

Ref: 0793

Heritage Statement & Impact Assessment

Bisham Abbey
Bisham Village
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Job No	Location	Issue No	Issue Date	Written By	Proof	QA
0793	Bisham Abbey	1	Sept '23	RH & OS	HE	RH
0793	Bisham Abbey	2	Feb '24	RH & OS	HE	RH



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Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Mr Kevin Burton of the Sports Council Trust to set out the significance of Bisham Abbey and the Bisham Village Conservation Area. The statement enables the applicant to demonstrate the potential impact of their proposals upon that significance in accordance with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as amended 2023 (NPPF) and local planning policies within the Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Local Plan (2013-2033).

The statement has been informed by the Historic England advice note on statements of heritage significance published 2019 both primary and secondary research, as well as a number of site visits throughout 2022 and 2023.

The Authors

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He is one of only a handful of professionals in the UK holding full conservation accreditations with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB).

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Image 1: Aerial View of Bisham Abbey, Outlined in Red

Context of ‘Significance’

Significance is a term used in “*Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment*” published by English Heritage in April 2008. Significance is the sum of an asset’s cultural and natural heritage values and only through understanding the significance of a place is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value are vulnerable to harm and loss. *Conservation Principles* were produced primarily to help ensure consistency of approach by English Heritage (now Historic England) in carrying out their role as the Government’s statutory advisor and leading expert body on the historic environment in England.

The heritage values that provide the framework for understanding of the heritage importance of a place in *Conservation Principles* are currently being updated and revised so that when describing significance, the language is more closely aligned with the terms used in the NPPF and those used in designation and planning legislation. These proposed terms are *archaeological*; *architectural*; *artistic* and *historic* and it is intended that they will be described as ‘interests’ rather than values going forwards.

"Significance" is not just about a building's age or its architectural grandeur. It's the sum of various heritage values - from the archaeological evidence it might contain, to its aesthetic merits, to the stories and histories it encapsulates.

Historic England’s guidance on the interests laid out in Advice Note 12) Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets) is as follows:

Archaeological interest

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 skills, 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.

The three outlined interests (archaeological, architectural, and artistic, and historic) can and often do overlap. Any building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape has the potential to be a heritage asset and as sites and society evolves over time, their value and interest will also evolve. All heritage assets have significance, but this is on a sliding scale.

Where the identified heritage or cultural interest of a site meets defined criteria, it will then be eligible for designation. Bisham Abbey has been statutorily designated as grade I listed, forms part of the Bisham Village Conservation Area, and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. See [Appendix A](#).

Listed Building(s)

Bisham Abbey is a Grade I listed building dating from the 13th century. A preceptory of the Knights Templar was founded on the site in 1135 and was succeeded by an Augustinian monastery in 1334. The core building is located within the Scheduled Monument of the Monastic site along with associated buildings of many dates and styles. The entire site is situated on a flat floodplain along the southern bank of the River Thames and is approached from the east by a private driveway.

The listed buildings on the historic site are given in the table and shown on the below plan.



Number on Plan	Name	Designation
1	Bisham Abbey: Monastic and Manorial Complex	Scheduled Monument
2	Bisham Abbey	Grade I
3	Dovecote	Grade I
4	Stable Cottage, Bell Cottage, and Workshops with attached wall	Grade II
5	The Grange, Middle House, Tithe Barn Cottage	Grade II
6	Tithe Barn	Grade II*
7	The Barn and Dairy House	Grade II

Image 2: The Distribution of Listed Buildings in the Locality of the Site is Shown in the Aerial Map Above.

Conservation Area

Bisham Conservation Area was designated in June 1995. It contains a variety of different building types dating from the Norman period through to the late 20th century. The varying architectural style reflects the various stages and periods of development within the village. The most notable buildings belong to the abbey complex which stands independently to the west of the village. This unique group of buildings date from the 13th century and offer a stark contrast to the vernacular village core to the north.

The majority of the buildings in the village appear to have been upgraded in the 18th and 19th centuries and are Grade II listed. Although individually different in age and structure they do have an overall unified appearance within the streetscape. The predominant characteristics throughout though include construction in local brick in combination with timber frames, timber fenestration, tiles roofs, and brick chimneys.

The River Thames, along with the agricultural fields to the south and east of the village underline the strong connection the village has to the rural areas surrounding the settlement whilst also providing an attractive foreground and impressive views.

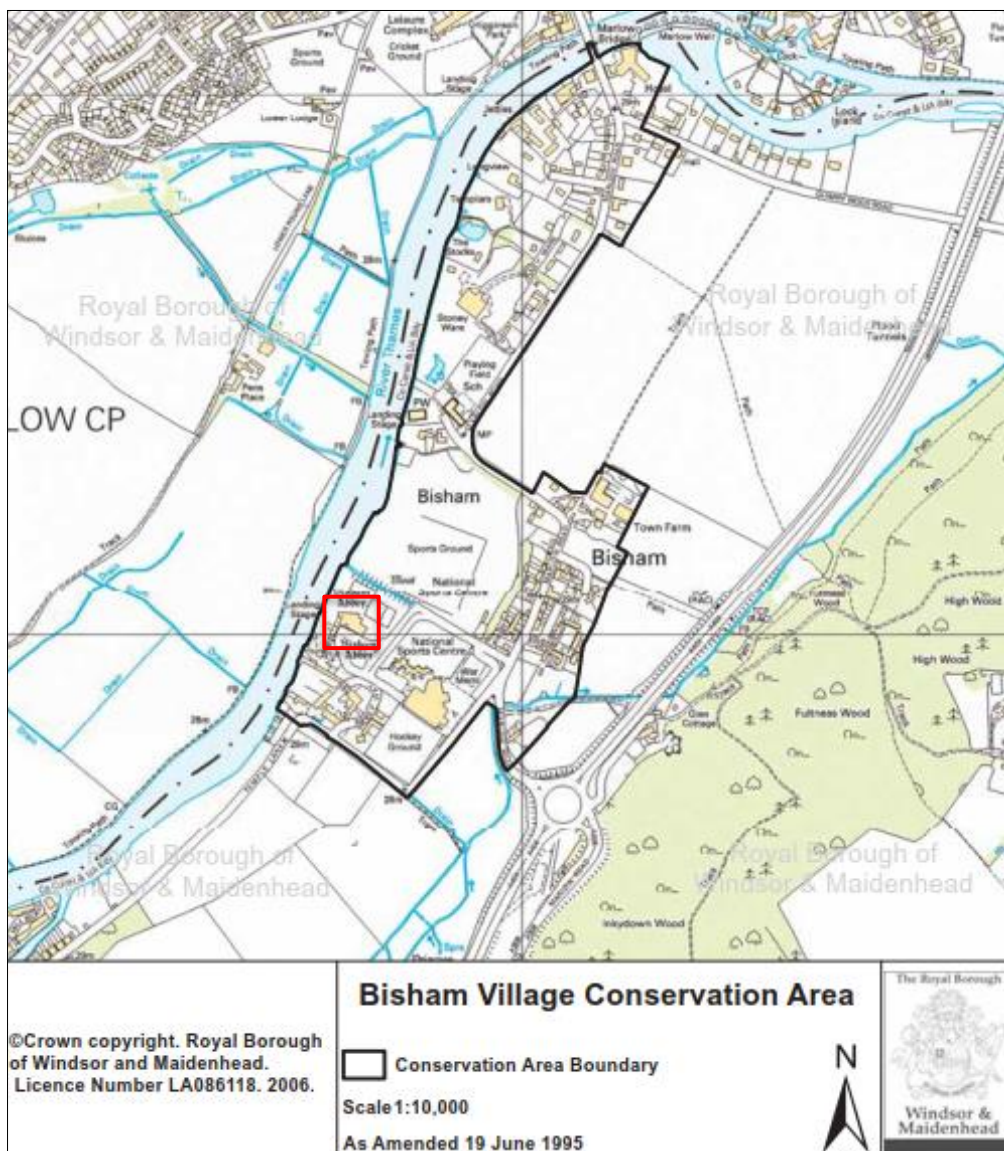


Image 3: Bisham Conservation Area Map - Bisham Abbey Highlighted in Red.

Scheduled Ancient Monument

Bisham Abbey is set within the scheduled monument of the monastic and manorial complex on the south bank of the River Thames. There is no trace of the Augustinian priory buildings however various parts of the original Templar buildings survive including the great hall within the Abbey, stone roofed porch, and kitchen block. Whilst the Abbey itself is Grade I listed there are also a number of late medieval buildings which survive to the west which include the circular dovecote, tithe barn, and grange.

There is evidence of earthworks of a surrounding rectangular moat, though most has been infilled. The date of the moat is unknown however it is thought to be post Dissolution occupation of the site. There are also archaeological remains of timber buildings and medieval pottery within the site.



Images 4 & 5: Aerial Views of Bisham Abbey Site and Scheduled Monument.

Historic Map Regression & Brief History

Historic maps are helpful in identifying contextual changes to heritage assets, from the wider landscape scale down to the streetscape level and even to the changes in the footprint of the asset. This all contributes to the understanding of character and significance.



Image 6: 18th Century Etching of Bisham Abbey.

The manor house at Bisham was built around 1260 as a community house for two Knights Templar. Since the dissolution of the monasteries, the building standing today has been known as Bisham Abbey. Bisham Priory however would have stood alongside the manor house and dominated the site. When the Templars were suppressed in 1307, King Edward II took over the manorial rights using the manor house as a gaol for Queen Elizabeth of Scots, (the wife of King Robert the Bruce), along with her stepdaughter Princess Marjorie and her sister-in-law, Lady Christine of Carrick. They were imprisoned there for two years before being moved to Windsor.

In July 1536, Bisham Priory was surrendered to King Henry VIII who went on to re-establish it as a Benedictine Abbey. However, the Abbey lasted for less than a year before finally being dissolved in June 1537. Nothing now remains of the priory or the associated buildings.

After its dissolution, Bisham Abbey was given by King Henry VIII to his former Queen, Anne of Cleves. Following Anne's death, Bisham Abbey passed onto Sir Thomas Hoby, the man who was responsible for the custody of Princess Elizabeth during the reign of Mary Tudor. It was the Hobys who demolished the monastic church on the site while adding the impressive bay window to the northern end and, in 1560, an imposing brick tower.

Following on from the Hoby family, the Abbey passed onto the Vansittarts. This family and its descendants held the Abbey, the estate and village, up until 1965. The Abbey, which had been let to the Central Council for Physical Recreation as a memorial to two brothers in the family who were killed in the Second World War, was then purchased as the CCPR's first residential site. Today, Bisham Abbey remains under the custodial ownership of Sport England.

A detailed history of the site can be found on the British History Online website - [Parishes: Bisham](#).

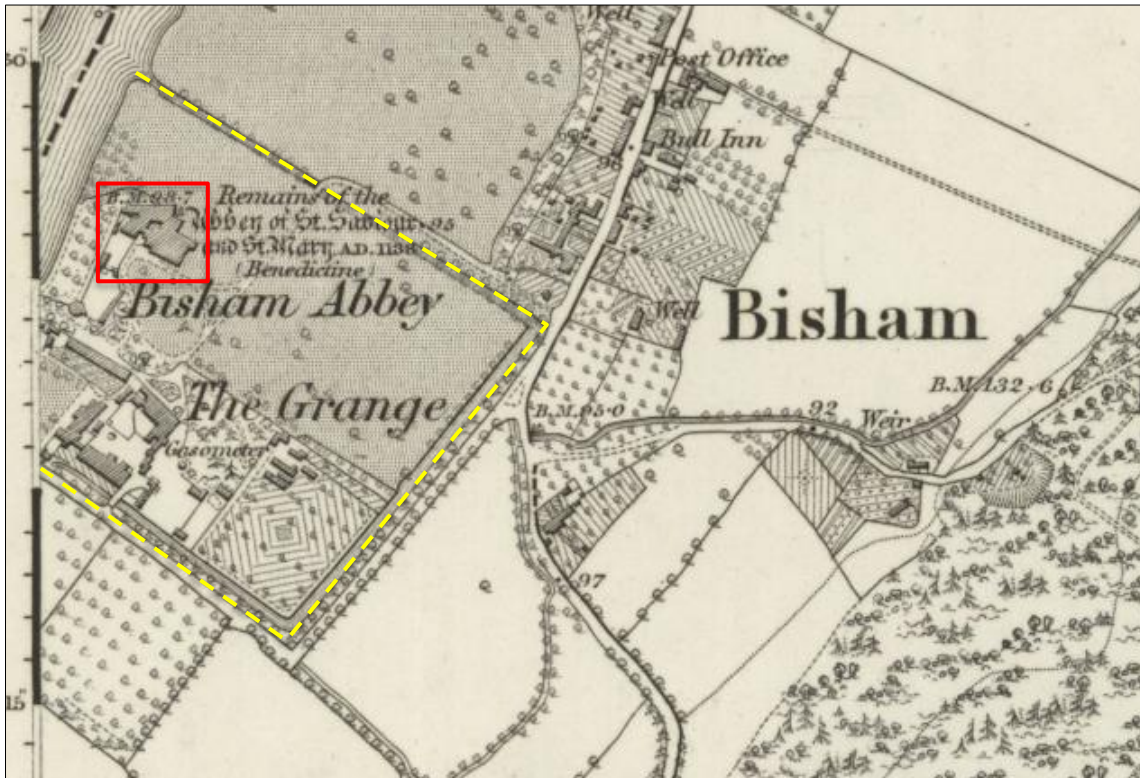


Image 7: OS Six Inch Map c.1882. Bisham Abbey is highlighted in red.

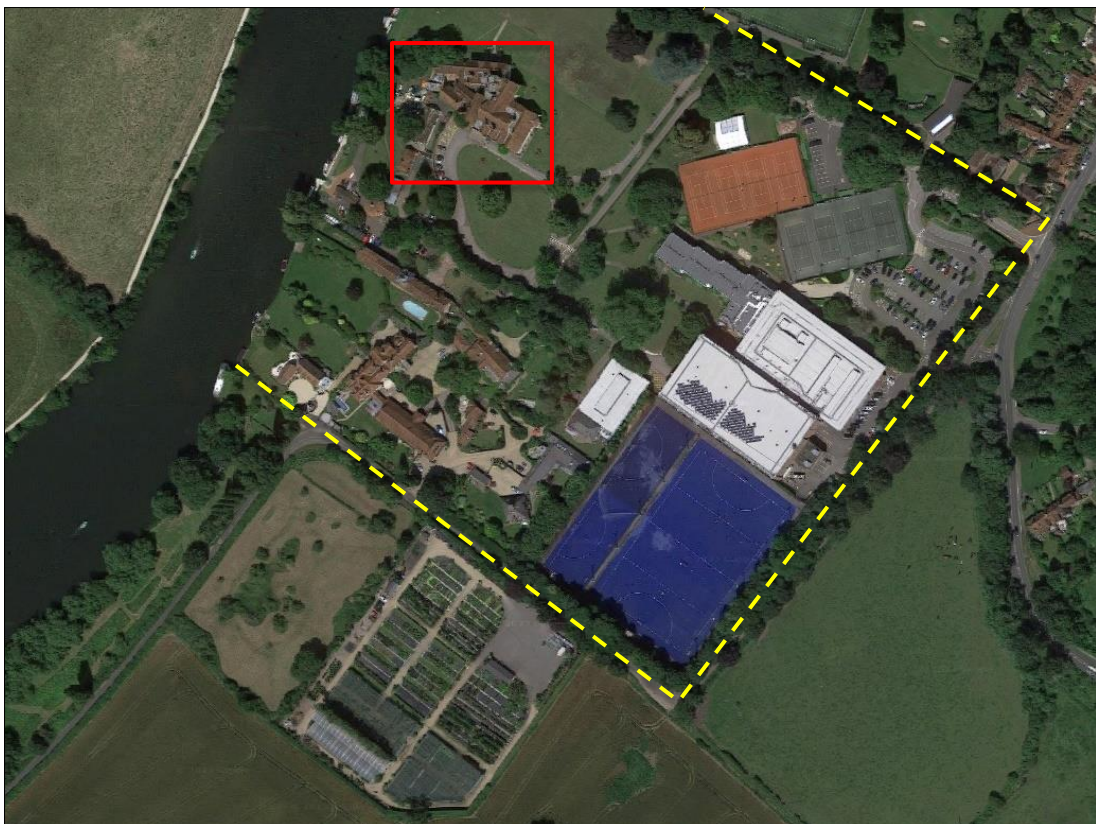


Image 8: Satellite Image of the Bisham Site. From the mid-20th century into the 21st century, the Bisham Abbey site has been continuously developed as a national sports centre and much of its curtilage now houses sporting facilities. Abbey highlighted in red.

Significance

Heritage Interest:	Rating:
Architectural (Aesthetic)	Very High
Explanation:	
<p>Bisham Abbey is a place of very high architectural interest, exhibiting a number of styles and architectural features from the 13th century onwards, indicative of a building that has undergone many changes throughout centuries having been adapted from a religious to residential building. Such a building is never the work of one particular architect or builder but should be considered a combination of the work of many designers and craftsmen. The result can be considered aesthetically pleasing, particularly when viewed from the north across the lawn.</p>	
Heritage Interest:	Rating:
Historical	Very High
Explanation:	
<p>Bisham Abbey also has very high historical interest as a place that has had several uses, it has been connected to a number of significant groups and individuals including Norman Knights and the Knights Templar, but perhaps most significantly Richard, Earl of Warwick (the ‘Kingmaker’), Anne of Cleves, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Both of the latter used what is now known as the Elizabeth Room as a council chamber on occasions during the 16th century.</p> <p>In more recent centuries, the property was home to the Vansittart-Neal family, who were influential landowners and MPs in the 18th and 19th centuries in this part of Berkshire.</p> <p>Further historical interest can also be found crossing over from the architectural and archaeological interests in information that can be gleaned from the building materials and construction of the building itself, as well as more general information on the lives and society of the gentry class from the 16th – 19th centuries.</p>	
Heritage Interest:	Rating:
Archaeological	Very High
Explanation:	
<p>Archaeologically, Bisham Abbey is again of very high interest as the site has been in continuous human habitation since before the Norman conquest. Much of what stood on the site prior to the 13th century no longer exists above ground, though it is expected that significant archaeological evidence remains below ground from this period, as well as possible evidence of successive alterations/demolitions dating from later periods.</p> <p>Evidence of a rectangular moat which once surrounded the abbey are clear and archaeological remains of timber buildings are known to exist within the interior of the site. Large amounts of medieval pottery has also been discovered.</p> <p>The building itself also holds archaeological evidence of building construction from a variety of periods.</p>	

Heritage Interest: Artistic	Rating: Low-Medium
Explanation: Artistically the building is of relatively low artistic interest, as it has not been tremendously ornamented or decoratively embellished with additional work of any particular artist. Some effort has been made, however, in the form of chequerboard style clunch and flint masonry work to make what would otherwise have been plain stretches of masonry decorative and there are stained glass windows (probably 19 th century) to some rooms, depicting some of Bisham's more famous inhabitants and visitors. There are also examples of fine carving, both in stone and timber, in the form of fireplaces, staircases and the gallery screen in the Great Hall.	

Identification of Special Character and Appearance

Bisham is situated in an area of flat river flood plain abutting the south eastern bank of the River Thames. It is characterised by a variety of different building types reflecting the development of the settlement dating from the Norman period through to the late 20th century, some of particularly fine quality. Bisham Abbey is not seen from the majority of the conservation area due to the size of the plot and the number of large (and in some cases ancient) trees that surround it, though it makes a positive contribution, particularly when seen from the northern, Buckinghamshire side of the River.

Trees in and around the village play an important role in contributing to towards the rural feel of the area, framing the views across the river to agricultural land beyond.

Setting

The immediate setting of the abbey is primarily characterised by lawns to the front and rear of the building, with the river to its western side. A number of other significant buildings associated with the abbey remain on the site, including a dovecote, several barns and cottages – see also [Listed Building\(s\)](#).

To the east/southeast side of the abbey is now a collection of often very large 20th/21st century buildings associated with the sites use as a national sports centre, as well as other facilities such as tennis courts and hockey pitches, all of which have had a significant negative impact on the setting as a whole, and on views to and from this direction.

Relevant Planning History

Application No	21/02733/CLLB
Description	Certificate of lawfulness to determine whether the works on 2 felt flat roofs and one lean to tiled roof is lawful.
Validated	Tue 31 Aug 2021
Decision	Application Permitted
Decision Issued Date	Mon 25 Oct 2021

Application No	03/40840/LBC
Description	Re-roofing of existing building and associated remedial works to the interior.
Validated	Thu 18 Sep 2003
Decision	Refuse
Decision Issued Date	Tue 20 Jan 2004

Application No	94/00096/LBC
Description	BISHAM ABBEY NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE TEMPLE LANE BISHAM BERKSHIRE SL7 1RT REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING CORRUGATED SHEET ROOF WITH CLAY TILING AND FELT ROOFS WITH SANDCAST LEAD
Validated	Mon 14 Feb 1994
Decision	Application Permitted (delegated powers)
Decision Issued Date	Thu 19 May 1994

Proposals

The proposal on which this application is predicated relate to:

1. The first phase of proactive like-for-like replacement of failing (both tiles and fixings) plain clay tiled pitched roofs, and lead covered flat roofs, as part of a longer-term repair and maintenance plan. This is required to protect highly significant timber roof structures and internal finishes.

It is apparent from the varying condition of the tiles, which ranges from fair to very poor, that the roofs are composed of (probably) new and salvaged tiles at the time of the last reroofing scheme – which we suspect was largely undertaken in the 1970s. The use of iron fixings to the east slope of Roof K, which are corroding, suggest that this slope was last re-roofed prior to this, though no earlier than the late 19th or early 20th century.

Due to the relative difficulty of erecting a scaffold at Bisham Abbey, both logistically and for the disruption this would cause to the building's use as an events venue, we are proposing to use new handmade plain clay tiles to each of the pitched roofs encompassed in this phase of works:

- Roof K.
- Roof L.
- Roof H.
- Roof I.

The roof covering should have a life expectancy of 75+ years and it will therefore not be necessary to scaffold again for the foreseeable future. The proposed new handmade clay plain tiles are made by Aldershaw in Sussex and would be predominantly restoration red (85%) with a smaller percentage of medium (10%) and dark red (5%) mixed through them to provide a predominantly orange hue whilst avoiding a flat appearance.

Although called 'restoration red' the colour is more orange, and the tiles are made of clay sourced in England. Many of the other tile manufacturers actual source their clay and sometimes even their tiles from abroad. The marketing however can be very misleading.



Restoration Red, Dark Red Buff



Dark Red, Medium Red and Restoration Red.

Images 9 & 10: Other historic buildings tiled with the above mix of colours.

2. In undertaking the above, taking the opportunity to significantly improve the building's energy efficiency (and long-term sustainability) through the introduction of technically appropriate and permeable roof insulation (wood fibre).
3. Replacing existing Velux style roof lights, many of which now allow water ingress, with new Conservation Roof Lights of the same dimensions.

The lead covered roofs to be replaced will be renewed on a like for like basis in sand cast code 7 lead sheet to the same details as existing.



Image 9: Location of Proposed Works.

Photographs

Roof H – Pitched Plain Clay Tile



Roof I – Pitched Plain Clay Tile



North Slope



South Slope

Roof K – Pitched Plain Clay Tile



East Slope



West Slope

Roof L – Pitched Plain Clay Tile



North Slope



South Slope

Roofs O1, O2 & O2 – Flat Lead



Roofs P & P1– Flat Lead



Roofs R1 & R2 – Flat Lead



Roof T– Flat Lead



Impact of Proposals Upon Significance

The loss of historic fabric (tiles and lead sheeting) would amount to some harm, though this would be at the lower end of less than substantial. Both materials have a finite lifespan, and it is therefore expected that replacement will eventually be required, particularly when discussing a building with such a long history. It is certain, therefore, that replacement of the roof coverings will have taken place on several occasions before, and will, in time, need to be done again. These works should be considered more of a repair than an alteration, ensuring that the building remains watertight in the coming years and conserving the significant fabric of the building within.

The addition of appropriate sustainable and vapour permeable insulation will greatly improve the energy efficiency of the abbey. This is vital, both in terms of the cost of running and maintain a building such as this, and the current energy/climate crisis, safeguarding the ongoing use of the building and ensuring that it will continue to be used and enjoyed in future years. This proposal should therefore be considered of beneficial impact.

Replacement of the existing Velux windows, which are thought to date from the 1970s, with Conservation Roof Lights will also be an enhancement, both in aesthetic terms, and again to halt water ingress which over time poses a serious risk to the historic roof structure and other significant fabric of the building internally.

It is considered that the proposed works will have no impact on the Scheduled Ancient Monument, or the Bisham Village Conservation Area.

Historic Environment Legislation & Policy

The legislative framework includes the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which plays a crucial role in safeguarding the historic environment and its heritage assets. Specifically, Section 16 of the Act mandates local planning authorities to give special consideration to preserving listed buildings, their surroundings, and any distinctive architectural or historical features when evaluating applications for listed building consent. Section 66 of the Act extends the same responsibility to the local planning authority when exercising their planning functions.

This statutory duty forms the foundation for the approach to the Historic Environment outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supported by the National Planning Policy Guidance. The NPPF recognizes that protecting and enhancing the built and historical environment is vital for sustainable development's environmental aspect. The government's objective is to conserve heritage assets appropriately so that they can continue to enrich the quality of life for present and future generations.

The principles and policies outlined in Section 16 of the NPPF are directly tied to the responsibilities of Local Planning Authorities under the heritage-related consent regulations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It emphasizes that heritage assets are irreplaceable resources, and therefore, their significance must be sustained and enhanced. To achieve this, a comprehensive understanding of an asset's significance is crucial, and this understanding should guide efforts to avoid or minimize conflicts between conserving the heritage assets and proposed developments.

In cases where harm to a heritage asset cannot be avoided, it must be thoroughly and convincingly justified. The more extensive the harm, the stronger the justification required. Additionally, the greater the significance of the heritage asset, the more weight should be given to its conservation in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The above proposed works to replace failing roof coverings and Velux roof lights and install appropriate roof insulation to of Bisham Abbey will have a beneficial impact on the significance of the building. They will ensure long-term watertightness, protect its significant historic fabric, and improve its energy efficiency.

It is considered that the proposals are in line with the requirements of Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the 1990 Act, paragraphs 194, 197 and 199 of the NPPF as well as Policy HE1 of the Windsor & Maidenhead Borough Local Plan and should, therefore, be recommended for approval.

Appendix A: Historic England List Description & Conservation Area Map

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

District: **Windsor and Maidenhead (Unitary Authority)**

Parish: **Bisham**

National Grid Reference: **SU 84684 85021**

Details

SU 8485-8585 and SU 8484-8584 16/15 15/15

BISHAM MARLOW ROAD (west side, off) Bisham Abbey

25.3.55

G.V. I

Preceptory of the Knights Templar, now the Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre. C13, altered and extended C14, and largely rebuilt in C16, altered and extended C17. Minor restorations in 1859, altered mid C20. Part brick, part rendered, part chalk, part chalk with knapped flint; some exposed timber frame on west. Several old tile gabled roofs. Roughly four main blocks; the first runs east and west and faces due north; the second is connected at its west end to the first block and runs in a south-easterly direction; the third is a continuation of the second and contains the great hall and screens passage; the fourth runs north-east at right angles to the hall. At the south-east corner of the northern range and rising above it is a tower. Mostly two storeys, but part two storeys and attic.

Tower: built 1560, brick with stone quoins and dressings. Irregular, windows mostly blocked but some two-light casements remain. At the north-east is an octagonal turret, finishing in an embattled parapet, and at the opposite corner, a large chimney-stack containing many chimneys. South-west or entrance front: centre part chalk, four bays, with a one bay gable at either end. Centre part has two brick gables with crow steps, and two large chimneys with diagonal shafts, offset heads and clay pots. Three C16 cross windows with pediments on first floor. On ground floor are three, three-light casements with pediments and on the left a C13 entrance porch with fine outer and inner doorways and a quadripartite ribbed vault. The doorways have colonettes and moulded arches, and the large planked inner door with its ironwork is original. Above the doorway is a small three-light casement and above it is an embattled brick parapet. The left gable of chequered chalk and flint is set back slightly and has a steeply pitched roof, a two-light cusped traceried window at the upper level, and a small two-light window with

a two-centred arched head, below. The right gable is chalk and has a two-light leaded casement at attic level in a moulded frame. Below this is a five-light mullioned and transomed window with casements at the bottom level. On the ground floor, a small three-light casement on left with pediment, and a blocked arched opening on the right.

East front: coved eaves cornice. Four bays. On the right bay, a two-storey canted bay with hipped tile roof with large mullioned and transomed window on first floor, and three arched openings to ground floor. To the left of this on the first floor, two two-light casements with hoodmoulds and a large window in the third bay similar to that in the canted bay. On the ground floor of this section is a small, square-headed blocked opening on the left, and to the right one narrow and three wide arched openings with moulded heads which formed part of the former C14 cloisters. Two further arches run through behind the openings of the canted bays.

Interior: in the great hall the remains of a late C13 window of three lancet lights, now blocked, in the east wall; and a mid C16 stone fireplace with coupled Corinthian columns on either side, standing on enriched pedestals and supporting an entablature with a carved frieze. Above this, an early C17 oak overmantel, given by James I to Lord Windsor c.1605 for his house at Worcester, and when the house was sold, the eighth Earl of Plymouth presented it to Bisham Abbey. The screens and projecting gallery above are late C15, and the lower part of the hall wall is C17 panelling. In the screens passage are five blocked arches which originally went into the C13 kitchens. A good C18 staircase with moulded balusters to the north of the hall. Over the Great Chamber on the east side, built by Lord Montagu, c.1370, and now the Elizabethan Room, is an extremely fine collar purlin roof of five bays with moulded arched braces to collars, moulded crown posts braced four ways, and double side-purlins hollow chamfered and finely moulded.

The House was an abbey for only three years. Formerly a preceptory of the Templars, it became an Augustinian Priory in 1337, and in 1537 a Benedictine abbey. This was dissolved in 1540, and the estate granted to Sir Philip Hoby in 1553, who began to rebuild as did his half-brother who succeeded him. Much of this work was carried out between 1557 and 1562.

Listing NGR: SU8470085002

Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number: **40803**

Legacy System: **LBS**

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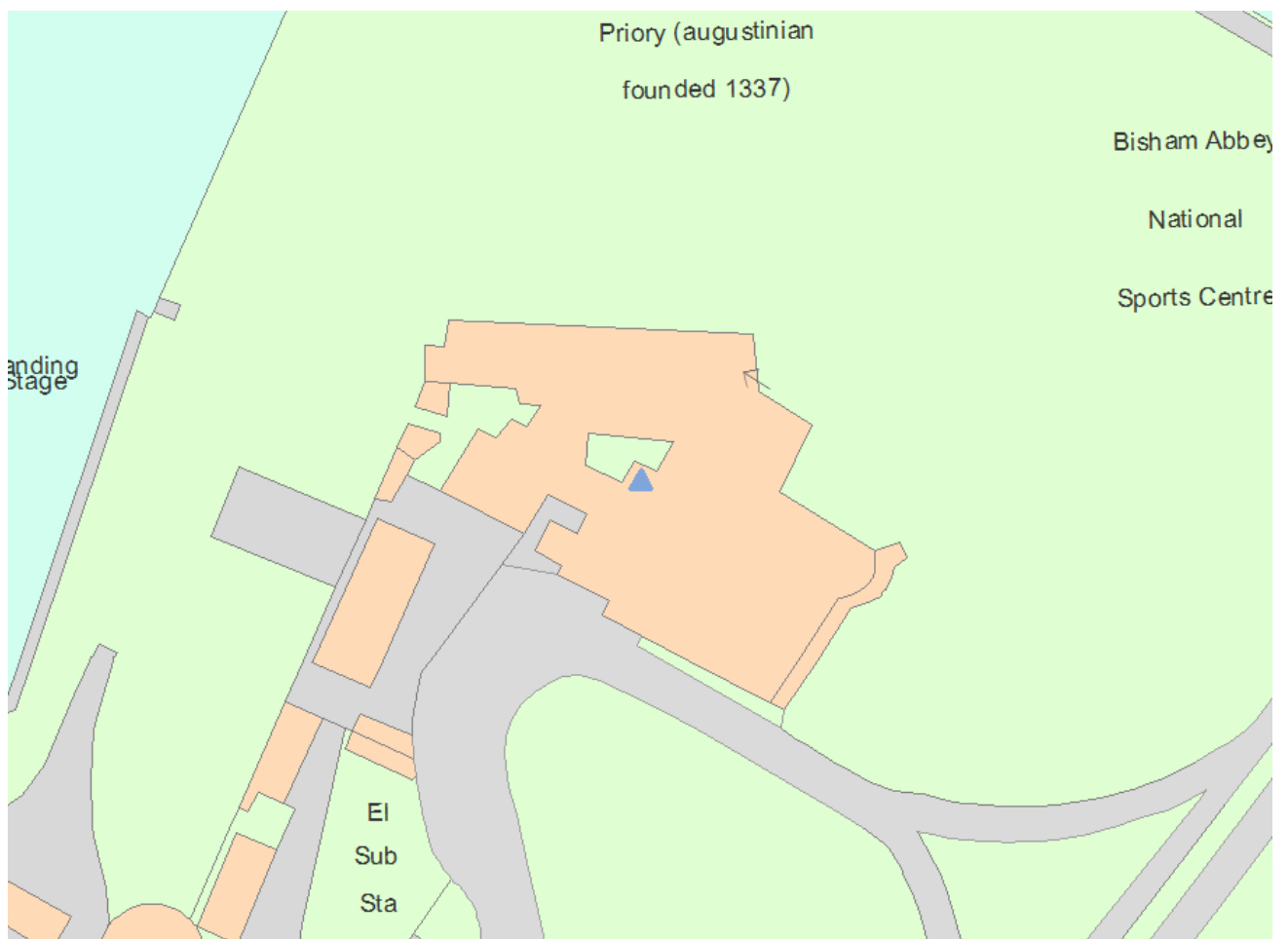
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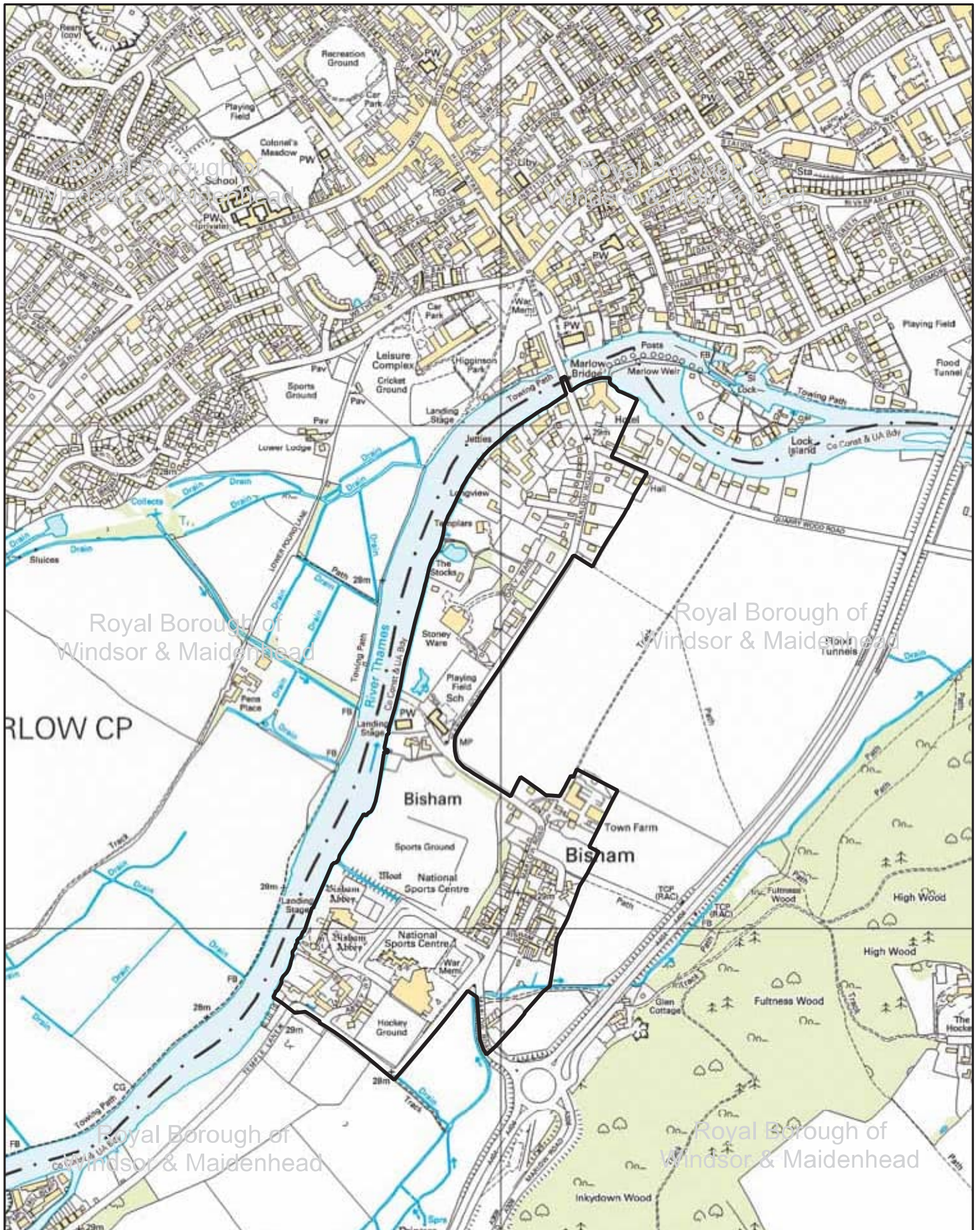
'Country Life' in Country Life, (1941), 342

Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.



Map



Bisham Village Conservation Area

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 Conservation Area Boundary

Scale 1:10,000

As Amended 19 June 1995

