

# HERITAGE STATEMENT

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CREATION OF PROSPECT MOUND

at

BUXHALL VALE, RECTORY ROAD, BUXHALL, IP14 3DH

for

MR & MRS R. STEWART

**LAST & TRICKER**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Last and Tricker were commissioned by Mr and Mrs R Stewart to provide a statement to accompany a planning application for a new prospect mound in the grounds of Buxhall Vale, Buxhall, Suffolk.

1.2 This statement should be read in conjunction with the following drawings;

- 5945-3 Proposed Site Location Plan
- 5945-4 Proposed Layout & Elevation

1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes a proportionate approach to the description of the impact of proposals on the significance of any designated or un-designated heritage asset. It identifies that *“the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”*.

1.4 The heritage statement will, therefore, provide a proportionate assessment of both the building’s significance and the impacts of the proposed development on the heritage asset.

## **2. RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY**

2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings (Sections 16 and 66).

2.2 Section 16 of the NPPF sets out the Government's position on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires applicants to describe the impact of proposals on the significance of any heritage asset to a level of detail proportionate to the assets' importance. As set out above, this should be no more than is sufficient to understand the potential of that impact on the significance. Paragraph 195 requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

2.3 Paragraph 197 sets out that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

2.4 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF apportions great weight to a designated asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. The NPPF highlights that significance can be harmed or lost through physical change and any harm requires clear and convincing justification.

- 2.5 Paragraphs 200 and 201 address how local planning authorities should deal with situations where the assessment of impacts has identified harm to a heritage asset.
- 2.6 At the local level, saved policy HB01 deals with listed buildings and their settings and provides a number of criteria against which to assess proposals that affect listed buildings.
- 2.7 These legislative and policy provisions thereby identify a need to assess the significance of the heritage asset in a proportionate manner, identify the impact of the proposed development on that significance, balance any harm arising against the public benefits and ensure that the special character of the building is preserved and, where possible, enhanced.

### **3. THE SITE AND HERITAGE ASSETS**

3.1 Buxhall Vale is a Grade II listed building, added to the statutory list in December 1955.

3.2 The listing describes the building as;

*“House, early C19 with earlier core, possibly C17. Timber-framed and plastered. Hipped slated roof, low-pitched with paired modillions beneath the eaves. Rear chimneys of red brick, two with panelled shafts in the C17 manner. 3 storeys (the upper storey added C19). 7 windows. Early C19 small-pane sashes. Greek Doric portico porch with fluted columns and entablature with triglyphs. A pair of 3-panelled doors with panelled reveals”.*

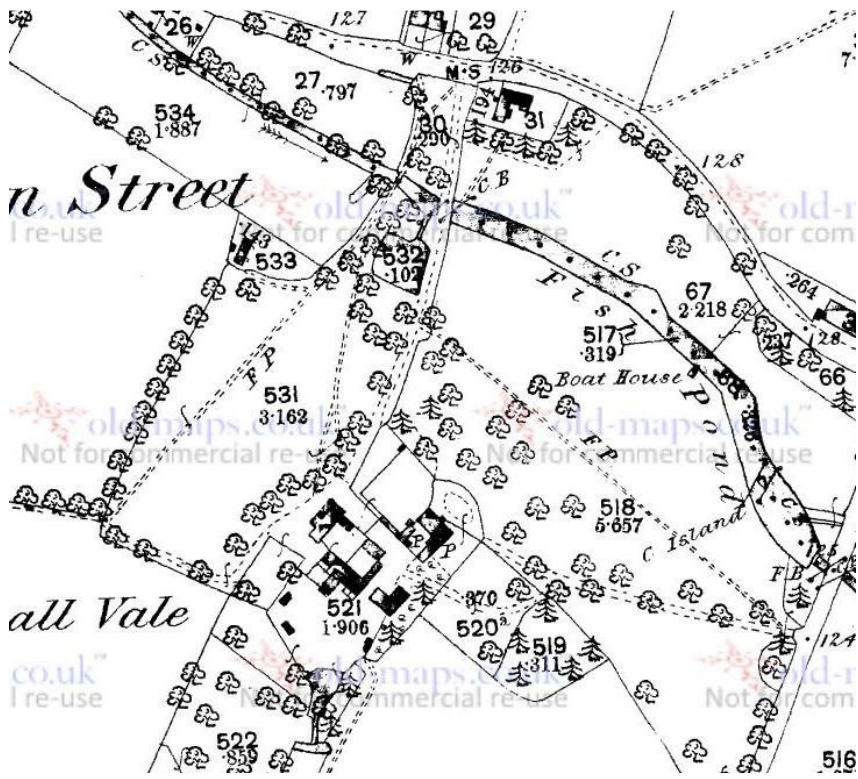
3.3 Buxhall Vale is believed to date from the 15th century as a Georgian Manor House to the main estate in Buxhall. The Georgian manor house and cottage were set in several 100 acres of paddocks, gardens and woodland including several other cottages. The frame of the Medieval hall house on which it is based remains largely intact and is partially exposed.

3.4 The house has evolved and there is evidence of building work in the 16th and 17th centuries. Significant changes were made during the 19th century, when the top floor was added giving the house the Georgian proportions.

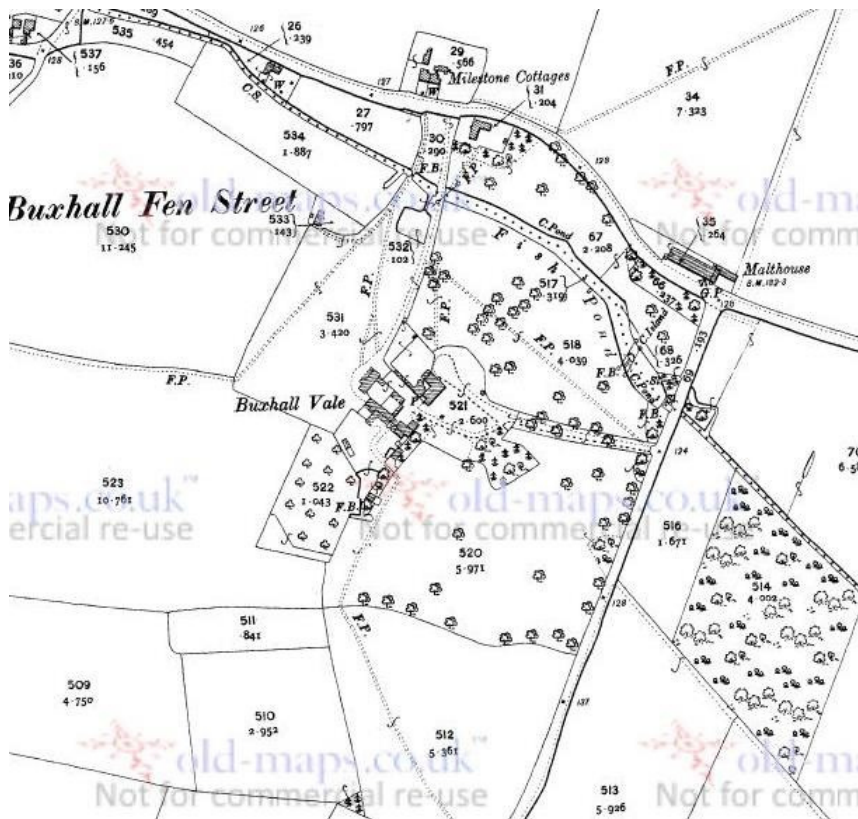
- 3.5 The grounds are an appealing feature of Buxhall Vale, comprising attractive parkland grazing and woodland, paddocks and a former orchard.
- 3.6 At the turn of the 20th century, Buxhall Vale, in Buxhall, near Stowmarket, was owned by Eugene Wells, who was a Justice of the Peace and Master of the Suffolk Hunt, shown in this photograph. It therefore has a well-established relationship with the countryside.



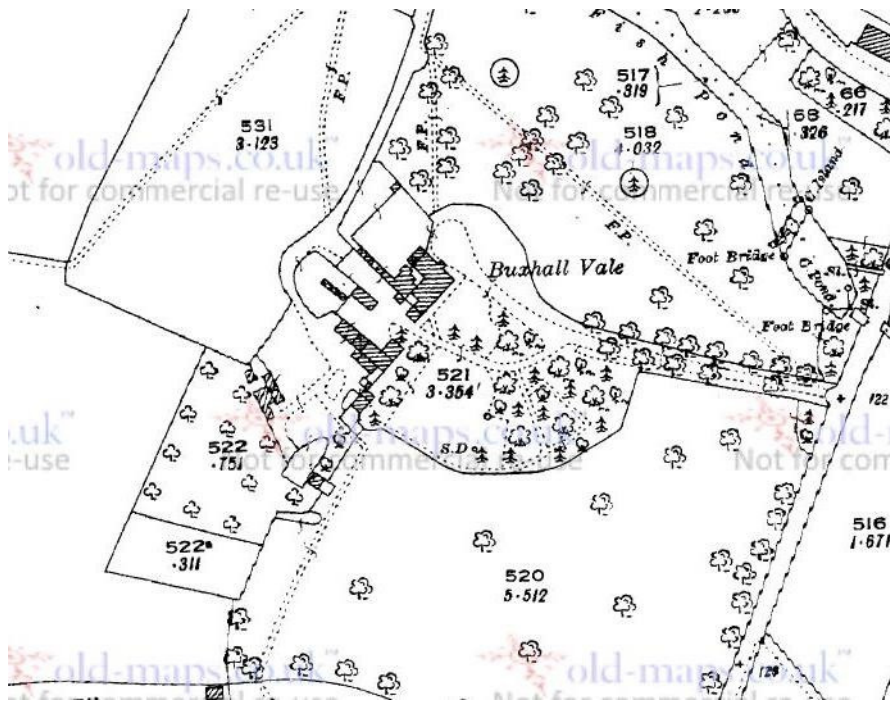
- 3.7 The property lies in a remote location to the north of the village of Buxhall and to the south of Lower Road. The River Rat runs to the north of the property.
- 3.8 The image below, dating from 1885, shows the building at that time in the context of adjacent premises. The river can clearly be identified and many of the land boundaries remain visible today.



3.9 This can be seen more clearly in the image below, which dates from 1904



3.10 The 1926 extract below. Shows some change in the site, particularly to the eastern side.



3.11 However, by 1968, there can be seen further changes in the form and siting of buildings on the land. Compared with a recent aerial image, it can be seen that there have been further significant changes on the site over the last 50 years.



3.12 This basic map regression is sufficient to demonstrate that Buxhall Vale has evolved in terms of its plan form, with a more consolidated amount of development on the site now than historically existed.

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the construction of a prospect mound to the southwest of the property. A prospect mound is defined as:

*An artificial mound, generally conical, placed within a garden or park to provide a viewing point to overlook the garden or park. It may also serve as a visual focus in the garden or park layout.*

4.2 The intention of the proposal is to provide an additional feature within the parkland providing interest and amenity to residents at Buxhall Vale. The proposal takes advantage of the ability to use spoil from the recently constructed conservation pond (ref: DC/21/04913).

4.3 The proposed mound forms part of a wider strategy to upgrade the parklands surrounding Buxhall Vale complimenting the main house and giving it the setting it deserves as a large Georgian manor house within a wider estate.

4.4 The application is supported by a site plan and indicative elevation.

4.5 Prospect mounds are a common feature in many estates in the UK. Is an appropriate additional as typically Georgian landscaping feature.

4.6 Renowned landscape architect and Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Kim Wilkie, gave a talk as part of the 14th Annual Winter Lecture Series at the New York Botanical Gardens on Sculpting the Land in which he mentions:

*“Earth forms tend to survive even longer than buildings and are repeatedly re-appropriated. Burial mounds, such as the one in Richmond Park, have been re-used for hunting high-points and communication lookouts. The Thames landscape was dotted with similar viewing mounds. Francis Bacon created mounds at Twickenham Park (as well as Gray’s Inn) in the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, a whole series of mounds were raised along the river, notably for Princess Caroline at Richmond Lodge and Alexander Pope in Twickenham.*

*One of Caroline’s protégés, Charles Bridgeman was a particular genius with geometric land sculpting. While breaking away from the surface intricacy of French and Dutch parterre design, Bridgeman worked with a more subtle formality on a massive scale, using the grass-clad shape of the land itself. Changing light and shade revealed the planes of his designs, while a looser frame of woodland trees directed views out into productive agricultural land beyond. Many of Bridgeman’s crisp, turf forms were later smoothed away by Lancelot Brown, but where his work survives at Stowe, Rousham and most*



*particularly Claremont, it shows a wonderful dramatic artistry. For much of the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, more informal and naturalistic earth shaping became fashionable, but geometric turf sculpting was revived with art deco in the 1930s. Percy Cane's grass terraces at Dartington Hall, are a good example.*

*Bridgeman's landforms at Claremont, set beside Aislabie's moon ponds at Studley Royal, reveal a tradition which has re-emerged in contemporary landscape design such as Charles Jencks' and Maggie Keswick's work at Portrack and is now inspiring mounds and earthworks throughout Europe. Some of the most imaginative new directions have been led by environmental artists such as Andy Goldsworthy and Richard Long.."*

- 4.7 Understandably it is not unusual to see houses of this stature supported by mounds and formal landscaping within their setting. Indeed, examples of this can be seen below:

SIBTON PARK ESTATE, SUFFOLK (now known as Wilderness Reserve)  
Grade II\* Hall with formal landscaping around pool.

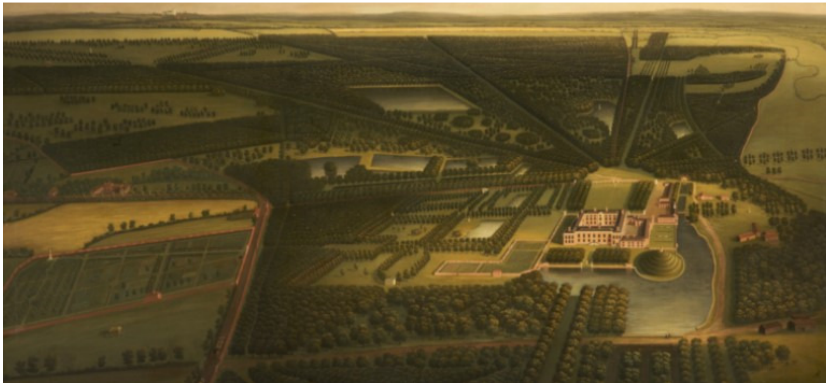


HEVENINGHAM HALL, SUFFOLK  
Grade II\* Hall with formal landscaping levels



DUNHAM MASSEY, CHESHIRE (National Trust)

Grade II property with viewing mound built in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (seen near the water).



WEST WYCOMBE GARDENS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Designed in 1700s by Nicholas Revett used as a viewing point out to the east and south of the park and as an eye-catcher from the park and east drive.



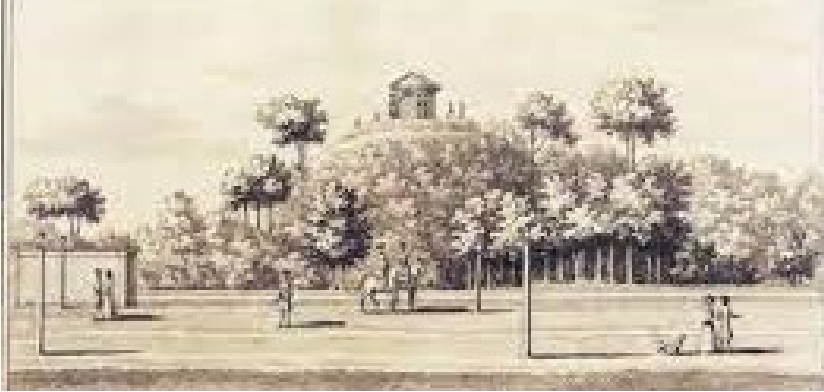
THE LODGE AT LYVEDEN NEW BIELD, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (National Trust)

Grade I property with Elizabethan viewing mound



KENSINGTON GARDENS, LONDON

Constructed for Queen Caroline 1730-1731.



LITTLE MORTON HALL, CHESHIRE

Two prospect mounds restored in 20<sup>th</sup> Century to Leonard Meager's 1670 design.



POTRACK HOUSE, DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

New mounds constructed within garden to heritage property



## 5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 As per the requirements of paragraph 194 of the NPPF, the assessment of Buxhall Vale has recognised its status as a Grade II listed building and thereby a heritage asset for the purposes of the definition provided by the NPPF. The significance of the curtilage listed coachhouse, stated on site to be an early C20 replacement to a previous outbuilding is also identified as historically sensitive and one where the impacts of change must be carefully managed.
- 5.2 The proposed works comprise the formation of a 14ft high prospect mound located approximately 120m to the south west of the main house within the grounds of Buxhall Vale. The impacts here are, therefore, two-fold, being both the land use relative to the use of the heritage asset and the physical impacts of this proposal on the setting and significance of the asset.
- 5.3 The land rises towards the south, therefore the proposed site is elevated slightly compared to the main house, this gives a superb view over the parkland towards the main house.
- 5.4 The location is surrounded by mature trees and is not visible to surrounding properties. It does not cause any overlooking concerns in the location selected.
- 5.5 The proposed prospect mound provides a spiral path that gently winds up in elevation by approximately 4.2m (14ft) providing views of the parkland and surrounding countryside.
- 5.6 The mound itself will be covered in grass and wildflowers. The prospect mound would appear as a natural feature within the parkland.
- 5.7 On the basis that the proposal is a significant distance from the main house, it does not give rise to any negative impact on the heritage assets/
- 5.8 The prospect mounds proposed location provides a focal point to the south west area of parkland to Buxhall Vale. It creates an additional appropriate landscaping feature adding amenity value to the property.
- 5.9 The Historic England Document entitled “Conservation Principles – Policies and Guidance” states, at paragraph 84, that; *“Conservation involves people managing change to a significant place in its setting, in ways that sustain, reveal or reinforce its cultural and natural heritage values (Principle 4.2).*

*Conservation is not limited to physical intervention, for it includes such activities as the interpretation and sustainable use of places. It may simply involve maintaining the status quo, intervening only as necessary to counter the effects of growth and decay, but equally may be achieved through major interventions; it can be active as well as reactive. Change to a significant place is inevitable, if only as a result of the passage of time, but can be neutral or beneficial in its effect on heritage values. It is only harmful if (and to the extent that) significance is eroded”.*

- 5.10 Conservation is the process of managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance, and it is well versed that significance may be derived not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence but also from its setting. However, it is also recognised (para.78 of Conservation Principles) that;

*“Understanding the importance of a place by comparing it with other places that demonstrates similar values normally involves considering:*

- how strongly are the identified heritage values demonstrated or represented by the place, compared with those other places?*
- how do its values relate to statutory designation criteria, and any existing statutory designations of the place?”.*

- 5.11 The prospect mound is seen to compliment the house without causing any harm on the heritage assets or neighboring properties.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 Paragraph 194 of the NPPF requires a description of the potential impact of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets to a level of detail proportionate to the importance of those assets and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential of that impact.
- 6.2 The site is of particular heritage significance. Buxhall Vale is a Grade II listed building consisting of a timber-framed three storey manor house with a likely C16-C17 core, with an adjoining walled garden and curtilage listed early C20 coach house.
- 6.3 Whilst recognising that there would be a physical change in the setting of Buxhall Vale, not all change is harmful. Indeed, the Historic England 'Conservation Principles' documents tells us that change is inevitable, and that it is the management of change that will determine the acceptability of those changes.
- 6.4 The proposed works have been found to result in no harm to the character and significance of the heritage asset. The creation of a prospect mound in this setting would see a change in the character of this land, but has been designed to be an appropriate landscape response that takes advantage of the land levels will bring amenity benefits to the site.
- 6.5 This statement has demonstrated the significance of the asset and how the development would impact upon both the character and setting of the building and the wider appreciation of the heritage assets. In light of the conclusions reached above, the proposal does not give rise to harm and it is not necessary to weigh the public benefits against harm as the requirements of paragraphs 202 and 203 of the NPPF are not engaged.
- 6.6 For these reasons, the proposal is in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF and with the elements of policy HB01.