

Heritage Statement

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Proposed demolition of rear conservatory and replacement with single storey rear extension; external and internal alterations, re-instatements and repair

Gate house, Hunsdonbury Lane, Hunsdon SG12 8PW

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CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	SITE & SURROUNDING AREA.....	3
3.0	PROPOSAL	6
4.0	POLICY CONTEXT	7
5.0	ASSESSMENT	8
6.0	SUMMARY	10

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this Heritage Asset Statement & Impact Assessment is to inform & support the application for listed building consent & planning permission. The statement (to be read together with the Historic Building Appraisal) will provide the description of significance of Gate House (Grade II listed building), together with the settings of the nearby listed buildings.
- 1.1.2 An assessment of the impact of the proposals- on the special interest, character, appearance & significance of these heritage assets- is included, to justify the proposed works & to explain how the proposals would not substantially harm the character, appearance, special interest or significance of the listed building & the settings.
- 1.1.3 This Heritage Asset Statement concentrates specifically on the heritage assets & the historic environment involved & is to be read alongside the Design & Access Statement which gives the background to the site, surroundings & full detail of the proposed works, together with the record photographs & design drawings.



Figure 1: Gate House- from the garden looking north-west, showing the relationship to Hunsdonbury & the location of the existing modern conservatory- proposed to be demolished



Figure 2: Gate House- from the garden looking north- the awkward relationship of the ungainly modern conservatory to the house



Figure 3: The existing stair- ground floor to first floor- from the entrance hall by the front door

2.0 SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1.1 Gate House is a now a free-standing, detached Grade II listed house, formerly a service wing of Hunsdonbury (Grade II listed), though since separated (during the mid-20th century, following the demolition of the link), located to the south of Hunsdonbury Lane. Pedestrian & vehicular access is from a part of the earlier horseshoe driveway (beyond East Lodge & North Lodge- both Grade II listed) which also provides access to a number of other properties- including Hunsdonbury. The area immediately to the south & west is wooded & the topography gently undulating, falling gradually to the south & the valley of the River Stort with the A414 alongside.
- 2.1.2 Hunsdonbury Lane provides a link between Church Lane/ Acorn Street (to the east) & the road from Hunsdon village (approximately 1 Km to the north) to Stanstead Abbots (2.5km to the south-west). At the junction of Church Lane with Hunsdonbury Lane is the group of farm buildings & farmhouse associated with Nine Ashes Farm (many are Grade II listed) & beyond that, to the south, is Copthall Farm (Grade II listed buildings), then Hunsdon House & the medieval Parish Church of St Dunstan (both Grade I listed).
- 2.1.3 To the west of the junction with the Hunsdon- Stanstead Abbots Road (B180) is a country house, Bonningtons (Grade II) & The Wilderness, part of a designed garden & landscape, including a large lake.
- 2.1.4 Gate House is designed in an early 19th century fashion based on the Gothic Tudor style (as Hunsdonbury). The official Historic England list description is as below. The building was first listed in 1984.

TL 4113 HUNSDON HUNSDONBURY (west side)

8/21 The Gate House

GV II

Wing of house, now a separate house. 1832 by Kemp for Revd Nicolsen Robert Calvert (inscription in cellar noted by Gibbs (1915) 22). 2 storeys, attic and basement white brick Gothic house facing N. formerly part of Hunsdonbury nearby to S.

Steep gabled tile roofs with stucco gabled dormers, heavy stucco moulding to gable and eaves parapets. Raised stucco surrounds to openings with square-headed moulded labels and boldly modelled heads as finials.

Front faces N with 2 windows. Central door with fanlight and large chimney breaking up from moulded parapet with quatrefoil shield panel and 3 octagonal chimneys over with plaster base, brown brick shafts and caps in the form of panelled fonts. Flemish bond. 3-light wooden casement windows with pointed lights. 6-pane studded door.

Gabled wing set back at left with 5-light moulded mullioned window with pointed leads to lights on Ground floor and 3-light window on 1st floor. 3 shaft side chimney similar to other. Short lower rear wing and modern square conservatory in the angle.

An interesting early C19 Gothic building. Part of group with Hunsdonbury to S, of which it formerly was a part.

Listing NGR: TL4144713107

Hunsdonbury- *the original principal part of the 1832 Country House/ Rectory for Revd. Calvert is a Grade II listed building. List description below.*

TL 4113 HUNSDON HUNSDONBURY (west side)

8/22 Hunsdonbury

GV II

Country house, reduced by demolition of centre. Rebuilt 1832 (blundered inscription in cellar noted by Gibbs (1915) 22 'This house rebuilt 1832 at the expense of the Revd R U Calvert Rector. C. Kemp. architect'). Altered in later 1840s when Calvert family abandoned Hunsdon House and moved here to former Rectory. Centre part demolished c1950 and 2 wings became separate premises. White brick with stone dressings and stucco in parts. Red tiled roof behind parapets and gable parapets. A large irregular rectory in Tudor style recorded in Buckler drawings of 1835 (HRO) and the Tithe Map of 1842 (HRO). Shallow W entrance wing and its 2 storeys porch are alterations of the later 1840s. The present house is a compact rectangular 2 storeys house facing N.

The 2 window N front shows marks of the original single storey porch around the W window, and the E window is probably a modern copy since a similar sized wing ran northward from this wall and had the other surviving part of the house (now called The Gate House qv) connected with its NE corner. Single storey vaulted stucco cloister on E end with 3 pointed arches, angle buttresses and fine moulded figures as hood mould stops to windows. Lofty stuccoed buttressed wall with open work cusped parapet, links house to a tall octagonal stucco pillar to the W, carrying a lion rampant holding a vane. The wall is partly concealed by the 2 storeys brick and stucco W entrance wing with a 2 storeys parapeted porch. An 8-panelled door under a 4-centred arch. Single storey canted bay window on S;front at E end. Plaster rib vaulted passage leads from a Gothic half-glazed garden door at the NE to the stair hall with flat panelled ceiling, stone arched moulded fire surround and Gothic staircase.

An elaborate Gothic rectory of 1832 of outstanding architectural and historical interest, and especially notable for the contemporary interiors and the vigorous grotesques used as label stops. Reduction in size has not reduced its interest. Part of a group with The Gate House. (RCHM Typscript: Gibbs (1915) 22: HLHS 1979) 41).

Listing NGR: TL4136013035

A **mock ruin** is also close to Gate House & was formerly a garden feature, now within ownership of adjacent house & garden. List description below.

TL 4113 HUNSDON HUNSDONBURY (east side)

8/20 Mock Ruin in Garden of Longcroft

GV I

Mock ruin. Circa 1832, probably by C Kemp for Revd Nicolsen Robert Calvert, as a garden embellishment to his rebuilt Tudor style rectory of that date which later became Hunsdonbury qv. Knapped flint with stucco dressings on brick to represent stonework. Facing N, a convincing mock ruin of the lower part of the W wall, of a medieval church tower, now partly covered in creeper.

Diagonal corner buttresses with stucco quoins, heavy moulded plinth course, central 4-centred arched doorway with 2 chamfered orders and dripmould with kings' heads as stops. The lower part of a window over the door. Door leads into a small circular vaulted chamber with the walls and vault plastered to represent ashlar. The chamber is covered by a large semi-circular earth mound now mostly in the garden of The Gate House.

A picturesque Gothic garden building in the form of a mock ruin. Part of a group with Hunsdonbury and the Gate House.

Listing NGR: TL4142313061

3.0 PROPOSAL

- 3.1.1 The proposed works involve- demolition of the existing rear conservatory; replacement with a new single storey family room linked to the kitchen; external & internal alterations, to include the realignment & adaption of the existing main staircase & stair access, together with associated works to improve & ease access throughout the house. These works are shown in detail on the annotated drawings.

4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1.1 The statement has special regard to sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990, as the site includes a listed building & is close to the settings of nearby listed buildings, & is to satisfy the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (July 2021): 12- Achieving well-designed places & in particular 16- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment;

Statements of Heritage Significance- *Analysing significance in heritage assets*- Historic England Advice Note 12 (October 2019); & current EHDC local planning policy & published Design Guidance.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.1 The proposed removal of the existing conservatory- a ungainly recent addition- is considered to be an enhancement to the listed building- is supported in the application (3/22/1921/HH & 3/21/1922/LBC- Matthew Crook/ Honey Kojouri, 6 December 2022 & 10 March 2023) advice report (identifying the conservatory as *a modern structure of indifferent quality*) & a replacement being acceptable in principle.
- 5.1.2 The new rear single storey extension proposed will simply add to the existing house structure as a subordinate element, that would not dominate or compete with the form, proportions & rhythms of the existing house- with no damaging impact to historic structure or fabric, merely butting up to the existing walls. The scale & massing would relate harmoniously with the pleasing balance & form of the main house. All materials are to be carefully selected to complement & be sympathetic with the historic building.
- 5.1.3 The proposed internal alterations, in particular the replacement reconfigured staircase, are designed to be thoughtfully worked around the key elements of the structure, in such a manner as to sympathetically relate to the preserved structural walls & floor/ ceiling frame. Inspection of the existing main staircase identifies a sequence of past alteration & design, probably related to the later 20th century internal reallocation of spatial layout & access arrangements, following separation from Hunsdonbury, resulting in the current awkward configuration- both practically for access & visually uncomfortable in relation to the entrance door & hall space. The proposed re-alignment will seek to overcome these identified problems & create a more simple, accessible connection between the floors- & visually & aesthetically more satisfactory resolution & outcome.
- 5.1.4 The proposed external alterations will seek to relate closely to the existing architectural detailing & materials- as set out in the annotated drawings & the agreed schedule of works. Gate House was the service wing to the rather grand principal element of the main house (as noted in the list description above). Externally it relates well with the principal house- but as a subordinate wing. Interior detailing is for the most part relatively plain & understated- this attention to detail is carefully continued in the current proposals.
- 5.1.5 All making good to interventions, resulting from the adjustments to door & window openings, internal joinery details, fixings & repairs would accord closely with usual conservation good practice, specifications, methods & SPAB Technical Guidance Notes. Recommended sustainable materials & finishes throughout, to reduce carbon emissions, as a response to the climate emergency, are proposed.
- 5.1.6 With regard to any potential impact or harm to heritage assets or their settings- the nearby listed buildings, as identified above- the replacement extension & re-instatements & repairs are all considered to be wholly beneficial & represent enhancements to the setting of Gate

House & the listed building most affected, due to proximity, Hunsdonbury. The setting of adjacent mock ruin is unaffected. The other listed buildings referred to are at such distance that any possible inter-visibility is much restricted or not realistic.

6.0 SUMMARY

- 6.1.1 The proposed demolition of the conservatory with the proposed replacement extension & alteration works to this listed building have, it is considered, been sympathetically conceived & thoughtfully designed to give *great weight* to the conservation of the house & its key significance- as is required by NPPF paragraph 199 & local planning policy & design guidance & advice- & in seeking to overcome the issues identified in the original submissions for planning permission & listed building consent.
- 6.1.2 It is axiomatic that historic buildings & historic areas- as an irreplaceable *precious & finite resource*- must continue to be relevant, sustainable & viable for use & life in the 21st century. Listed buildings need to adapt to current circumstances & spatial requirements for varied social, economic, environmental, technological & cultural reasons.
- 6.1.3 Most old buildings & settings have been altered greatly & changed quite dramatically over time. Permanence is an illusion. Taking the long view of change with old buildings- *nothing is fixed* (in time), *everything must evolve** (Jean-Louis Dedieu- quoting architect/ designer Eileen Gray, 1929). So long as the essential character, special interest & significance of the building continues into the future- as an irreplaceable resource, is changed sympathetically & conserved- & the building is *not played false*- the objectives will have been achieved.
- 6.1.4 The key significances, the character & appearance of Gate House & of the settings of the other nearby historic buildings, will continue, thoughtfully conserved for existing & future generations, as the character & appearance of the design of the new extension & alterations respect this sensitive context & provides a meaningful viable & sustainable (evolving) long-term future for this family house. This, therefore, provides the clear & convincing justification for the proposed works. The emphasis is on the selection & use of renewable & sustainable materials throughout.
- 6.1.5 Should there be any question of any degree of harm to the significance of the heritage asset, the *public benefits* (in terms of NPPF paragraph 202) will include the justified upgrading of the essential residential amenity quality of the house, providing ongoing beneficial & viable use as a sustainable family house fit for the 21st century- managing change to consolidate the residential use- conserve the appearance & the character of this listed building & maintain its intrinsic significance.

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