

Esher Place  
Representations regarding  
potential listing upgrade  
Prepared for Esher Residents Limited  
March 2022





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## Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
1.0 Introduction .....	2
2.0 The landscape .....	3
3.0 The House .....	8
Appendix 1: List entry.....	12
Appendix 2: Country Life, 1900 .....	14
Appendix 3: Built Heritage Appeal Statement .....	19



# Executive Summary

This report has been prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd for Esher Place Residents Ltd. It provides representations regarding a potential listing upgrade, for the consideration of decision makers.

Esher Place House was listed at Grade II in 1975. At the time, its interiors were not inspected. The designed landscape that surrounds the house is not included on the Register of Parks and Gardens.

As set out in this report there is a very strong case:

- for including the garden on the Register of Parks and Gardens
- for upgrading the listing of the house to Grade II\*

## Landscape

The creation of Esher Place – both house and landscape – marks an important phase in the English development of French-inspired design.

The main phase of development is c. 1895-1905. The garden created in this period by Achille Duchêne and Sir Edwin Lutyens is undoubtedly 'of special interest and relatively intact,' thus fulfilling Historic England's selection criteria.

To Achille Duchêne's work of the 1890s can be attributed the sophisticated forecourt design, with curved stone balustrade, stone steps and shaped lawn parterres on the gently rising ground.

To the west, Duchêne's paved viewing terrace culminates in a carefully designed sequence incorporating circular stone steps and curved paths leading to further steps and features.

The designed landscape was embellished further c. 1905 by the renowned designer Sir Edwin Lutyens, who added the remarkable semi-circular earthwork Sunken Theatre (pictured) and also a Sunken Garden.

## House

Esher Place House displays French-inspired architecture of the highest quality that is comparable with Grade I and Grade II\* listed examples.

It is clear from the list entry that the interiors were not inspected when the house was listed in 1975.

Externally, the unusual curved plan and the decorative use of stone and brick in combination creates a rich effect that sets it apart from other listed houses.

Internally, the planning and craftsmanship of the principal interiors are comparable with the celebrated work of Mewès and Davis at Luton Hoo and the Ritz, listed at Grade I and Grade II\* respectively. The Esher Place interiors were created several years earlier.

Today, there is a renewed interest and understanding of this French-inspired phase in English design, explored by historians such as Tom Stammers and Diana Davis and debated at conferences organised by the Wallace Collection ('Sir Richard Wallace and his Age', 2018) and the Victorian Society ('French Architecture and the English', 2021).

This is the context in which Esher Place should be re-assessed.



The designed landscape is not currently on the Register of Parks and Gardens

# 1.0 Introduction

## Purpose and structure

This report has been prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd for Esher Place Residents Ltd. It provides representations regarding a potential listing upgrade, for the consideration of decision makers, including Historic England.

Esher Place House was listed at Grade II in 1975. At the time, its interiors were not inspected. The designed landscape that surrounds the house is not included on the Register of Parks and Gardens.

As set out in this report there is a very strong case:

- for including the garden on the Register of Parks and Gardens (see chapter 2)
- for upgrading the listing of the house to Grade II\* (see chapter 3)

The report is designed to assist decision makers by drawing to their attention relevant information. Photos in the report are from the website [saveesherplace.org](http://saveesherplace.org).

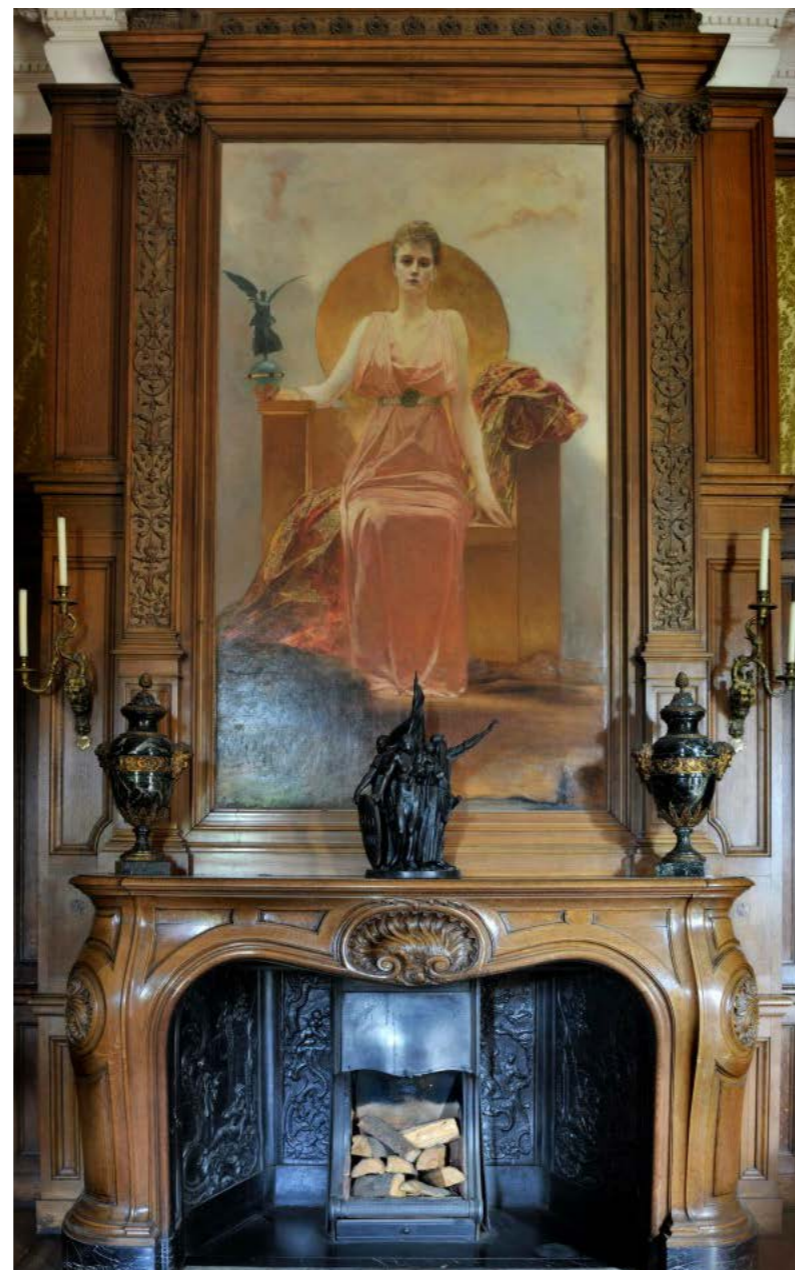
To support decision makers and make best use of time, the report is deliberately concise, setting out the key points and with illustrations for ease of reference.

The current list entry description is included at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 reproduces a historic article from Country Life.

At the time of writing (March 2022), the site is subject to a planning appeal. For context, the Built Heritage Appeal Statement is included at Appendix 3. This includes a list of sources.

## Limitations

This report is based on an external site visit, available photographs and on a review of published information (see Appendix 3: Sources). The understanding set out in the report may be capable of refinement as further information comes to light.



Interior of the Library



View toward 'My Lady's Garden'

## 2.0 The landscape

There is a historic park and garden associated with Esher Place, as illustrated. Neither are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens. Parts of the historic park have been developed, but its extent is still apparent. A pair of lodges survive at the north entrance to the park on Mole Lane which are not designated.

The gardens around the house are well preserved and full of interesting features, as set out overleaf. The gardens were designed in two phases by two important figures – the noted French designer Achille Duchêne and the celebrated English designer Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Criteria for inclusion on the register is set out in Historic England's *Rural Landscapes: Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide* (2017):

*All sites included on the Register of Parks and Gardens must hold a level of significance defined as 'special historic' interest in a national context. Nine general criteria have been defined, five relating to date and rarity, and four to other considerations, which have been used in assessing candidates for inclusion since the start of the Register in the 1980s.*

These nine criteria are listed below, with comments in each case:

### Date and rarity

*The older a designed landscape is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. Likely to be designated are:*

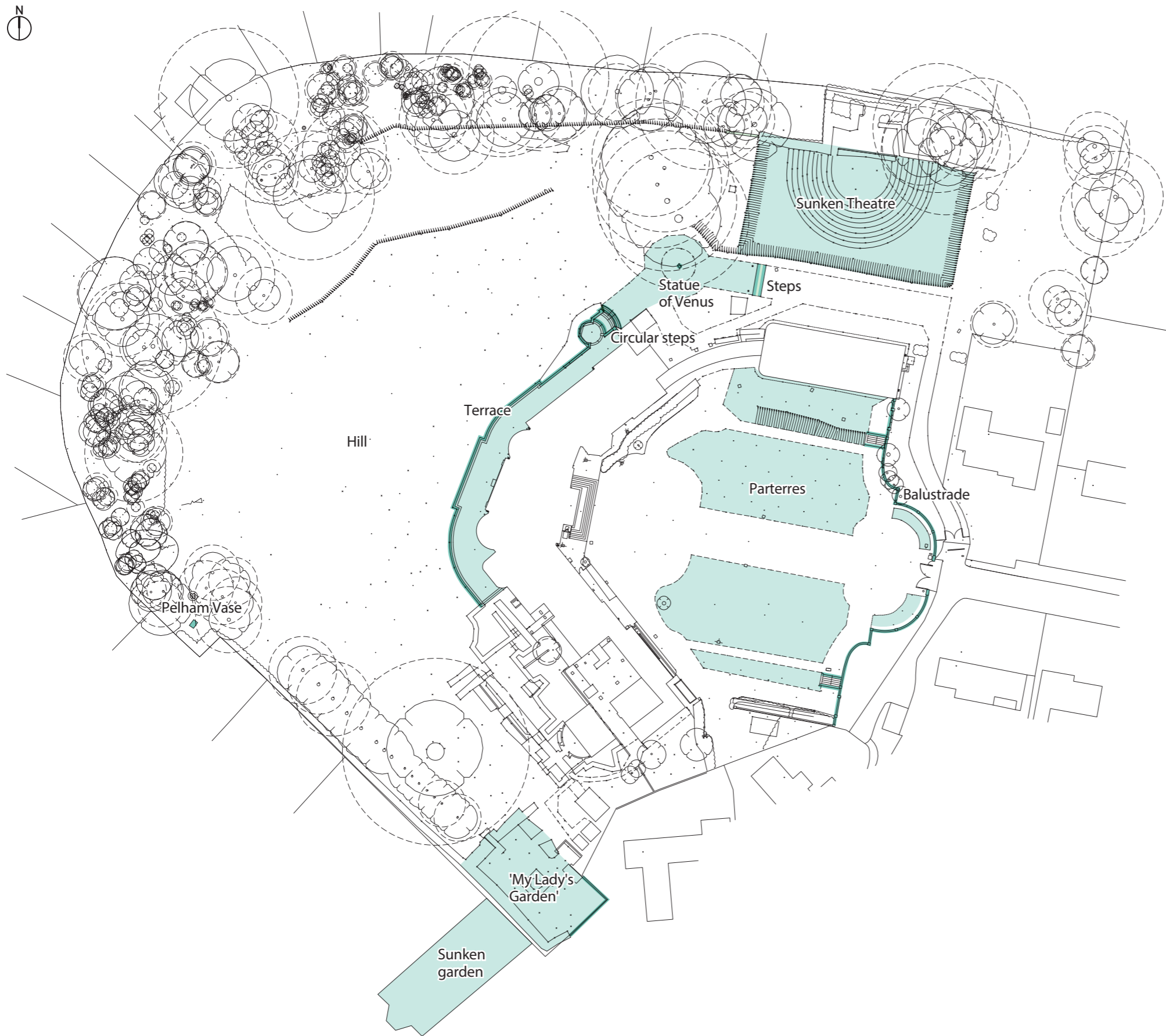
- *Sites formed before 1750 where at least a significant proportion of the principal features of the original layout is still in evidence*

The Esher Place estate was formed in the thirteenth century, originally the property of the Bishops of Winchester. In the 1730s it became 'one of the most significant Rococo landscapes in the country, with a house, landscape and estate buildings designed by William Kent', as described by Historic England in the list entry for garden walls at 7 More Lane, one of the Kent structures to have been listed (list entry no. 1293580).

Other features still recognisable from eighteenth-century views and maps include: i) the approach to Waynfleete's Tower, Waynfleet Tower Avenue, and, (ii) the hill on which Esher Place House stands.



Overview of historic landscape, with key surviving features overlaid on 1895 Ordnance Survey



Key surviving features of the designed landscape



## ESHER PLACE

The hill was always a key feature. Kent first proposed it as the site of Pelham's mansion and in the event built a Belvedere there, which was later superseded by the nineteenth-century mansion (see chapter 3).

- *Sites laid out between 1750 and 1840 where enough of the layout survives to reflect the original design*

N/A

- *Sites with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact, the degree of required special interest rising as the site becomes closer in time*

The main phase of development of the gardens is c. 1895-1905. The French-inspired garden created in this period by Achille Duchêne and Sir Edwin Lutyens is undoubtedly 'of special interest and relatively intact,' thus fulfilling the criteria.

To Achille Duchêne work of the 1890s can be attributed the sophisticated forecourt design, complete with curved stone balustrade, stone steps and shaped lawn parterres on the gently rising ground.

On the other side of the house a paved viewing terrace overlooking the landscape culminates in circular stone steps, with curved paths leading to further steps. This design capitalises on the unusual curved plan of the house. It is a location that was photographed for Country Life c. 1900 and survives essentially intact.

Also surviving from that period are the arcaded walls of the walled garden described as 'My Lady's Garden' in Country Life 1900 (for historic photo see Appendix 2).



Parterres, Esher Place



Balustrade, Esher Place

## COMPARISONS



Parterre, Mentmore, Bucks (registered Grade I)



Balustrade, Aldenham House gardens, Elstree (registered Grade II)

## ESHER PLACE

The designed landscape was embellished further c. 1905 by the renowned designer Sir Edwin Lutyens. The surviving Lutyens landscape features include the remarkable semi-circular earthwork Sunken Theatre with adjacent stone balustrade, and also a Sunken Garden with a linear pond, the latter surviving within the garden of an adjacent property.

- *Particularly careful selection is required for sites from the period after 1945*

N/A

- *Sites of less than 30 years old are normally registered only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat.*

N/A

### Further considerations

*Further considerations which may influence selection, and may exceptionally be sufficient by themselves to merit designation, are as follows. In each case there is an expectation that at least a significant proportion of the main elements of the designed landscape layout survives:*

- *Sites which were influential in the development of taste, whether through reputation or reference in literature*

The creation of Esher Place – both house and landscape – marks an important phase in the English development of French-inspired design, as explored further in chapter 3.

*Sites which are early or representative examples of a style of layout or a type of site, or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance*

Sir Edwin Lutyens has national importance as among the most important garden designers and architects of the Edwardian era.



Sunken Theatre, Esher Place



Circular steps, Esher Place

## COMPARISONS



Theatre, Dartington Hall, Devon (registered Grade II\*)



Circular steps, Marshcourt, Hampshire (registered Grade II\*)

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- Sites having an association with significant persons

Esher Place is rich in its associations with historical figures, from the Bishops of Winchester, who owned the estate in the medieval period, to Cardinal Wolsey, who lived there while building Hampton Court, to later owners. These include Britain's third Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, and the notable collectors and connoisseurs, Lord and Lady Vincent, who created the present gardens.

- Sites with a strong group value with other heritage assets

Esher Place is one of a series of famed Surrey estates that were celebrated in their time and influential in the development of taste, such as Ashted, Claremont, Hampton Court and Painshill, which are included on the Register.

In conclusion, and as the images show, the garden of Esher Place has landscape features that are comparable with registered gardens.

Features that are recognisable from eighteenth-century views and maps include i) the approach to Waynefleete's Tower, Waynefleet Tower Avenue, and, (ii) the hill on which Esher Place House stands.



Sunken Garden, Esher Place, historic image (Smithsonian)



Terrace, Esher Place

## COMPARISONS



Sunken Garden, Marshcourt, Hampshire (registered Grade II\*)



Terrace, Mentmore, Bucks (registered Grade I)

## 3.0 The House

Esher Place House is listed at Grade II, but fully deserves consideration for upgrade to at least Grade II\*, due to its suite of principal interiors of exceptional quality and intactness.

It is clear from the list entry that the interiors were not inspected when the house was listed in 1975. They are not mentioned at all in the list entry description.

There is little published guidance on the difference between the three listing grades. The principal guidance is in the DDCMS's *Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings* (2018), which explains the three grades of listing as follows (para. 7):

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional special interest;
- Grade II\* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
- Grade II buildings are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

A Grade II\* listed building has qualities that elevate it above Grade II listed buildings. In practice, it is often the interiors that make the difference. For example, Clerkenwell Fire Station was upgraded from Grade II to Grade II\* in 2019 due mainly to its rare and intact laundry room interior, despite many other rooms being much altered.

Esher Place House is not only a site of rich history and associations, it also displays French-inspired architecture of the highest quality that is comparable with Grade I and Grade II\* listed examples.

### ESHER PLACE



Esher Place



Entrance Hall, Esher Place

### COMPARISONS



Eltham Palace (Grade II\*)



Ritz Hotel (GII\*)

## Architectural/Aesthetic interest

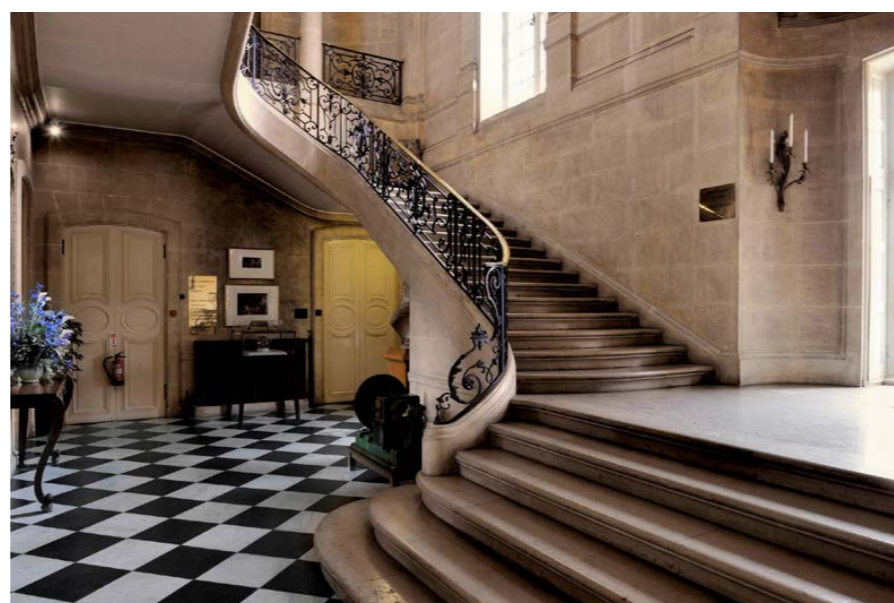
### Quality

- Externally, the unusual curved plan and the decorative use of stone and brick in combination creates a rich effect that sets it apart from other listed houses. This richness of effect can be compared to Grade II\*-listed houses such as Eltham Palace or Camden Place, Kent.
- Internally, the austere, grand Entrance Hall and Staircase Hall, in their planning and craftsmanship, with carefully cut stone and bespoke ironwork, are comparable with the celebrated work of Mewès and Davis at Luton Hoo and the Ritz, listed at Grade I and Grade II\* respectively. The Esher Place interiors were created several years earlier.
- The fully panelled interiors of the Dining Room and Bar Lounge are of the highest quality. The sinuous lines of the panels and the sculpted relief modelling in both timber and plaster are comparable with the finest panelled rooms, such as at Mentmore, Buckinghamshire (Grade I) and Camden Place (Grade II\*).

### Intactness

- It is clear from modern and historic photography that the principal interiors of Esher Place are extremely well preserved, both in terms of their overall plan-form and in their architectural decoration including decorative plasterwork, carpentry, ironwork and stonework.
- Some lesser rooms have been subdivided and altered in other ways, as is often found in a house of this size. This does not preclude a listing upgrade. For example, the upgrade of Clerkenwell Fire Station from Grade II to Grade II\* was occasioned despite the majority of the interiors being much altered.

## ESHER PLACE



Staircase Hall, Esher Place



Dining Room, Esher Place

## COMPARISONS



Staircase Hall, Luton Hoo (Grade I)



Dining Room, Camden Place, Kent (Grade II\*)

## Historical/Associations interest

- From the mid-nineteenth century there was an increasing popularity for French-inspired architecture, interiors and decoration initiated by French architectural salvage sold to the expanding appetite of the British market post Revolutions. The taste for this opulent fashion was often deep rooted in new money. The Rothschilds in particular were pioneers of this fashion that began with Mentmore in the 1850s and was fully realised at Waddesdon Manor in the 1870s- recreating interiors in the style of Louis XV.
- By the late nineteenth century this fashion had become academic in both its understanding and use which resulted in a more refined style, incorporated into the British architectural discourse by experienced craftsmen such as Mewes and Davis, Laurent and Haber and Howard and Sons who could copy French architectural salvage to a high quality. The fashion reached a pinnacle in the early twentieth century with examples such as the Ritz.

### Associations: Duchêne and the Vincents.

- Further investigation may reveal the involvement of the prolific craftsmen of this period. G. T. Robinson was certainly familiar with Howard and Sons, praising their economical reproduction of panelling and wainscoting in an article of 1891 ('Our Household Furniture: Its Past History and its Present Development', Arts Journal).
- The Vincents were well-connected minor aristocracy and became important collectors after their marriage in 1890. It stands to reason that the house was subsequently bought and altered to their tastes and understanding of a French style and to house their substantial and important art collection.
- Achille Duchêne was a prolific garden designer who worked primarily designed gardens for French chateaux in the nineteenth century. His foray into British architecture came at Blenheim when in the early twentieth century he designed part of the landscape for the Duke of Marlborough (now listed). Marlborough was concerned with restoring a formal French arrangement to the house and grounds from the 1890s. The Vincents were acquaintances of the Duke of Marlborough and his wife.

## ESHER PLACE



Plasterwork, Dining Room, Esher Place

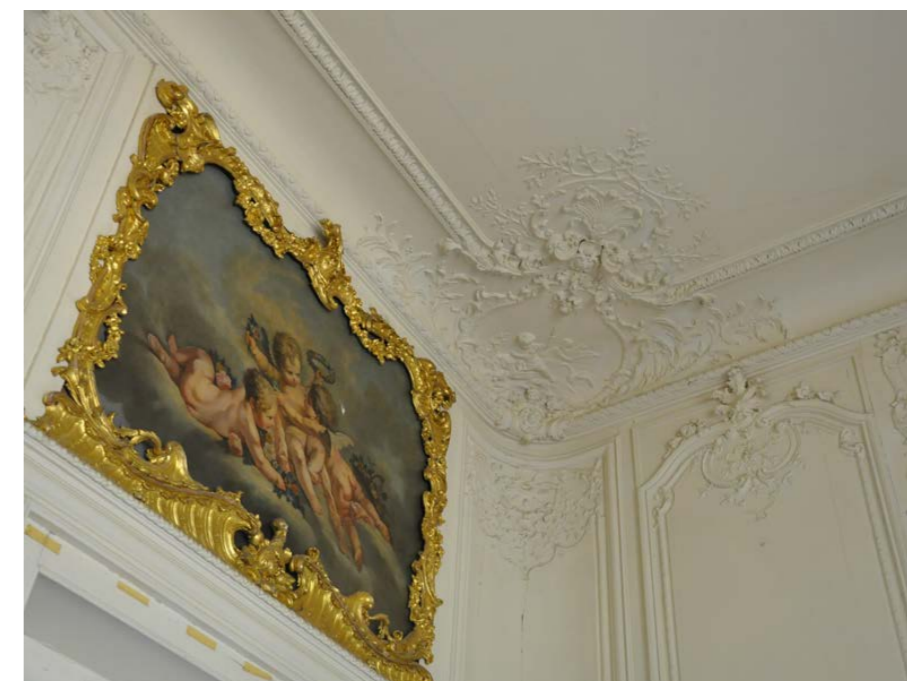


Plasterwork, Bar Lounge, Esher Place

## COMPARISONS



Plasterwork, Dining Room, Mentmore, Bucks (Grade I)



Plasterwork, Small Dining Room, Mentmore, Bucks (Grade I)

### The French connection

In recent years there has been a renewed interest and understanding of the French-inspired phase in English design of the Victorian period.

From the mid-nineteenth century there was an increasing popularity for French-inspired architecture, interiors and decoration initiated by French architectural salvage sold to the expanding appetite of the British market post Revolutions. The taste for this opulent fashion was often deep rooted in new money. The Rothschilds in particular were pioneers of this fashion that began with Mentmore in the 1850s and was fully realised at Waddesdon Manor in the 1870s- recreating interiors in the style of Louis XV.

By the late nineteenth century this fashion had become academic in both its understanding and use which resulted in a more refined style, incorporated into the British architectural discourse by experienced craftsman such as Mewes and Davis, Laurent and Haber and Howard and Sons who could copy French architectural salvage to a high quality. The fashion reached a pinnacle in the early twentieth century with examples such as the Ritz.

Esher Place's date of 1890 places the building in this later, refined employment of the style executed by experienced British craftsman.

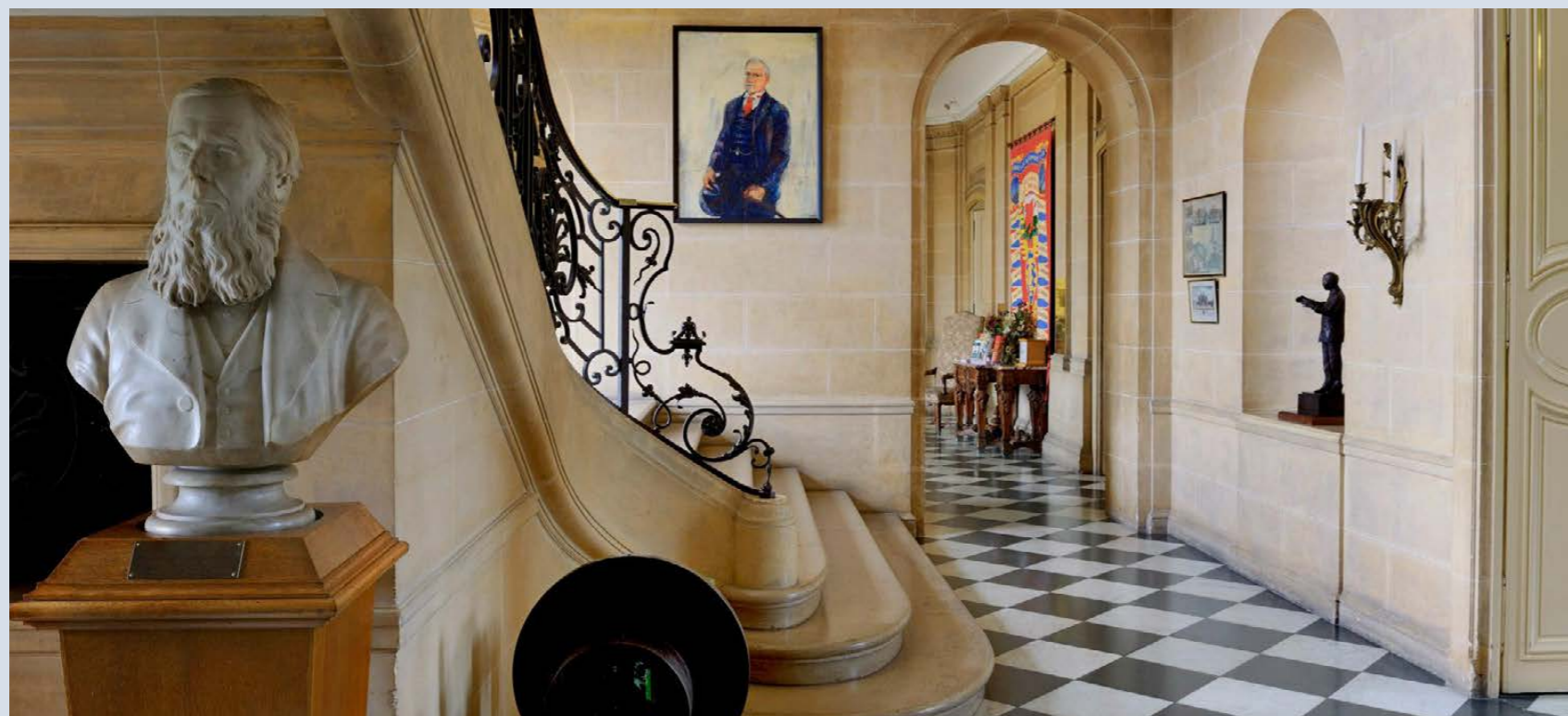
In recent years there has been a renewed interest and understanding of this stylistic and decorative phenomenon and its French origins. For example, recent publications include:

- Tom Stammers, *Purchase of the Past...*(2020)
- Tom Stammers, *The Allure of Napoleon...*(2017)
- Diana Davis, *The Tastemakers – British Dealers and the Anglo-Gallic Interior..* (2020)

Recent conferences include:

- 'Sir Richard Wallace and his Age: Collectors, Connoisseurs and Philanthropists,' *The Wallace Collection*, 2018'
- 'French Architecture and the English 1835-1914', *The Victorian Society*, 2021.

This is the context in which Esher Place should be re-assessed.



The Staircase Hall, Esher Place

# Appendix 1

## List entry



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ESHER PLACE, Non Civil Parish - 1377431 | Historic England

### Official list entry

Heritage Category: **Listed Building**

Grade: **II**

List Entry Number: **1377431**

Date first listed: **07-Feb-1975**

Statutory Address 1: **ESHER PLACE, 30, ESHER PLACE AVENUE**

This List entry helps identify the building designated at this address for its special architectural or historic interest.

Unless the List entry states otherwise, it includes both the structure itself and any object or structure fixed to it (whether inside or outside) as well as any object or structure within the curtilage of the building.

For these purposes, to be included within the curtilage of the building, the object or structure must have formed part of the land since before 1st July 1948.

[Understanding list entries](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/) (https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/understanding-list-entries/)

[Corrections and minor amendments](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/) (https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/minor-amendments/)

### Location

Statutory Address: **ESHER PLACE, 30, ESHER PLACE AVENUE**

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

County: **Surrey**

District: **Elmbridge (District Authority)**

Parish: **Non Civil Parish**

National Grid Reference: **TQ1337264910**

### Details

TQ 16SW 5/147

BOROUGH OF ELMBRIDGE, Esher ESHER PLACE AVENUE, No. 30 (Esher Place)

7.2.75.

GV II

House, now conference centre. South wing 1805, the remains of a house by Lapidge, extended in 1895-8 by G.T. Robinson and Duchene for the first Viscount D'Abemon, in C18 French Style. Red brick with stone dressings, hipped slate roofs with irregularly placed stone panelled stacks. Centre block with two wings projecting forward at c 45 degrees to form polygonal courtyard to front. 2 storeys to wings, 3 storeys with 3 bay attic to centre and "bulls eye" window in stone, segmental surround above, oval dormer windows under projecting hoods to either side. Stone plinth and cornice over ground floor, deep bracket cornice over first floor centre, dentilled to first floor right. Wing to left of 8 bays, stone dressed casement windows under cambered heads with scroll keystone, rusticated end bay projecting, first floor set back under moulded eaves. Wing to right: 4 bays end bay projecting. Casement windows in stone strip surrounds, angle bay window rising through 2 floors with balustrade top to junction of wing and main block. Main block: brick bay to right containing arched window in roll moulded surround behind oval stone balcony with wrought iron hand rail on 2 moulded brackets to first floor. Circular window below. 3 bay centre to left on stone rusticated plinth, end bays projecting. Articulated with paired ionic pilasters across the first floor. Arched casement windows with stone surrounds breaking into cornice on first floor, camber head windows with block keystones to outer ground floor bays. Centre bay recessed behind stone balustrade on first floor with central covered cartouche. Triple arched and glazed casement doors below. Garden front: 3 bay centre with quoined edges, 2 circular bays to outer ends. C20 extensions in similar style to left end, further C20 extensions to right. PEVSNER: BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND, SURREY (1971) p223.

Listing NGR: TQ1337264910

### Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.  
Legacy System number: **286725**

Legacy System: **LBS**

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1377431?section=official-list-entry>

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ESHER PLACE, Non Civil Parish - 1377431 | Historic England

### Sources

**Books and journals**

Pevsner, N, Nairn, I Rev. by Cherry, The Buildings of England: Surrey, (1971), 223

### 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

This map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. This copy shows the entry on 09-Mar-2022 at 15:14:48.

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End of official list entry



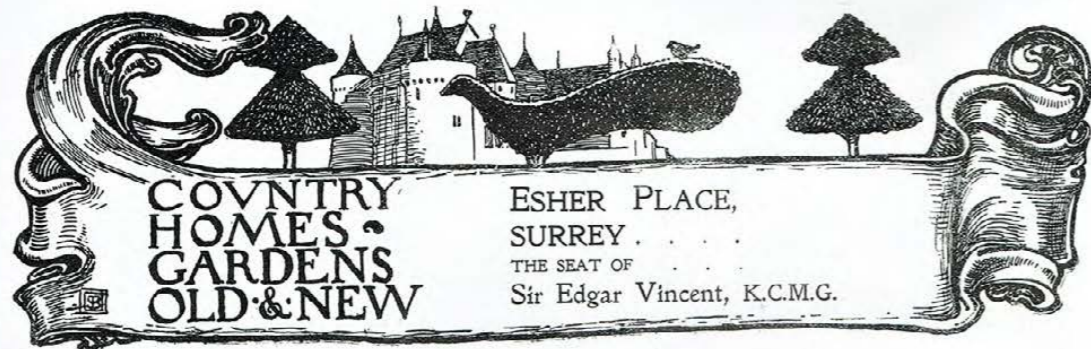
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2/2

# Appendix 2

## Country Life, 1900



THE thoroughly English village of Esher, which is well known to all who travel by the old Portsmouth road, and was very famous in the coaching days, is fortunate in having for its neighbours the glorious domain of Claremont at one end and the delightful woods and gardens of Esher Place at the other. Visitors to Sandown well know the beauties of that sylvan region. The old house of Esher stood upon lower

ground by the river Mole, and Wolsey, who repaired and in part rebuilt the Palace, which had been erected by William of Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester, 1447-86, well knew it to have a "moist and corrupt air." It was to Esher, when the great seal had been taken from him, in October, 1528, that he withdrew, and faithful Cavendish has given a pathetic account of the melancholy days, and of how Cromwell set forth thence to Court,

where, in his own grim words, he would "either make or mar." The quaint old red brick and ivy-clad tower with its angle turrets standing in the trees near the Mole is the striking memorial of those times. From Elizabeth the house passed to Lord Howard of Effingham, and, through many hands, in 1729, to those of the Right Hon. Henry Pelham, one of the "Broad-bottom Administration." Pelham did a great deal for Esher Place. It was he who employed Kent to lay out the grounds, and much of their character may be traced to the famous landscape gardener's hand. What Kent swept away we do not know, but some old features must have disappeared, while little temples were scattered about in the classic taste of the time. Kent was an excellent exponent of the landscape school, but his architecture was almost uniformly bad, and it is melancholy to reflect that Pelham employed him to insert the pseudo-Gothic windows which may now be seen in the fifteenth century tower.

The modern house stands in a far finer situation than the old. It is upon higher ground, and the gradual descent in almost every direction opens out romantically beautiful views. The region is very varied in its character, and the judicious planting of former times has added wonderfully to its beauty. From the stately terraces the prospect is magnificent. Here we survey the peaceful valley of the Mole and the hills flanking the Thames, including Richmond and the country beyond, and, as we turn, a glorious panorama is outspread to where we see stately Windsor rising from the distant haze. As the sun-bursts and cloud-shadows pass over the woods and meadows, we recognise the extraordinary beauty of the land, and the glory of the multitudinous trees. The beeches are especially magnificent, but everywhere the foliage is full of the richest charm.

Sir Edgar and Lady Helen Vincent have transformed the place since they came into possession, and the whole estate bears the marks of their care. Lady Helen is a flower gardener in the true



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THE ORCHARD ENTRANCE.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



"COUNTRY LIFE."

GARDENS OLD AND NEW.—ESHER PLACE: MY LADY'S GARDEN.

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THE TERRACE STEPS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

sense of the word—one of those who love flowers for their own sake, and not merely for the effect they produce. True taste and excellent judgment accordingly rule the pleasure grounds, and at every turn, as we go forward, we discover some new and subtle charm. Here, leaving the terrace, we find ourselves in an old English garden world, with trim yew hedges enclosing great masses of flowering plants. A few steps further we enter the charmingly quaint and delightful retreat of "My Lady's

Garden," where a red brick wall, backed by great masses of foliage, enframes quaint figures sculptured in stone. These once adorned Pelham's orangery, which exists no more, and, being disinterred in the forming of a rose garden, have found an appropriate place, and now look out upon yew hedges, sweet lavender borders, masses of white marguerites and gladioli, the orange-red Montbretia Pottsi, the peach-leaved bell-flower, and many more gay denizens of the parterre. We, too, sitting in that



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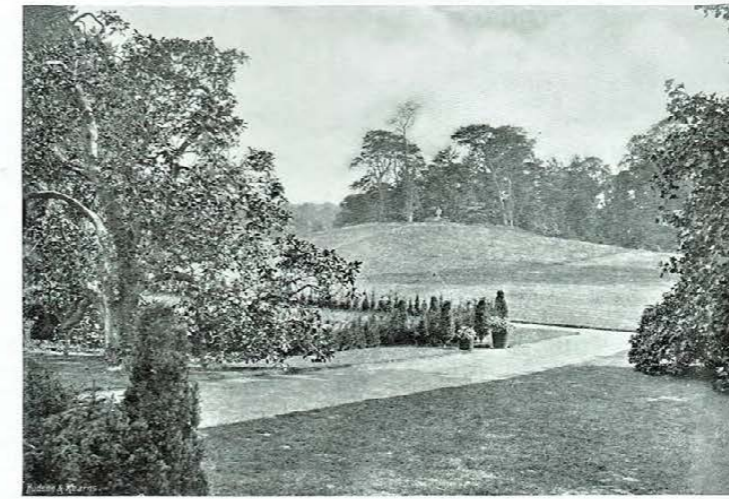
TEMPLE IN THE WILDERNESS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

sweet arbour-like pergola, with gay wistaria for our shelter, survey the placid scene, looking beyond to the grand old tulip tree, more than 21ft. in diameter, said to be the finest in England, and to the pinetum and the hill crowned with firs. It is a vision of radiance, and a place where the figures of a former time seem to linger lovingly. In the midst of this sweet garden before us a dial stands, quaint old monitor of our passage, and not the only one at Esher to tell of fleeting time. Its fellow, amid rhododendrons, poppies, and larkspurs, cries out from its carven stone:

"I give men warning how the hours fly,  
For men are shadows—and a shadow I."

But the house is in the midst of pleasure grounds and lawns. On another side there is a garden quite unlike the one we have surveyed—a French garden it is called—and gay Henry Jacoby pelargoniums and other flowers scarcely less brilliant are there, harmonised by the green of the turf and the sober tints of the trees. We are now in a sylvan land where everything delights. There are shadowy walks, and we find the contrast of



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A VIEW FROM THE GARDEN.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

the silvery stems of beeches and the dark hues of firs. Now we are approaching the kitchen and fruit gardens, but these are not deprived of flowers. We are to experience the pleasure that arises from a gradual unfolding of successive charms, and to pass from garden to garden where something new and beautiful is constantly disclosed. Passing the reserve garden, running by an old wall—a place where flowers are grown for the house—we enter through a simple oaken gate into the cottage garden, surrounded by old walls, some of them creeper-clad, with borders of monthly roses, lavender, and love-lies-bleeding—very charming in sweet simplicity. A second gate leads to a flower border in the kitchen garden. All is very sweet and charming hereabout. The grass walk is bordered by masses of hardy flowers, there is a sundial in the path, and the fine groups of tiger lilies, hollyhocks, white phloxes, and other tall flowers have a dark yew hedge for a background. An old mulberry tree casts a grateful shade, and a gate clustered with Gloire de Dijon roses brings us to the scented garden where fragrant heliotrope, sweet peas, and



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THE LAVENDER WALK.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



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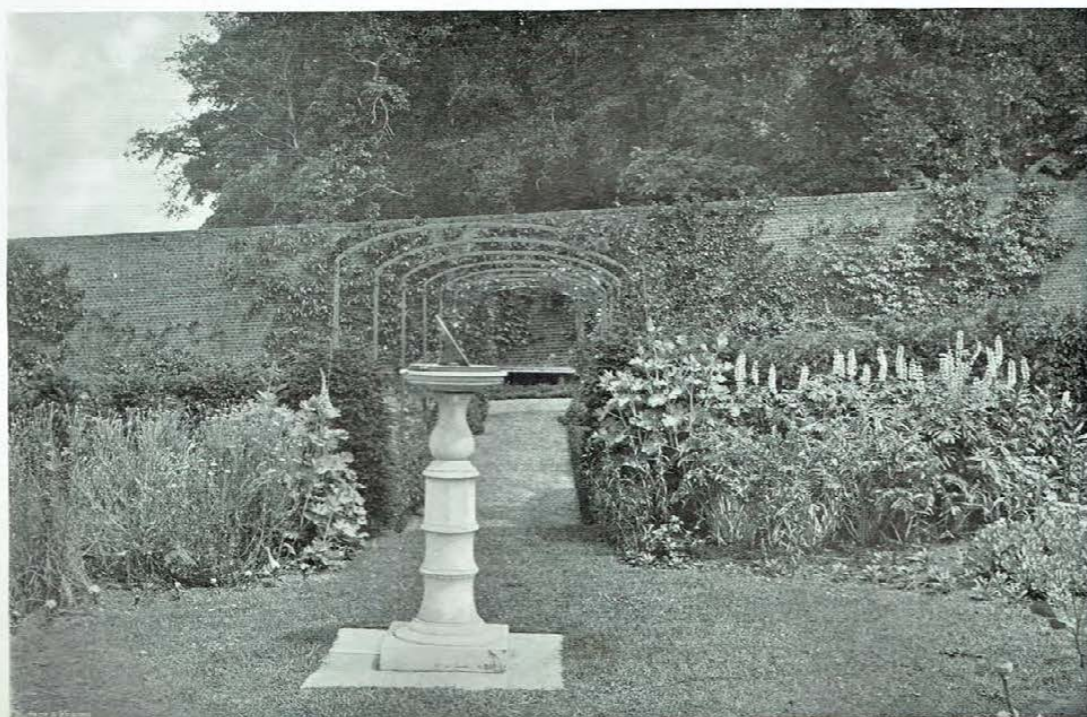
THE SOUTH FRONT FROM THE CROQUET LAWN.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

roses are all in effective masses. A long lavender walk is a delightful introduction to the picturesque orchard, where there is sweet disorder—daffodils and other beautiful flowers breaking through the grass in the spring, and ivy caressing the old trees. We must not forget a venerable medlar among them. There is nothing of the formal character to clash with Nature in this delightful part of the gardens at Esher Place, and we leave it gratified and charmed.

But it is time to retrace our steps and drop down through

Pelham's Wood by winding paths. Here is a sylvan paradise, where the elves might sport in the glades, and there is a cave or hollow which tradition says once led through to Hampton Court. In a clearing is Pelham's urn, with an inscription placed in grateful remembrance of the man who delighted so much in the adornment of Esher Place. From a well-placed seat we look down through a glade flanked by tall yews and other trees to the winding Mole placidly flowing below, for Pelham's Wood is a tree-clad hill, and there is a lovely walk that takes us round



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THE SUNDIAL.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

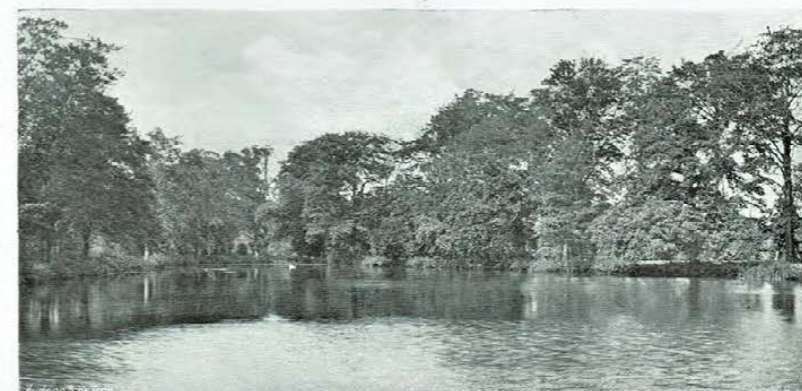
its circuit, where sylvan beauties of tree and flower are encountered at every step.

We may now enter the park, which is rich in noble trees. A new bridge spans the river, but it is in the fashion of its old predecessor, and near by in the valley is the solitary tower of Waynflete's and Wolsey's abode. From this point looking up the slope we have a glimpse of the house, with groups of oak and beech and fine standard yews and other trees between, and nearer the mansion great masses of rhododendrons with a belt of fine trees. It is pleasant, finally, before leaving historic and beautiful Esher Place, to linger by the shadowy sheet of the old fish-pond amid the trees, which was formed by Cardinal Wolsey. This survey could not exhaust either the beauties or the interest of such an attractive domain.

There are beauties that will delay the privileged visitor

longer than this description can.

How can the pen call up such visions of varied beauty, of hill and stream, of wood and meadow, of tree and blossom, as those who see Esher Place enjoy—who look out from the terrace, or survey the landscape from Princess Mary's Walk? There are abundant lessons in such a park and garden as we have here. Perhaps we may say that, with a certain stateliness, they are the quiet charms of half-rustic garden, rare borders, and creeper-clad walls that mostly please. In the general landscape we delight greatly in the splendid trees. These are not the creation of a day; they are the heritage bequeathed by the former time.



Copyright

THE OLD FISH-POND.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

Much do we owe to the great planters of a century ago, and we cannot do better than follow their great example in planting judiciously varied and suitable trees throughout the land.

Washington Irving observed that the best mark of an English gentleman was his deep-set love of trees. Esher Place is evidence of the truth of his words. Pelham was but one of many in his time who did much to invest the country with the umbrageous charm of splendid trees. He followed in the footsteps of others, but he set an example that many should delight to follow.

Books of the Day.

VERSATILITY approaching very near to

the sacred confines of genius is the keynote of Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's work, and it has polish also. "Little Lord Fauntleroy" became a household word and a familiar picture on his merits. "A Lady of Quality" was a striking achievement. "His Grace of Osmonde" was of extraordinary brilliancy. Now there is lying before me "In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim" (Frederick Warne and Co.), not many weeks old, but yet in its third edition already. This, in these days of storm and stress, means a great deal. Some of us fondly hoped that the war would make little or no difference to the sale of books. But the war has turned out to be a more serious affair than any of us anticipated, and publishers and booksellers alike have found that it is impossible to divert public attention from those tales of battle told ten times over, from those ghastly lists which are the all too long price of imperial greatness. Even as I write, there lies before me a letter from the best of publishers concerning an unburnt babe of a book, a small thing, but mine own. It is to the effect that if I insist on publication, he is in my hands, but that for the moment the booksellers are imploring him and his colleagues not to attempt to place a book on the market. Therefore these three editions of a single novel within a few weeks, almost within a few



Copyright

THE HOUSE FROM THE MEADOWS.

"COUNTRY LIFE."



Copyright

THE EAST FRONT.

"COUNTRY LIFE."

days, are a great achievement. Be it said at once that they are the splendid attainments of sheer merit.

This is a story primarily of American life before and after the Civil War. Secondly, it is a picture, powerful and delicate, of character. It has its passionate and its pathetic moments. It has the saving grace of humour; but neither passion nor pathos is exaggerated, and the humour is never forced. So one feels the passion and the pathos, and one enjoys the humour as if it were a bubbling spring, which, in fact, it is. Tom De Willoughby was the loutish, lumbering, soft-hearted member of a brilliant and fashionable Southern family. He was to be a doctor, but the hospital sickened him, and he came home to meet his father's scorn and to fall in love with pretty Delia Vanuxem. She had a tenderness for him, but she gave her heart to his brilliant brother De Courcy. So big Tom, broken-hearted, induced his father to give him some of his patrimony, and became store-keeper and post-master, and also a monument of lazy good-nature, at the village of Talbot Cross Roads. But the day came when, in spite of his indolence, he was stirred to activity, and the whole of his great frame was instinct with friendly energy, although he weighed "three hundred," which



ESHER PLACE: RUINS OF WOLSEY'S PALACE. "COUNTRY LIFE."

I take to be 21st. 6th. Down in the hollow was a cabin, and to that cabin came mysterious strangers, a man and a woman, clearly of gentle blood. The woman died in childbirth, with Tom De Willoughby holding her hand. The child survived. The man, paralysed with sorrow, and, as they all thought, with remorse also, departed, leaving the child with Tom, who adopted it. The relation of the man and the woman seemed to be that of the old and cruel story, and the neighbours all laughed at Tom. His anxieties are described with great skill, and the advice given to him by many mothers is recounted with infinite humour.

"Loe", yes," said one matron; "jest keep her kivered up 'n don't let no air strike her, 'n yer won't hev no trouble with her, I reckon."

"No air?" enquired Tom, in some trepidation; "some at all?"

"Wal, thar's my way," was the answer. "Some folks does diff'rent, but I didn't never expose 'em none till they was more 'n a month old. New-born babies is tender things!"

"Yes," said Tom; "good Lord, yes!" His visage stared at him perplexedly for a moment.

"Wal," she said, "my man allus used to say they kinder skeered him 'long at the first; he kinder felt as mebbe they 'd come apart, or smthing. They allas sorter 'minded me o' young mice. Wal, you jest tell Mornin to give her es much milk as she calls fer, an' don't let it bile too long, 'n she'll come on fine."

The next visitor that entered uttered an exclamation of dismay. "Ye're gwine ter kill her!" she said. "Thar aint a breath o' air in the room, 'n thar aint nothing a new-born baby wants mor 'n plenty o' air. They're tender critters, 'n they cayn't stand to be smothered up. Ye'll have her in spasm afore the day's over."

Tom flung the doors and windows open in great alarm. "It is hot," he said; "it's hot enough out o' doors, but Mis' Simpson told me to keep her shut up, and I thought she'd had experience enough to know."

"Jane Simpson!" with ill-concealed scorn; "she'd orter! she's had six to die in their second summer. I reckon she told yer to give her half-biled milk as often as she wanted it!"

Tom reflected in manifest trepidation. "She did tell me not to boil it too much and to give it to her when she called for it," he said, slowly.

"Wal, if ye don't want to kill her, take my advice, and bile it a good half-hour, 'n don't give it to her oftener than once in three hours. She'll cry fur it, but ye needn't mind. Ye'll get used ter it. I don't believe in lettin' young 'uns hev nothing out of their reg'lar time."

The next caller found Tom rather discouraged. He preceded her into the reception chamber with less alacrity than he had shown in his previous visits.

She was a younger woman than the rest, and when she reached the cradle's side, she bent down and rearranged the cover with a soft touch. "She's gwine to be a purty little thing," she said; "she'll be sort o' dark complected, but she's gwine to have purty hair 'n eyes. Ye'll be right proud of her, Tom, when she's grown, 'n I guess she'll be a heap o' company to you. Lord!" with a motherly sigh, "it seems sorter curi's her bein' left to a man; but you'll do well by her, Tom—you'll do well by her. I haint no doubt o' that. You was always mighty clever with children."

"I'll do all I can for her," said Tom, "though I suppose that isn't much."

The young woman—she had left her own baby in the store with her husband—patted the little pillow lightly into shape. "Ye'll larn a heap by watchin' her," she said. "Jest watch her close 'n she'll teach you herself. What do you do about her milk?" anxiously.

"I've been told to do several things," said Tom; "I've been told to boil it half-an-hour, and not to boil it at all, and to give her all she wanted, and not to give her all she wanted. I'm a little mixed about it."

"Wal, I haint had but five, but I've allus let it come to a bile, and then kinder used my reason about givin' it. Seems like the mejunner ye air with children the better. Bat, Lordy! I guess Mornin knows. She raised her young mistress's."

She kissed the child before she left it, and when she re-entered the store, hurriedly took her own straggling offspring from its father's arms, settled its pink dress and sun-bonnet with a nervous, caressing motion, and, carrying it to the door, stood with it pressed against her dress, while she seemed to be looking

out at the distant mountains. She did not move until her husband had completed his purchases and came to her. And when she followed him out to take her place in the waggon her eyes were bright and moist.

Love and devotion, however, will do wonders, and the story of the upbringing of the babe Felicia, whom the neighbours would call Sheba, is full of tenderness and truth. Tom's unwearied attention, his joy when she crawled after him into the store, his plans and exertions for her comfort, are told beautifully.

Now it fell on a day that Tom and Sheba, aged five by this time, went to the neighbouring town to buy pretty things for their new house, and there many things happened, but the most important of them was an accidental acquaintance between the child and a beautiful Southern boy who was, as it turned out, the son of De Courcy and of pretty Delia Vanuxem. Delia, gentle creature, had died broken-hearted for the brilliant De Courcy, who charmed Society, was given to periodical debauches of whisky and opium. Society did not for the moment understand this, and so it passed this judgment on the boy.

"It was not agreed to that he inherited his father's grace of manner, however."

He was a definitely unamiable boy, if one might judge from appearances. He always wore a dark little scowl as if he were either on the point of falling into a secret rage or making his way out of one; instead of allowing himself to be admired and made a pet of, he showed an unnatural preference for prowling around the grounds and galleries alone, sometimes sitting in corners and professing to read, but generally appearing to be meditating resentfully upon his wrongs in a manner which, in a less handsome boy, would have been decidedly unpleasant. Even Mrs. Marvin's advances did not meet with any show of cordiality, though it was allowed that he appeared less averse to her society than to that of any other woman, including the half-dozen belles and beauties who would have enjoyed his boyish admiration greatly.

"I knew your mother," said Mrs. Marvin to him one day, as he sat near her upon the gallery.

"Did you?" he answered, in a rather unencouraging way. "When did you know her?"

"When she was young. We were girls together. She was a beauty and I wasn't, but we were very fond of each other." "What makes women break so?" he asked. "I don't see why they break so. She had pretty eyes when she died, but—but—" He drew his handsome black brows down and scowled; and seeing that he was angry at himself for having spoken, Mrs. Marvin made another remark:

"You miss her very much?" she said, gravely. He turned his face away. "She's better off where she is, I suppose," he said. "That's what they always say of dead people."

And then, still frowning, he got up and walked away. The negro servants about the hotel were all fond of him, though his manner towards them was that of a fiery and enthusiastic young potentate, brooking no delay or interference. His beauty and his high-handed way impressed them as being the belongings of one favoured by Fortune, and worthy of admiration and respect.

"He's a d'Willoughby out and out," said his father's negro, Tip. "Aint no mistake about dat. He's a young debil when his spirit's up, 'n it's easy raised. But he's a powerful gentleman sort of boy—powerful. Throws you a quarter soon as look at ye, 'n he's got the right kind of high ways—dough dar aint no sayin' he aint a young debil; de kumel hisself cayn't outcess him when his spirit's up."

Society came to understand the boy's attitude later when De Courcy, escaping from his servant during one of his bouts, made his appearance at a fancy ball. That Rupert and Sheba should fall desperately in love was in the nature of things, that they should marry and live happily was much to be

desired. But the beauty of the book lies in the completeness with which the plot is worked out and in the manner in which the concluding chapters demonstrate that every incident in the opening pages is part of one coherent and harmonious composition. The war and the poverty which came after it were, so to speak, what set the tambourine a-rolling. Tom Willoughby found, as others did, that the taxes which came after were more than any man of moderate means could pay and live. (The rueful thought forces itself upon me that some of us, who are real and not merely persons in books, may be discovering the same thing before long.) De Courcy De Willoughby, too, died, and Rupert, reduced to his last two dollars, came to his uncle Tom for refuge. Then came forward a faithful negro, named "Uncle Matt"—these faithful slaves have always seemed to me the most unspeakably pathetic things that resulted from the Civil War in the States—with a story of a claim for compensation in respect of a mine, which Tom and Rupert, as the last survivors of the De Willoughbys, must have. They went to Washington to follow it up. They happened on an honest Congressman. There at the same time was Stamps, a worm-like creature of the Cross Roads, with a bogus claim for a herd of oxen grown fraudulently out of a calf, which might or might not have been born. Now Stamps was a sinking creature, who had pried about when honest Tom De Willoughby adopted Sheba, thinking that he must have an ulterior object. Stamps was wrong; but in prying he discovered letters; and with those letters he blackmailed Latimer, whom he believed to have been the betrayer of Sheba's mother. Latimer, however, was not the real betrayer, but the brother of Sheba's mother, whose name was Margery. The real betrayer was Baird, who again was Latimer's closest friend, with whom, all innocent, he used to discuss the sorrows of Margery. Moreover, Baird himself was hardly the villain he had seemed to be. So, when Stamps had parted with the letters to Latimer, there was a scene between Baird and Latimer, but it was Latimer who killed himself in a very dramatic way, and it was Baird finally who helped Tom De Willoughby to assert his claim successfully, and to ensure the happiness of Sheba and Rupert. And this passage, it seems to me, is the true but not the literal wind up of a splendid book. "He (Baird) began to walk up and down the room. 'A man does not live—for fifteen years—side by side with another—the other loving him wholly—and see the blackness of his own deed laid bare—and hear again and again of the woe he has wrought—he does not live so in peace.' . . . 'In all the cruelty of it there seems to have been but one human, pitying soul. It was yours. You were tender to her in those lost hours. You were merciful—you held her hand when she died.'" That is the right winding up and the true keynote of a wonderful book—the tender heart of Tom De Willoughby.

## Bringing Game to the Gun: The Pheasants.

IN discussing partridge shooting it has always to be admitted that there are two points of view of which either the one or the other is reasonable. It is reasonable for a man to say "I like shooting over dogs, because it amuses and interests me to see them work"; and again, it is reasonable for a man to say "I prefer driving, because you get better shots, kill the birds in a manner that makes them more fit for the table, and improves the stock." The balance of advantage seems to us to lie in the latter, the driving scale; but we are quite ready to admit the rationale of the other opinion.

With pheasant shooting, on the other hand, we cannot deem that there is any reasonable difference of opinion. Every man, except the small minority made up of specimens of "the sort of fellow that would say anything," would prefer shooting pheasants driven over his head to putting them up before him and shooting them in the tail as they go away. The question of the dogs working hardly comes in, for where pheasants are at all many it is virtually impossible to shoot them over dogs. Not one in ten will sit still to be "pointed" and then rise; the great majority will go running on interminably as long as the covert lasts. It is by taking advantage of this habit of the pheasant of running on that the beating of the birds to the gun can be satisfactorily done.

There is one cardinal principle, we may probably say, of pheasant beating—to drive them away from home and then bring them back over the heads of the guns. Pheasants will not fly nearly as freely away from their home covert as towards it, and to realise this and act upon it is a great step towards making a success of your pheasant shoots. For it is perfectly astonishing (to any man still capable of being astonished by the doings of his fellow-creatures) how many people there are who fully realise the truth of this cardinal principle in theory, and yet violate it with the very greatest consistency in their practice. You will see the man



OUT OF HIGH TREES.

who has been preaching it most emphatically over-night allowing his keeper in the morning to begin beating the pheasants right out of their home covert over the guns, exactly in the manner that the master had been so loudly condemning from the arm-chair.

A second but less important principle to use as a working basis is, that pheasants will commonly run out of thin covert into thick covert, and may commonly be made to rise out of the thick covert, when driven back again, singly, or in small parties at a time, whereby you are able to put the birds over the guns in such a way that a great proportion of them get shot at. A third factor to be realised is that birds rising out of a covert above the guns or OUT OF HIGH TREES will generally rise yet higher in their flight and give good shots, whereas birds flushed out of low covert at a lower level than the guns will never rise high enough to be interesting; whence we may deduce a third principle, that if possible they should be driven, before flushing, into a covert or part of a covert that either has high trees or lies above the level

# Appendix 3

# Built Heritage Appeal

# Statement

**Esher Place**  
**Built Heritage Appeal Statement**  
**Prepared for Esher Place**  
**Residents Ltd**  
 November 2021

**Contents**

1.0 Introduction..... 1  
 2.0 Policy context..... 3  
 3.0 Significance..... 6  
 4.0 Comments on the applicant’s assessment..... 10  
 5.0 Comments on the applicant’s proposals..... 12  
 6.0 Conclusions..... 15  
 7.0 Sources..... 17  
 8.0 Images..... 18



## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Built Heritage Appeal Statement has been prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd on behalf of Esher Place Residents Limited (EPRL). It provides representations on the heritage aspects of four planning appeals and two listed building consent appeals that are under consideration by the Planning Inspectorate. This statement should be read in conjunction with the Appeal Statement by Black Box Planning.

1.2 The site subject to the appeals is the Grade II-listed Esher Place House, 30 Esher Place Avenue, Surrey KT10. Application proposals to redevelop Esher Place House and its grounds and convert the site from conference centre to residential use were refused by Elmbridge Borough Council in 2020. The applicant has appealed to the Planning Inspectorate.

1.3 There are six appeals, pertaining to four main applications, which relate to different aspects of one overall scheme:

- APP/K3605/W/21/3275789 (change of use from conference centre to residential to provide 21 flats – planning permission)
- APP/K3605/Y/21/3275801 (change of use from conference centre to residential to provide 21 flats – listed building consent)
- APP/K3605/W/21/3275803 (three-storey rear extension to create 8 flats – planning permission)
- APP/K3605/Y/21/3275807 (three-storey rear extension to create 8 flats – listed building consent)
- APP/K3605/W/21/3275808 (terrace of 3 two-storey houses)
- APP/K3605/W/21/3275811 (two pairs of semi-detached houses)

1.4 All four planning applications and the two associated listed building consent applications were refused by Committee at Elmbridge Borough Council. The reasons for refusal included the harm to the significance and setting of the listed building (see the Appeal Statement by Black Box Planning).

1.5 The proposals need to be considered as one scheme in order to fully understand the heritage impact. EPRL have made submissions to the Planning Inspectorate seeking that the four planning appeals be considered collectively (see Appeal Statement by Black Box Planning). Currently the appeals are to be determined by way of Written Representations.

1.6 Esher Place House is set in a designed landscape which includes the grounds to the front and to the rear of the house. This deliberately designed composition is fundamental to the significance of the site (see chapter 2). It is important that the significance of the listed building is understood in this way, as with other historic country houses. It therefore follows that heritage impacts arising from application proposals need to be considered in this context.

1.7 The statement includes a summary of relevant policy for the historic environment (chapter 2) and a summary of the heritage significance of the site (chapter 3). It provides comments on the applicant's own assessment (chapter 4) and on their proposals (chapter 5). The key findings are summarised in the conclusion (chapter 6).

1.8 The statement is based on a review of the documents and drawings submitted with the applications and appeals (see chapter 7). The site was viewed externally, but no internal access has yet been granted.

## Abbreviations

1.9 The following abbreviations are used within this statement, to refer to the submitted documents related to the six planning applications:

HS – Heritage Statement (December 2019)  
 BHAS – Built Heritage Appeal Statement (May 2021)  
 SoS – Statement of Significance (December 2019)

## 2.0 Policy context

2.1 The legislative framework for listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings Act provides: *66. (1) In considering whether to grant planning permission ... for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or ... the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.*

2.2 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (2021) places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets. This replaced the 2019 version of the NPPF which was valid at the time of the determination. There are no substantive changes between the earlier and replacement document but references to relevant paragraphs may have changed. As set out in Paragraph 194:

*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. 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. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

Where there is no harm to significance of a designated asset or where overall there is enhancement of significance, as a result of the proposal then paragraph 194 would require decision makers to reflect the desirability of that outcome and would not require a consideration of the proposal against the policies which address harmful heritage impact to designated assets (paras 201 and 202).

2.3 In addressing harm to heritage assets, the NPPF makes a distinction between 'substantial harm' and 'less than substantial harm'. As set out in Paragraph 201:

*Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:*

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

2.4 The test that applies to proposals that lead to 'less than substantial harm' is set out in Paragraph 202:

*Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.*

2.5 Relevant local policy includes the Elmbridge Local Plan which consists of the Core Strategy 2011 and the Development Management Plan April 2015. The latter is relevant to the assessment of planning applications. A new Local Development Scheme 2021-2024 was agreed on 7 June 2021. The Council is currently preparing its draft Local Plan.

2.6 The relevant policies of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan 2015 are:

- DM2 – Design and amenity
- DM7 – Access and parking
- DM10 – Housing
- DM12 – Heritage

2.7 DM2:

*All development proposals must be based on an understanding of local character including any specific local designations and take account of the natural, built and historic environment. Development proposals will be expected to take account of the relevant character assessment companion guide in the Design and Character SPD.*

*a) Proposals should preserve or enhance the character of the area, taking account of design guidance detailed in the Design and Character SPD, with particular regard to the following attributes:*

- *Appearance*
- *Scale*
- *Mass*
- *Height*
- *Levels and topography*
- *Prevailing pattern of built development*
- *Separation distances to plot boundaries*
- *Character of the host building, in the case of extensions*

2.8 DM12:

*Planning permission will be granted for developments that protect, conserve and enhance the Borough's historic environment. This includes the following heritage assets:*

- *Listed Buildings and their settings*
- *Conservation Areas and their settings*
- *Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest and their settings*
- *Scheduled Monuments and their settings*
- *Areas of High Archaeological Potential and County Sites of Archaeological Importance (CSAIs)*
- *Locally Listed Buildings and other identified or potential assets (including non-designated locally significant assets identified in the local lists compiled by the Council).*

*a) Listed Buildings*

- i. The Council will encourage appropriate development to maintain and restore Listed Buildings, particularly those identified as being most at risk.*
- ii. Development to, or within the curtilage or vicinity of, a listed building or structure should preserve or enhance its setting and any features of special architectural or historical interest which it possesses.*

iii. A change of use of part, or the whole, of a Listed Building will be approved provided that its setting, character and features of special architectural or historic interest would be preserved or enhanced. Consideration will also be given to the long-term preservation that might be secured through a more viable use.

iv. Development which would cause substantial harm to or loss of a listed building (including curtilage buildings), such as total or partial demolition, will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances. In such cases, consideration will be given to the asset's significance<sup>2</sup>. Applicants will need to clearly demonstrate that either:

1. There are substantial public benefits outweighing any harm or loss;
2. All of the following apply:

- the nature of the listed building prevents all reasonable use of the site
- no viable use of the listed building can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;
- It can be demonstrated that charitable or public funding/ownership is not available to enable its conservation;
- any harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

## 3.0 Significance

### Introduction

3.1 Assessing significance is the means by which the cultural importance of a place, or its component parts, is identified and compared. Best practice guidance is set out within the NPPF (2021) and *Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008) which includes a methodology for assessing significance by considering heritage values.

3.2 Significance is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework 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 (Annex 2: Glossary, NPPF 2021).*

3.3 As set out in the Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (Paragraph 6), these interests can be defined as follows (which broadly equate to the aesthetic, historical and evidential values of Conservation Principles):

- **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.*

3.4 Section 12 of the NPPF stresses the importance that the Government attaches to securing high quality design. It states, at Paragraph 126, that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps to make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 127 set out that planning decisions should be grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.

3.5 Paragraph 130 sets out that decisions should ensure that developments:

*c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*

*d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*

3.6 Another key aspect of assessing the impact of development to the significance of a designated heritage asset, and other aspects of the historic environment, is a consideration of setting. The definition of setting is given in the NPPF (Annex 2: Glossary, 2021) as:

*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change*

*as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.*

3.7 The Government’s Planning Practice Guidance on Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (updated in 2019) also sets out the following with regard to setting in Paragraph 7:

*Heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals.*

3.8 At Paragraph 13 (updated 2019) detailed guidance is provided on how the setting of a heritage asset should be taken into account:

*All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each. The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance.*

### Summary of Historical Development

3.9 Esher Place has a rich and complex history that can be summarised as follows:

- ‘Esher Place’ was initially built in 1475-80 for Bishop Waynflete of Winchester. The gatehouse survives today as Waynflete’s Tower.
- The gatehouse and landscape were remodelled as a house by William Kent for Henry Pelham in the early eighteenth century.
- In 1806-08 a new house was built on the hill to the south-east of the tower. This villa was designed by Edward Lapidge for John Spicer and forms the historic core of the present Esher Place House.
- In 1895-98 the architect George Thomas Robinson and garden designer Achille Duchene extended and remodelled the house and grounds for the Lord and Lady Vincent (photographs of the estate were published in *Country Life* in 1900).
- In 1905 Sir Edwin Lutyens was commissioned to add further garden features including the sunken theatre to the north-west of the house (sometimes referred to as an ‘amphitheatre’) and a sunken garden to the south.
- From 1930 the house became a Shaftesbury School for Girls. Parts of the grounds were sold and developed as a residential enclave.
- Esher Place House was purchased by the Unite Union in 1952 and parts of the the grounds were further developed with large villas to the north and west.

### Significance of the site

3.10 The historic interest of the site is rich as it encompasses multiple phases and associations: from Bishop Waynflete in the late fifteenth century; Henry Pelham for whom a commemorative vase of 1754 remains in the grounds and the villa built by Lapdige, of which early nineteenth century fabric survives.

3.11 The primary historic and architectural interest of the site derives from the late nineteenth century development: the house (the exterior and the interiors) and its designed landscape conceived by George Thomas Robinson and Achille Duchene between 1895-98, surviving intact as an excellent example of a French-inspired architectural set piece with its attendant landscape.

3.12 From the mid-nineteenth century there was an increasing popularity for French-inspired architecture and interiors; examples being the chateau-like Bowes Museum (1869-76), the remodelled home of the exiled Napoleon III at Camden Place (c. 1870) and Waddesdon Manor (1874-89). By the 1890s and early 1900s, the academic understanding of French eighteenth-century style was greater, resulting in sophisticated works such as Esher Place House and Luton Hoo.

3.13 Externally, the French architectural inspiration is apparent in the use of mansard roofs, oeil-de-boeuf windows, a central cartouche, the tripartite arched windows surmounted by a balustrade and terrace and the use of contrasting red brick and stone dressing to delineate panel-like decoration.

3.14 The 1890s interiors are a remarkable survival comparable with the finest examples of French-inspired architecture such as at Luton Hoo and the Ritz, listed at Grade II\* and I respectively. Mewes and Davis, Laurent and Haber and Howard and Sons were some of the most prolific decorators. Whilst the decorators of Esher Place from this period have not been attributed, the involvement of Achille Duchenne, known for his involvement at numerous French chateaux, is an important factor. Duchenne was later responsible for the water gardens at Blenheim.

3.15 Esher Place is an important survival of a country house that is representative of this French-inspired architectural fashion to have survived intact with authentic interiors from the period. It is surprising that the site is listed at Grade II, since its quality and intactness would arguably warrant at the least a Grade II\* listing, such is its importance and rarity. Aspects of earlier phases may also survive and further investigation of the interiors could be undertaken to establish whether salvaged fittings are retained from the Kent house.

3.16 The sophistication of the design is equally apparent in the landscape. The large forecourt survives intact with its curved parterre lawns, balustrades and central approach axis. One only has to stand at the gates to understand that the entire forecourt is a formal design that is fundamentally important to the setting and makes a key contribution to the significance of the listed building. It is consciously designed to set off visually the house itself (see figs. 1-4).

3.17 The ‘rear’ of the house is an important garden front, designed to complement the landscape, with its curved form and rich ornament. This part of the house includes a balustraded terrace ending in circular steps, with curved paths leading to further steps. This location was photographed for *Country Life* c. 1900 and survives essentially intact (see figs. 5 and 6). This is not a functional back-of-house location, but one of the key accents in the Duchenne-Robinson design.

3.18 The designed landscape was embellished further c. 1905 by the renowned designer Sir Edwin Lutyens. The surviving Lutyens landscape features include the sunken theatre to the north-west and the sunken garden to the south (in a neighbouring garden) which possess high design interest and historical interest. The sunken theatre is especially unusual and interesting

and is essentially intact. It should also be stressed that the features of the designed landscape have significance individually and further significance as a group.

3.19 Lastly, it should be stressed that a country house is a unified creation, which is key to its significance. Lord and Lady Vincent were notable collectors and connoisseurs of art. Esher Place was consciously designed as an artistic creation, experienced as a unity of architecture and landscape. The interiors are experienced as a sequence of related spaces. This is not about individual elements of fabric, but about the way they combine into something special. This is an important aspect of the significance of country houses generally and is especially important at Esher Place, considering the careful relationship between the house and its landscape front and back and the high level of intactness of the 1890s phase.

## 4.0 Comments on the applicant's assessment

4.1 The applicant is required to describe the significance of the asset in a way that is proportionate to the asset's importance as per the requirements of NPPF, para. 194. As set out below, this test has not fully been met, as there are aspects of the significance that have been overlooked or underplayed.

4.2 The significance of the Duchene-Robinson phase has been understated and has not been fully described. The exterior of the building does not only derive significance from 'the quality of its architectural design' (BHAS 0437, 6.5) but also, in a wider sense, from the way that its distinctive French-inspired forms are part of a larger whole encompassing a unified creation. It also has historical interest as a fine example of Anglo-Gallic architecture as popularised in the late nineteenth century and as the home of the Vincents, important patrons and collectors at this time. It is one of very few surviving country houses of this architectural style with intact interiors. This is the context in which Esher Place should be understood.

4.3 The interiors should similarly be considered. They possess more than a 'large degree of special interest in architectural and historic terms' (BHAS 0437, 6.6). They are comparable with the finest examples of French-inspired interiors such as at Luton Hoo and the Ritz. Whilst a room by room assessment was undertaken in the original Heritage Statement, it should also be understood that the interiors (regardless of phasing) are a designed sequence of spaces that are a holistic creation. This is also a key aspect of significance, as set out in Chapter 3, that has been underplayed.

### Setting

4.4 Furthermore, the importance of the setting as a designed landscape complimentary to the architecture of the house has been underplayed. Whilst there is an assessment of significance of key components in the Heritage Statement which includes some discussion of setting, as do BHAS 0437 and 0438, the omission of setting from the thorough Statement of Significance 0437 further demonstrates the lack of emphasis on the importance of the setting.

4.5 The applicant notes that the setting of the house, specifically the forecourt immediately in front of the house has been compromised and altered from its historic appearance by virtue of its use as a car park (BHAS 0438, 6.13). On the contrary, the forecourt is a key element in the Duchenne-Robinson design and is essentially intact and makes an extremely important contribution to significance (see chapter 3).

4.6 Whilst it is recognised that the 'rear lawns are an important part of the listed building's setting' (BHAS 0438, 6.14), the designed landscape and its relationship to the house has not been fully considered. The 'rear' part of the house (where an extension is proposed) is among the most important aspects of the significance of the site (see chapter 3). Steps lead up to the curved path and parterred lawns, and further steps lead to a terrace in the elegant manner that is key to the interest of this historic mode of design.

4.7 The applicant notes that the contribution to significance of the various landscape features and phases is reduced as they are fragmented and cannot be fully understood or appreciated (BHAS 0438, 6.14). However, the surviving elements of the landscape are well preserved and as a group constitute an important, consciously designed sequence of spaces that are key to the significance of the site. These important surviving features include the arrangement of steps to the rear of the house, the sunken theatre nearby and the sunken garden to the south of the house (the latter in separate ownership). They have survived and are

significant individually and as a group.

4.8 The applicant identifies that further north of the building, the extent of the grounds and the presence of residential development limit the area's contribution to setting and significance (BHAS 0438, 6.15). It should be pointed out that the sunken theatre (sometimes termed an 'amphitheatre') is an unusual and highly significant feature by the renowned designer Sir Edwin Lutyens that is essentially intact. Its open setting is a fundamental aspect of its design and significance. The two existing nearby houses undoubtedly diminished this sense of openness in the 1950s, to an extent; they are low enough to preserve some sense of openness. Nevertheless, this is a highly significant feature and this part of the designed landscape setting makes an important positive contribution to significance.

4.9 Similarly, the Lutyens' sunken garden to the south is still an important significant feature of the setting and, despite separate ownership, has group value with the terrace, steps and sunken theatre and other surviving features of the landscape (contrary to BHAS 0438, 6.17). The overarching point to make is that the gardens of the house represent an extremely interesting and important survival that is fundamentally important to the setting and therefore the significance of the listed building.

## 5.0 Comments on the applicant's proposals

5.1 This chapter addresses the heritage impact of the application proposals on the significance of the listed building. Rather than dealing with every aspect of the proposals in detail, this chapter will focus on those aspects that are most relevant from a heritage and conservation perspective.

### Forecourt

5.2 As set out in Chapter 3, the designed approach to Esher Place House is a key part of its setting, making an important contribution to its significance. Behind the front gates, the designed formal landscape is intact and is significant (see figs. 1-4). Under the proposals, this designed formal landscape would be replaced by a car park. Areas of lawn would be replaced by areas of hard standing, to a different configuration, destroying the carefully designed composition of lawn parterres.

5.3 The proposed car park is damaging to the setting in at least five ways: i) it destroys the French-inspired composition of lawn parterres, ii) it introduces hard standing and strips of lawn that relate poorly to that French-inspired character, iii) it introduces trees that relate poorly and would obscure views of the house, iv) it includes two bin stores that would further damage the designed composition and views of the house, and v) the visual effect of a sea of cars would spoil views of the house.

### Interiors

5.4 As set out in Chapter 3, the interiors of Esher Place House are highly significant, particularly for their French-inspired design. It is proposed to alter and divide the existing interiors to create 21 flats. The division into flats involves inserting new kitchens and ensuite bathrooms. Inserting multiple kitchens and bathrooms into historic buildings is, generally speaking, disruptive to plan-form and interior decoration. That is the case here. Some historic rooms will remain undivided, but each flat entails a degree of subdivision and insertion of services.

5.5 The insertion of partitions alters and obscures the historic plan-form, which is a key part of the significance. The introduction of many smaller rooms is essentially alien to the character of a grand house and is detrimental to historic character. The attendant servicing will include pipework for bathrooms and ductwork for kitchens and this will require penetrating historic fabric, though the extent of this is not clear. The detailed layout drawings include annotations indicating that bathroom and kitchen extracts will be routed 'through roof space above'. The word 'through' indicates that extract flues would appear above the roof, which is likely to spoil the external appearance of the roofline.

5.6 Perhaps the most fundamental change relating to the interiors is the change from a building in single ownership, experienced as a unity, to one in fragmented ownership, that cannot be experienced as a whole. This is an important point because this change would be permanent. At the moment the listed building preserves the idea of a country house, as a unified creation, experienced as a sequence of related spaces. This is fundamental to significance (see chapter 3). For this reason, an institutional use is highly suitable. Once the majority of spaces have been parcelled off behind locked doors, this aspect of the building's special interest, as a historic country house, will be diminished. Regardless of leasehold arrangements, the nature of residential use is such that this aspect of the harm would essentially be both irreversible and permanent.

**Extension**

5.7 As set out in chapter 3, the exteriors of Esher Place House are highly significant for their French-inspired design. This includes the rear terrace and circular steps, which contribute to a carefully managed transition into the designed landscape (see figs. 5 and 6). This designed relationship between the house and its setting is part of the significance of the listed building. The proposal to construct a three-storey building in this location will disrupt this aspect of the Duchenne-Robinson design and will harm this aspect of the significance.

5.8 In both plan and elevation, the proposed extension is alien to the character of the listed building. The historic house is composed of linked pavilions forming a curved arc. It is the simplicity of this shape that is visually effective in tying together the richly decorated elevations. In opposition to this, the proposed building breaks forward and has a complex elevation that is slightly curved in the opposite way. As proposed this building would mask and disrupt the historic character and significance.

5.9 The proposed extension is different from the proposal which was granted consent at appeal in 2011 (a decision that predates the National Planning Policy Framework). In plan, the new proposal is for a complex shape that relates poorly to the listed building as set out above. It relates poorly to the circular steps and terrace arrangement, which are part of the 1890s phase and are essentially intact. The elevations as proposed are also visually highly complex and include an array of window and cladding treatments and even projecting balconies, of the type used in apartment buildings, which are incongruous in this historic context.

**Terrace**

5.10 The location of the proposed terrace is near what would historically have been the service end of the house. Nevertheless, this location is still part of the historic landscape of the house.

5.11 The proposal to erect a terrace is harmful for two reasons. Firstly, it would develop part of the historic grounds of the house, diminishing the extent of the historic landscape. What was historically green open space would be developed with an uncharacteristically urban form: the terrace house. This form is incongruous within the immediate setting of a country house, neither does it relate well to the spacious 1930s layout of detached houses. The harm arising from the development of this part of the historic landscape would be further exacerbated by the introduction of an access road, hardstanding and bin stores.

5.12 Secondly, the proposed terrace is sited nearby to the sunken garden of c. 1905. This garden compartment, by the renowned designer Sir Edwin Lutyens, is an important part of the setting of the listed building (and now within the boundary of No. 7 The Gardens). The terrace of houses is proposed to be sited between the sunken garden and Esher Place House. This would introduce a further division between the listed building and its designed landscape, causing further harm.

**Semi-detached houses**

5.13 The location of the proposed semi-detached houses is immediately adjacent to the sunken theatre (sometimes referred to as the 'amphitheatre'), within part of the historic landscape of the house. This was part of the gardens, close to the main house.

5.14 The proposal to erect two pairs of semi-detached houses is harmful for two reasons. Firstly, it would develop part of the historic grounds of the house, diminishing the extent of the historic landscape. What was historically green open space would be developed with an uncharacteristically suburban form: the semi-detached house. This form is incongruous within the immediate setting of a country house, neither does it relate well to the spacious 1930s layout of detached houses. The harm arising from the development of this part of the historic landscape

would be further exacerbated by the introduction of an access road, hardstanding and bin collection areas.

5.15 Secondly, the proposed semi-detached houses are sited very close to the sunken theatre of c. 1905. This garden feature, by the renowned designer Sir Edwin Lutyens, is an important part of the setting of the listed building. The semi-detached houses are proposed to be sited immediately adjacent to the sunken theatre, encroaching on its open setting, which is a fundamental aspect of its design and significance. The two existing nearby houses diminished this sense of openness in the 1950s, to an extent. They are low enough to preserve some sense of openness. The semi-detached houses are proposed to be built on higher ground. Clearly, if development further encroaches on the Lutyens sunken theatre, then further harm will result.

## 6.0 Conclusions

6.1 As set out in chapter 4, the applicant’s assessment fails to meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 194, for the following reasons:

- The application material underplays the significance of key areas. The Duchene-Robinson phase of the 1890s is highly significant both historically and architecturally. Esher Place House is an excellent example and therefore an important and rare survival of a country house finished in this style. The includes the exterior, interiors and landscaping, which were designed as a unified creation.
- The applicant underplays the extent to which the designed landscape is part of this significant scheme. The significance of the landscape features has generally been underplayed. The applicant argues that the experience of these assets has been fragmented. However, the surviving historic garden is largely undivided and retains its significance, as well as having group value with landscape features that are in separate ownership such as the sunken garden.

6.2 The applicant’s proposals are harmful for the following reasons:

- The proposed car park destroys the carefully designed formal approach, with its lawn parterres, which is intact and an important aspect of the setting
- The subdivision of the interiors is highly disruptive to the historic plan-form, especially the insertion of multiple small kitchens and bathrooms that are at odds with the historic character of a country house
- The change from a building in single ownership, experienced as a unity, to one in fragmented ownership, that cannot be experienced as a whole, will be harmful and, due to the nature of residential use, would be irreversible and permanent
- The location and form of the extension would mask and disrupt the historic character and significance of the house, including its rear terrace and circular steps, and its relationship with the designed landscape
- The complex design of the extension including its elevations with an array of window and cladding treatments and projecting balconies would be highly incongruous in this historic context
- The proposed terrace of three houses would develop the historic grounds of the house, diminishing the extent of the historic landscape and would introduce a further division between the house and the important sunken garden by Lutyens that is an important part of the setting
- The proposed semi-detached houses would develop the historic grounds of the house, diminishing the extent of the historic landscape and would spoil the open setting of the theatre which is itself an important part of the setting of the listed building

6.3 In each area of these areas of the proposals, we consider the harm to be ‘less than substantial’ in NPPF terms, before they are considered on a cumulative basis. Based on our experience, the cumulative sum of the negative impacts is, in totality, towards the top end of the ‘less than substantial’ category. This will need to be weighed against any public benefits associated with the scheme (see statement by Black Box Planning). When one takes into account the high interest of the French-inspired design, encompassing the house and its designed landscape, and the high levels of intactness, it must be admitted that the scheme will have far-reaching, harmful consequences. The reasons for reaching this conclusion are summarised further below:

- The forecourt which, with its shaped lawns, so brilliantly sets off the French-inspired architecture, will be badly spoiled by the proposed car park with its bin stores, inappropriate trees and array of surface treatments.

- On the other side of the house, the historic landscape will be diminished further through the development of a terrace of three houses, two pairs of semi-detached houses and an extension to the main house.
- The proposed design of the extension is intrusive in this rich historic context, with no regard to the special qualities of the terrace and circular steps and the sophisticated way that they transition into the landscape.
- The interiors will never again be appreciated as a whole but will be divided off and altered with the insertion of multiple bathrooms and kitchens.
- Due to the nature of residential use, these changes are essentially irreversible and permanent, fundamentally diminishing the ways in which the listed building is significant as a historic country house.

6.4 NPPF para. 202 requires the harm to be outweighed by the public benefits generated by the proposal. The heritage benefit identified by the applicant is that the scheme would ‘contribute to securing the long-term conservation of Esher Place’ (HS, 7.23). The applicant has failed to demonstrate this assertion. On the contrary, the use that is proposed by the applicant would be harmful, as set out above. A less harmful use would clearly be preferable in conservation terms, such as, for example, an institutional use that preserves the site whole. There is nothing to suggest that the building could not be used in such a way in future. The stated heritage benefit can therefore not be considered a benefit at all.

6.5 The applicant has also identified the delivery of housing as a public benefit to be weighed in the balance. As set out in the Appeal Statement by Black Box Planning this stated benefit is not sufficient to weigh against the degree of harm in the scheme.



## 7.0 Sources

Application and appeal documents are listed in full in the Appeal Statement.

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## 8.0 Images



Figure 1 The formal approach, c. 1900 (Country Life)



Figure 2 The formal approach, 2021



Figure 3 Balustrade and forecourt lawns, mid twentieth century (Historic England)



Figure 4 Balustrade and forecourt lawns, 2021



Figure 5 Terrace steps, c. 1900 (Country Life)



Figure 6 Terrace steps and sunken theatre, 2021 (satellite view)

## Alan Baxter

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