha-ha in the foreground.

2.21 The Cottage, at the northern end of the canal (**Photo 2**), was originally a 17th century building of 5 bays to the canal, with a door in the centre, and with blind windows on the first floor. It is perhaps most notable for an interesting 18th century brick vaulted cellar to the north, in the 'picturesque' style, and externally with three particularly attractive triplets of blind lancet windows, also on the north. The building was converted into a two storey slate roofed cottage in the late 19th or early 20th century.



Photo 2: The south elevation of the cottage, with the pond in the foreground.

2.22 The Stable Block (**Photo 3**) is in a typical, if somewhat austere, provincial Palladian design. It was built between 1730 and 1750, with a plain recessed centre flanked by two hip-roofed wings with lunette windows. It is a good example of its kind, albeit internally without features of note, and with a modern character.



Photo 3: The formally composed Palladian west frontage of the stables.

3 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The conversion of the buildings back to a school would not only provide an opportunity to secure a viable and compatible long term future for this listed building, but it would reinstate a use that successfully operated from the site for a period of almost forty years from the late 1940s.
- 3.2 Whilst application is concerned only with the change of use, the school does not require any intrusive or harmful interventions to the listed buildings. No external alterations to the buildings are proposed or anticipated. The approach to the anticipated proposed minor internal physical works is one of a light touch, reversible and minimal interventions to the building fabric, with moveable furniture and only very limited additional services and changes to the building (i.e. Yateley Hall, with no changes proposed to the Stable Block).
- 3.3 The proposed change of use does not include any sports facilities provision, which would be provided off-site. The setting of the listed buildings would be preserved, with the only

changes a minor reconfiguration of parking bays to create dedicated disabled parking bays closest to the buildings, and bicycle parking in the form of Sheffield type stands, which is absent on the site at present. The area proposed for the bicycle stands is at present used as car parking and can be seen on the left hand side of **Photo 4** below.



Photo 4: The area to the east of the cottage, foreground left, where bicycle parking is proposed.

- 3.4 The bicycle parking, in place of the existing car parking, would be no worse the status quo, and if anything can be regarded as a minor enhancement. The proposed dedicated disabled parking bays and bicycle parking would preserve and enhance the setting of the listed buildings. The creation of an open space, free of parking, to the north of the Stable Block would enhance this part of the building's setting, which is at present used as car parking.
- 3.5 In conclusion, therefore, the setting of the listed buildings would be preserved and enhanced.
- 3.6 The school use as proposed is neither new, nor especially contentious. On 11 October 2012, permission was granted for a change of use of the buildings to a residential school with an ancillary element of day school provision, with associated alterations, under application ref. 12/01318/MAJOR. At that time, the Delegated Report (dated 10 October 2012) noted that the last known use of the building was in 2004. It also highlighted that the *Yateley Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals*

(produced in 2010, adopted in July 2011) highlights Yateley Hall at section 9.5.1 on page 30:

"Yateley Hall, the stables and the parkland are considered to be 'At Risk'. It would be helpful if the District Council could open discussions with the existing owners to see what plans are being made to ensure the future preservation of this important (grade II) listed building."*

3.7 It is clear from the recent history of the building, the Character Appraisal, and also from the submitted Marketing Summary prepared by Campbell Gordon, that there are issues with finding a suitable use for the buildings at Yateley Hall. In this context, and given that very minimal interventions to the building, and its setting, are required to facilitate this change of use, the proposed school use could rightfully be described as an optimum viable use of the building, which is described at paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework as a public benefit.

3.8 The Practice Guidance deals with optimum viable use in more detail, at Paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 18a-015-20190723 [Revision date: 23/07/2019]:

"... Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation. [...]"

It is important that any use is viable, not just for the owner, but also for the future conservation of the asset: a series of failed ventures could result in a number of unnecessary harmful changes being made to the asset.

If there is only one viable use, that use is the optimum viable use. If there is a range of alternative economically viable uses, the optimum viable use is the one likely to cause the least harm to the significance of the asset, not just through necessary initial changes, but also as a result of subsequent wear and tear and likely future changes. The optimum viable use may not necessarily be the most economically viable one. Nor need it be the original use. However, if from a conservation point of view there is no real difference between alternative economically viable uses, then the choice of use is a decision for the owner, subject of course to obtaining any necessary consents.

Harmful development may sometimes be justified in the interests of realising the optimum viable use of an asset, notwithstanding the loss of significance caused, and provided the harm is minimised [emphasis added]."

3.9 From the above it is clear than the school use, given the very limited anticipated interventions to the building, which would essentially preserve its significance, would represent an optimum viable use for the building (that is not to preclude other potential low-intervention viable uses, albeit it is noted from the Marketing Summary prepared by

Campbell Gordon that none have been forthcoming). Because the school use does not involve harm to the building, the fact that it represents an optimum viable use of the building and forms a material public benefit that weighs heavily in favour of the proposed change of use.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The proposed change of use would represent an optimum viable use for the buildings. Because the school use does not involve harm to the building, the fact that it represents an optimum viable use of the building and forms a material public benefit that weighs heavily in favour of the proposed change of use, especially given the history of the site and the higher grading of Yateley Hall.
- 4.2 Because no harm has been identified, only enhancements to the setting of the buildings and an optimum viable use, there are no policy conflicts with Local Plan policies. Neither does the proposal trigger paragraphs 195 or 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed development also complies with the statutory duties in s.66 and s.72 of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, 1990.
- 4.3 It is therefore respectfully submitted that the proposed change of use should be granted permission.