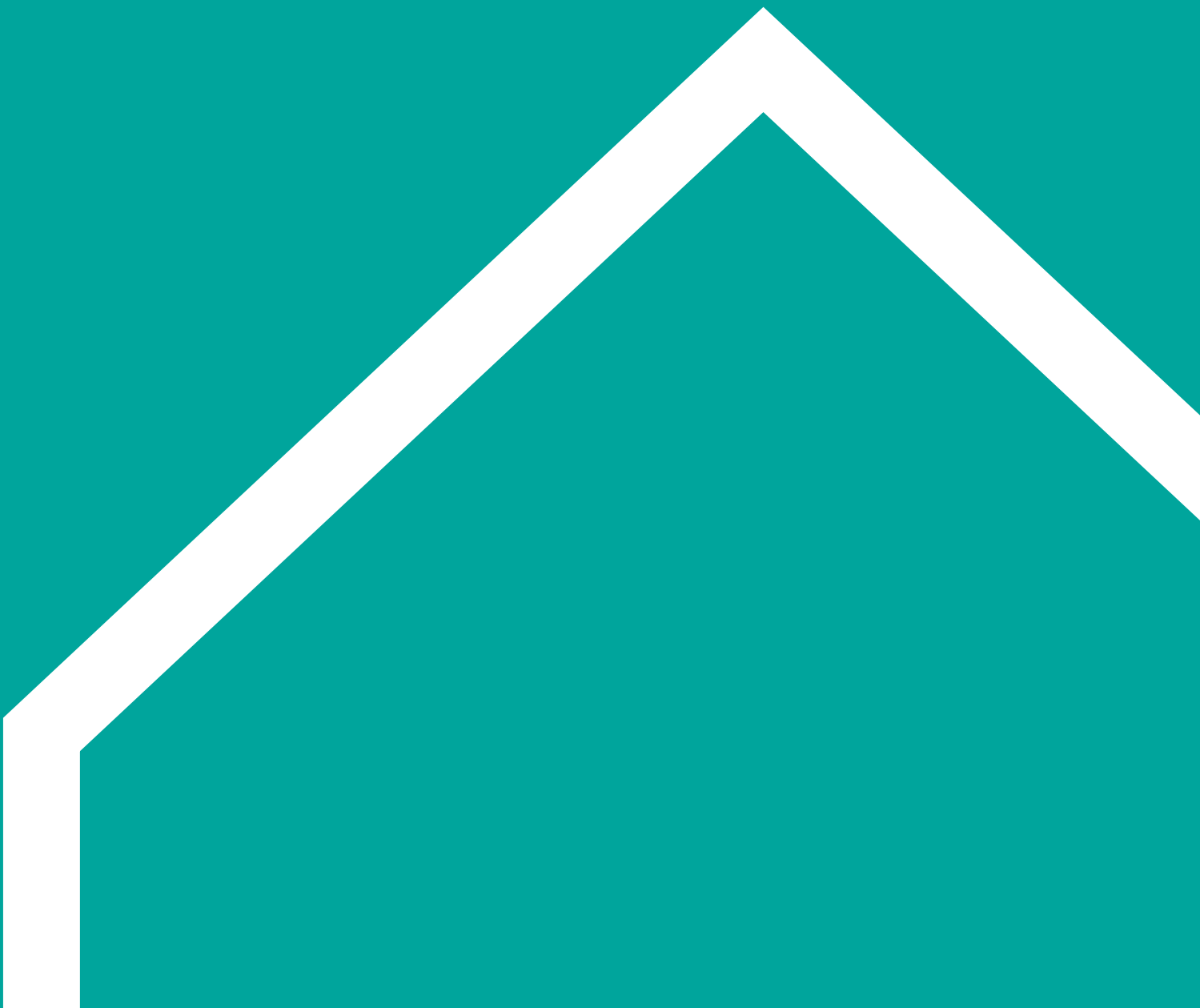


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Heritage Appraisal

Knuston Hall, Irchester, Wellingborough

July 2022



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PROJECT

Development opportunities for Knuston Hall, Irchester

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared for North Northamptonshire Council on behalf of Eddisons.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to understand, assess the significance and to analyse the impact of the proposed work including in order to comply with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.3 This Heritage Appraisal should be read in conjunction with the other supporting documents prepared by Eddisons and other consultants. It does not predetermine any decisions made by the Local Planning Authority regarding Listed Building Consent and its purpose is to advise the client on possible risks and opportunities.

2. Methodology & Limitations

- 2.1 The methodology in this report will be based upon Historic England's *Good Practice Advice in Planning 2 – Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* and Historic England's *Best Practice Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse* which sets guidance on how to assess the nature, extent and level of significance to support sustainable development.
- 2.2 This report has primarily been produced through desktop research, using relevant secondary sources including:
- Historic Environment Records (HER)
 - Historic England National Heritage List England (NHLE)
 - Northamptonshire Archives
 - National Library of Scotland (online resource)
- 2.3 No site visits were undertaken; however photographs have been supplied by Eddisons to give a broad overview of the exterior and interior. It is advised for a more in-depth assessment should the client wish to take forward proposals that a site visit would be necessary.
- 2.4 The assessment is a desk-based study which has utilised secondary sources derived from a variety of published sources. The assumption has been made that this data is reasonably accurate. The records held by the HER and historic maps are not an infinite record of all heritage assets, but a record of the discovery of historic features.
- 2.5 No existing drawn floor plans and elevations were made available at the time of writing to evidence the possible comparison between the current plan form and historic drawn records.

3. Identifying Heritage Assets

3.1 The NPPF (Annex 2 Glossary) defines a heritage asset as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)”.

3.2 Knuston Hall is a Grade II building (NGR SPR 9385366066) and is the only statutory designation on the site (List Entry 1392364). It is a relatively new listing (17th January 2008) unlike most listed buildings which were listed post-WWII.

3.3 The building in its entirety (i.e. inside and out) is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990). Unless the list entry explicitly says otherwise (which it does not in this case), under section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the protection of the listing also includes:

“any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948...shall... be treated as part of the building.”

3.4 This is often referred to as ‘curtilage listed’ but carry the same protection as the principal listed building under the Act.

3.5 There are also several additional listed buildings (designated heritage assets) surrounding the site which contribute to the significance of the site should future development be considered.

3.6 The ground itself is not listed, however the parkland in which Knuston Hall is laid out contributes to the significance to the hall in policy terms.

Name	Listing	Description
Fox Cottage	II	1866 coursed limestone lodge house with evidence of an earlier structure.
Bridge approx. 60m East of Ford Cottage	II	Early C19 squared coursed limestone bridge and dam originally leading to Knuston Hall.
Knuston High Farm and Attached Barn	II	Coursed limestone and ironstone mid-C18 and early C19 farmhouse and attached barn.

4. Planning Policy

4.1 Planning decisions should be taken in accordance with local plan policy unless material considerations indicate otherwise, Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 refers. This report is written in the context of the following legislative, planning policy and guidance:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021) *'The Framework'*
- National Planning Practice Guidance: *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (2019)*
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)
- Conservation Principles: *Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008)*
- Good Practice Guide 2: *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015)*
- Good Practice Guide 3: *The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017)*

4.2 Section 66(1) of the Act (1990) states that when:

"...considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, 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."

4.3 Decision-makers should give *"considerable importance and weight"* to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings when carrying out the balancing exercise¹.

¹ Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Limited v East Northants DC, English Heritage, National Trust & SSCLG [2014] EWCA Civ.137.

4.4 Section 16 of the NPPF contains policies for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. All of which are relevant to this application due to the nature and scope of heritage assets potentially impacted. However, specifically to 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.”

4.5 Public benefits do not need to be *visible* or *accessible* to the public. They may include:

- sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset
- reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset

4.6 The PPG clarifies the levels of harm which can arise from direct physical and indirect impact². If there is no impact on the heritage asset’s significance or the development will enhance its significance, there will be no harm:

- Substantial harm or total loss - this would be harm that would *“have such a serious impact on the significance of the asset that its significance was either vitiated altogether or very much reduced”*³
- Less than substantial harm – harm of a lesser degree than substantial
- No harm - case law⁴ provides us with the articulation of ‘preserving’ which means doing ‘no harm’ with regards the Section 66(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

² MHCLG, Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 018 (ID: 18a-039-20190723 Revision date: 23.07.2019)

³ EWHC 2847, R DCLG and Nuon UK Ltd v. Bedford Borough Council

⁴ EWHC 1895, R (Forge Field Society, Barraud and Rees) v. Sevenoaks DC, West Kent Housing Association and Viscount De L’Isle

4.7 Established case law has determined that:

“Statutorily....preserving the character or appearance of an area is achieved either by a positive contribution to preservation or by development which leaves the character or appearance unharmed, that is to say preserved.”⁵

4.8 The term ‘preserving’ does not constitute ‘no change’ as Historic England guidance⁶ confirms *“change to heritage assets is inevitable but it is only harmful when significance is damaged”*. Thus, the concept of change is accepted as part of the evolution of the historic environment. However, it is whether the change is therefore neutral, harmful or beneficial to the significance which is to be determined.

4.9 Whilst the statutory duty requires that special regard should be paid to the desirability of not harming the setting of a Listed Building, that cannot mean that any harm, however minor, would necessarily require planning permission to be refused as clarified in the Court of Appeal⁷.

4.10 These are judgements, and the level of harm are for the decision-maker, which should be clearly defined. The PPG states that: *“it is the harm to the asset’s significance rather than the scale of development that is to be assessed.”⁸*

4.11 The Planning Appraisal (22-024/KW/JH) details further local policies relevant to the site.

⁵ South Lakeland v Secretary of State for the Environment [1992] 2 AC 141

⁶ Historic England, 2017, *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition): The Setting of Heritage Assets*

⁷ Palmer v Herefordshire Council & Anor [2016] EWCA Civ 1061 (04 November 2016)

⁸ MHCLG, Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723

5. Opportunities & Risks

Overview of Significance

5.1 Significance is defined in the Framework as:

“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest...significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting...”

5.2 National guidance for identifying heritage values is set out in Historic England’s *Conservation Principles*, 2008. A revised draft was consulted on in 2017 incorporating amended definitions of these ‘values’ to reflect the terminology adopted in the NPPF. Both versions of the document are therefore referred to.

5.3 *Historic interest “...derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative”.*

5.4 Irchester itself is a Roman town located in a strategic position in relation to communication networks, sited to the south of the confluence of the Rivers Nene and Ise, and at the crossing of two possible roads which likely lead to its development.

5.5 The Knuston Hall we see today is located east of Irchester and dates back to the C17 and has a date stone of 1666 on its pediment. Prior to the Enclosures Act of 1769 there was a building of an earlier date likely to be the original manor house.

5.6 Architectural and artistic interest is defined in the National Planning Policy Guidance by *“an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of building and structures of all types.”*

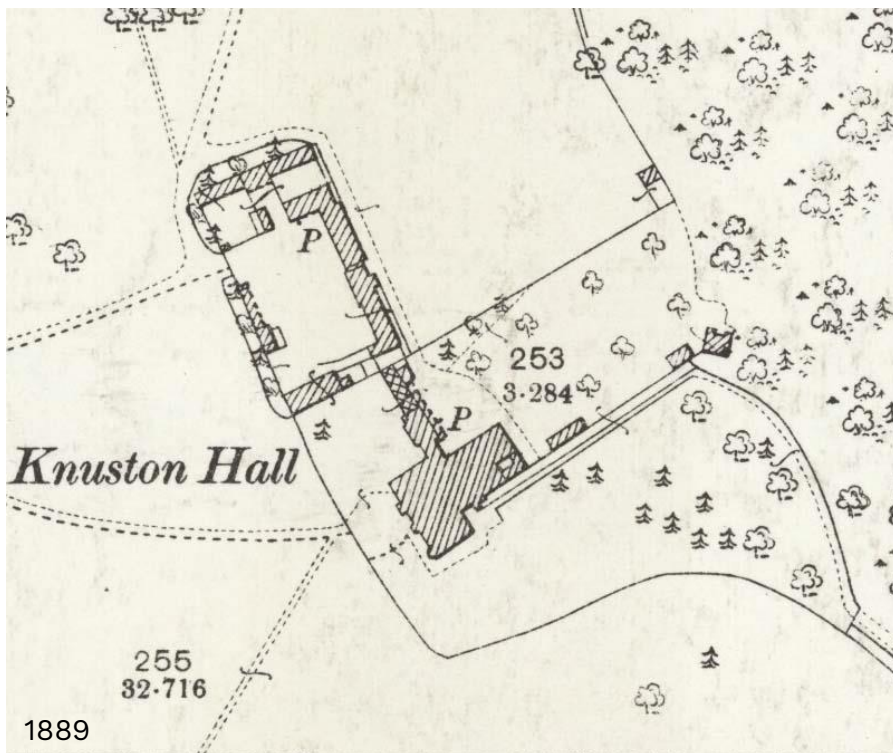
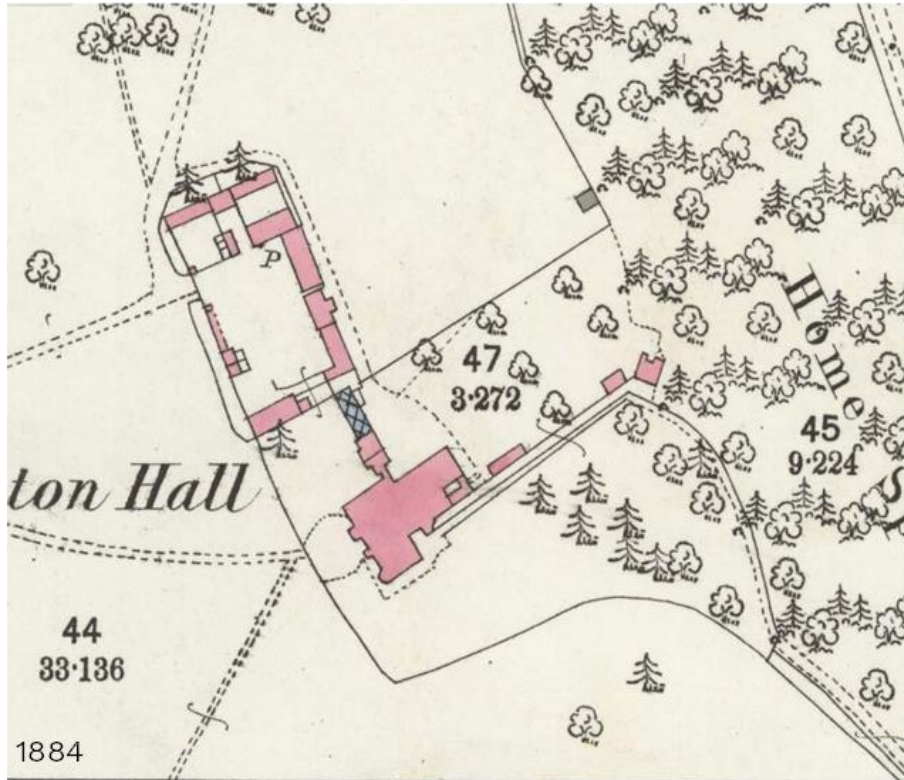
5.7 In 1775 Knuston Hall was acquired by Benjamin Kidney and is the core of the building that exists today in its Georgian form with north and west fronts of

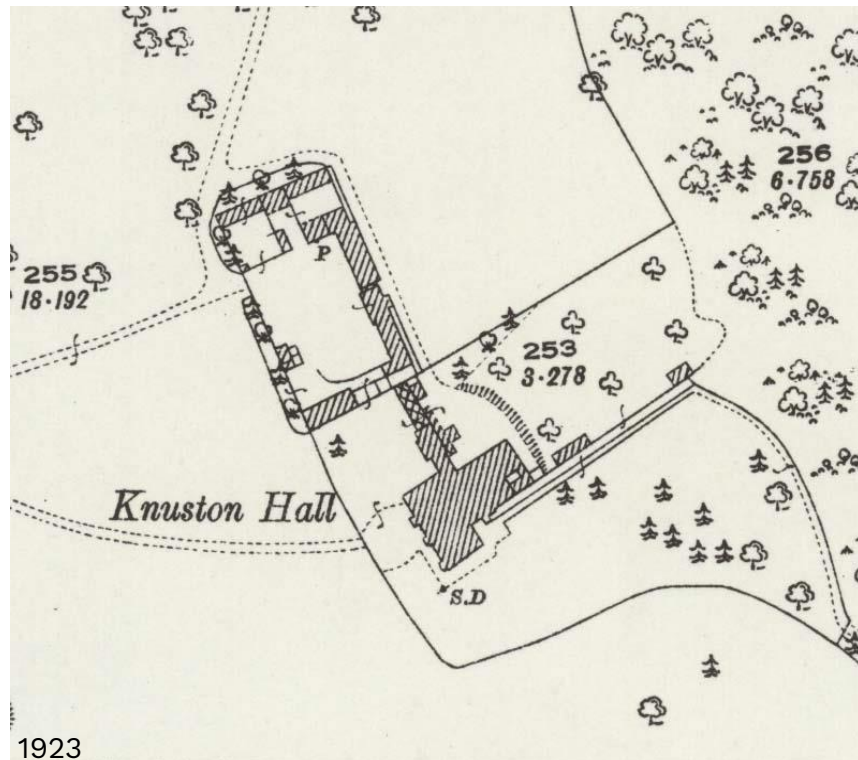
three bays and three storeys recorded in the 1840 George Clarke drawings (*not digitised but available to purchase at.RIBA*).

- 5.8 Cartographic evidence indicates a glasshouse to the north of the Hall and a courtyard complex to the rear of which very little change occurred to the footprint during the C19 other than small piecemeal loss of outlying detached outbuildings.
- 5.9 In 1865 the estate was bought by Robert Arkwright and remodelled internally and made further external additions including Jacobean Revival style gables.
- 5.10 Since 1949 the house has been owned by Northamptonshire County Council and is used as an adult education centre, however, is now temporarily closed.
- 5.11 The list description describes the building and its significance in further detail (Appendix A) and its reason for designation (below):

*“The building retains fabric from several epochs which possess architectural interest, and which is highly characteristic of an evolved gentleman's seat * The Hall has an important series of rich later C18 plasterwork decoration in the ground floor rooms of the square block * The various ranges, including a service range and outbuildings to the north, have a structure which has evolved since the C17 and elements of interest survive from the C17, C18 and C19 * The discovery of an early C19 annotated plan of the house adds to the interest.”*

Ordnance Survey Map Regression





Opportunities & Risks

- 5.12 There is a cluster of C20 development to the ‘rear’ of the hall to the north of the site and sits outside the boundary of the courtyard where a later access has been created.
- 5.13 This later development does not contribute to the significance of Knuston Hall and includes temporary single-story blocks with unsympathetic DDA railing. This should be removed to enhance the setting of the hall.
- 5.14 Alternatively, there is capacity to explore replacement development of a higher quality, similar in scale and footprint, that would unify the cluster. This would still enhance the significance of the designated heritage asset, thus reducing the harm that the current buildings result in.
- 5.15 The building present opportunities to enhance the quality of adhoc additions, e.g. inappropriate rooflights which are likely to have be undertaken without Listed Building Consent as these are not conservation rooflights.

- 5.16 Generally, where there has been a high retention of historic fabric and architectural features, these are sensitive to change and have a reduced capacity to change in comparison to areas that have been impacted by piecemeal erosion.
- 5.17 Both the list description and renowned architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner detail the “*series of rich later C18 plasterwork decoration in the ground floor rooms...*”
- 5.18 The original core appears to contain the majority of this plaster work and is the most sensitive to any alteration including removal of internal doors.
- 5.19 Any internal reconfiguration is possible, however there are of course constraints regarding removal of any solid walls that would reduce the legibility of the original plan. As well as impact on relief plasterwork and other architectural features as well as staircases.
- 5.20 There is considerable capacity for development in the courtyard with several buildings in poor condition and underutilised. The opportunity to re-purpose the courtyard buildings providing the use secures the *optimal viable use* in accordance with para. 202 of the NPPF would be welcomed.
- 5.21 These buildings although still of importance are of a more vernacular style, being functional buildings in comparison to the polite architecture of the hall, therefore are more likely to accommodate new openings and internal alterations for example to support the longevity of the site.
- 5.22 There is opportunity to ‘reinststate’ any lost outbuildings using historic evidence, or for example to explore partially enclosing the courtyard with another building similar in footprint to what is evidenced on historic mapping – providing any possible harm of this would be outweighed by *heritage* public benefits.
- 5.23 Furthermore, there has been some infill in the courtyard at the far north which is negative significance its loss would further reveal the significance of the site. There is an original historic access via the courtyard which could be

utilised. However, physical division through use of boundary walls is likely to be resisted and the courtyard should be kept open where possible, e.g. used as parking/shared space.

- 5.24 Although the parkland has no legal protection, any changes to access should consider impact on the parkland and in particular historic access routes.

Optimum Viable Use

- 5.25 The Planning Appraisal sets out possible uses for the future of Knuston Hall. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that:

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

- 5.26 The term optimum viable use refers to the use that is the use that is *least* likely to cause harm to the significance to the heritage asset including changes made to physical interventions and as a result of subsequent wear and tear over the lifecycle of the future of the building.

- 5.27 The option for possible uses set out in the Planning Appraisal (section 6) advises that residential, commercial, care and leisure use would all be acceptable (in principle) in accordance with local and national policy.

- 5.28 Residential for example, that may result in carving up of the interior spaces, introduction of ensembles with extraction fans etc and boundary treatments to divide up exterior spaces for gardens may result in harm over a use that can work with the existing spaces and requires minimum intervention.

Overview of Significance



- High - central block
- Low - replacement/extended C20 rendered block
- Negative - demountable blocks



Later vehicular access along courtyard and temporary block which high capacity to change



C20 alterations of low significance to C18 earlier extension



Decorative plasterwork of high significance with low capacity to change



6. Listed Building Consent

- 6.1 Listed building consent is required for the carrying out of works for the alteration and extension of the listed building in any manner which would affect its *character as building of special architectural and historic interest*. This covers a broad spectrum of works more so than those that are covered in planning permission and these works do not always constitute *development*.
- 6.2 Listed Building Consent is *not* required for the erection of a new building within the curtilage or affecting the setting of a listed building, unless it is *physically attached* to the existing building. However, it is likely planning permission will be required.
- 6.3 Case law is complex regarding when small-scale works, e.g. painting and repainting require Listed Building Consent as the what affects the buildings character is open to interpretation. For example, the view of the Secretary of State is as follows:
“Cleaning a building usually requires listed building consent. This is not only because cleaning can have a marked effect on the character of buildings, but also because cleaning process can affect the historic fabric”
- 6.4 Generally, it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority on the subject of paintwork that paintwork using appropriate paint for the substrate and in the existing colour does not require consent.
- 6.5 The term ‘like for like’ is again, open for interpretation as replacement windows ‘like for like’ would always require Listed Building Consent, however, generally spliced timber repairs to joinery would *not* require consent. It is always advised to consult the Local Planning Authority (which act as an independent regulatory body to the Local Authority).
- 6.6 It is recommend a more in-depth assessment of the phasing of Knuston Hall is undertaken and a holistic approach to any future development and possible use is undertaken to ensure all options are explored.

6.7 A ‘traffic light’ system approach to possible development and/or physical works that should be necessary to upgrade the building to facilitate its long-term use may be useful to understand the risks. An example is set out below:

- Works highlighted in red are works will impact the special architectural and historic interest of the building and therefore by definition require Listed Building Consent.
- Works highlighted in orange are works that are *likely* to require Listed Building Consent. However, it is our opinion that these works are less contentious.
- Works highlighted in green are works that we believe constitute a repair providing traditional materials and methods are used, or do not affect the character of the listed building. We would advise that these works may commence without statutory approval from the Local Planning Authority subject to the relevant notes as highlighted.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Knuston Hall acts a visual and physical record of the evolution of a gentleman's seat through the ages of the C17, C18 and C19 with a high retention of internal and external historic fabric in a parkland setting.
- 7.2 Both of these aspects would need to be carefully approached when considering any development and/or a new use. It is advised that early involvement with the Local Planning Authority and a core design team is key to ascertain the next step towards Knuston Hall's future.
- 7.3 Any development should be carried out in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and any possible uses should be carefully considered to ensure it is the *optimum viable use* to secure the future of the designated heritage asset.

Appendix A

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1392364

Date first listed: 17-Jan-2008

Statutory Address 1: KNUSTON HALL INCLUDING ATTACHED OUTBUILDINGS, STATION ROAD

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: KNUSTON HALL INCLUDING ATTACHED OUTBUILDINGS, STATION ROAD

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

District: North Northamptonshire (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Irchester

National Grid Reference: SP9385366066

Reasons for Designation

* The building retains fabric from several epochs which possess architectural interest, and which is highly characteristic of an evolved gentleman's seat * The Hall has an important series of rich later C18 plasterwork decoration in the ground floor rooms of the square block * The various ranges, including a service range and outbuildings to the north, have a structure which has evolved since the C17 and elements of interest survive from the C17, C18 and C19 * The discovery of an early C19 annotated plan of the house adds to the interest.

square main block and the rear wing for services. It had been thought that this rear wing (the current dining room) was the only surviving element of this house, which was then known as Hill House. As a result of the Enclosures Act in 1769 the grounds were laid out as parkland and in around 1775 Benjamin Kidney, a London merchant and High Sheriff of Northamptonshire, spent c £10,000 on the house. In 1791 Knuston Hall was sold to Joseph Gulston but, in the half century or so after this, the house was let or leased. In 1865 the estate was bought by Robert Arkwright, great grandson of Sir Richard Arkwright, the renowned textile entrepreneur. Robert made considerable additions to the house and also alterations to the existing structure. After Robert's death in 1888 the house was occupied by caretakers or tenants until the Hall was sold in 1920. Northamptonshire County Council bought the Hall in 1949 and it continues in use as a residential College of Adult Education.

A survey drawing made by the well-known architect JB Papworth, probably c.1811 for Thomas Lane who seems to have been the then tenant, gives a very good idea of the hall at that time showing both the configuration and use of the rooms. It is almost certainly a drawing made on the spot, whilst the architect toured the house and outbuildings, and may have been a preliminary to possible alterations. This drawing and the evidence of the surviving structure has permitted a suggested sequence for the building history of the house. It has not been possible to be precise on any changes Papworth may himself have made because of the major ones carried out later by the Arkwrights, but the present state of the square block which was the main house in the plan is probably the result of works in the 1860s. Nevertheless, this block still retains rich plasterwork almost certainly of the 1770s in the long room (formerly the entrance hall and the drawing room), and also in the panelled room (formerly the dining room), as well as in the room which is now the bar. This would appear to be part of the costly work carried out by Benjamin Kidney. The large block added on by Arkwright is fashionably Jacobean but the interior of the new entrance and staircase hall has a Neo-Georgian cornice echoing the C18 work in the adjacent square block and is the same as the in the long corridor.

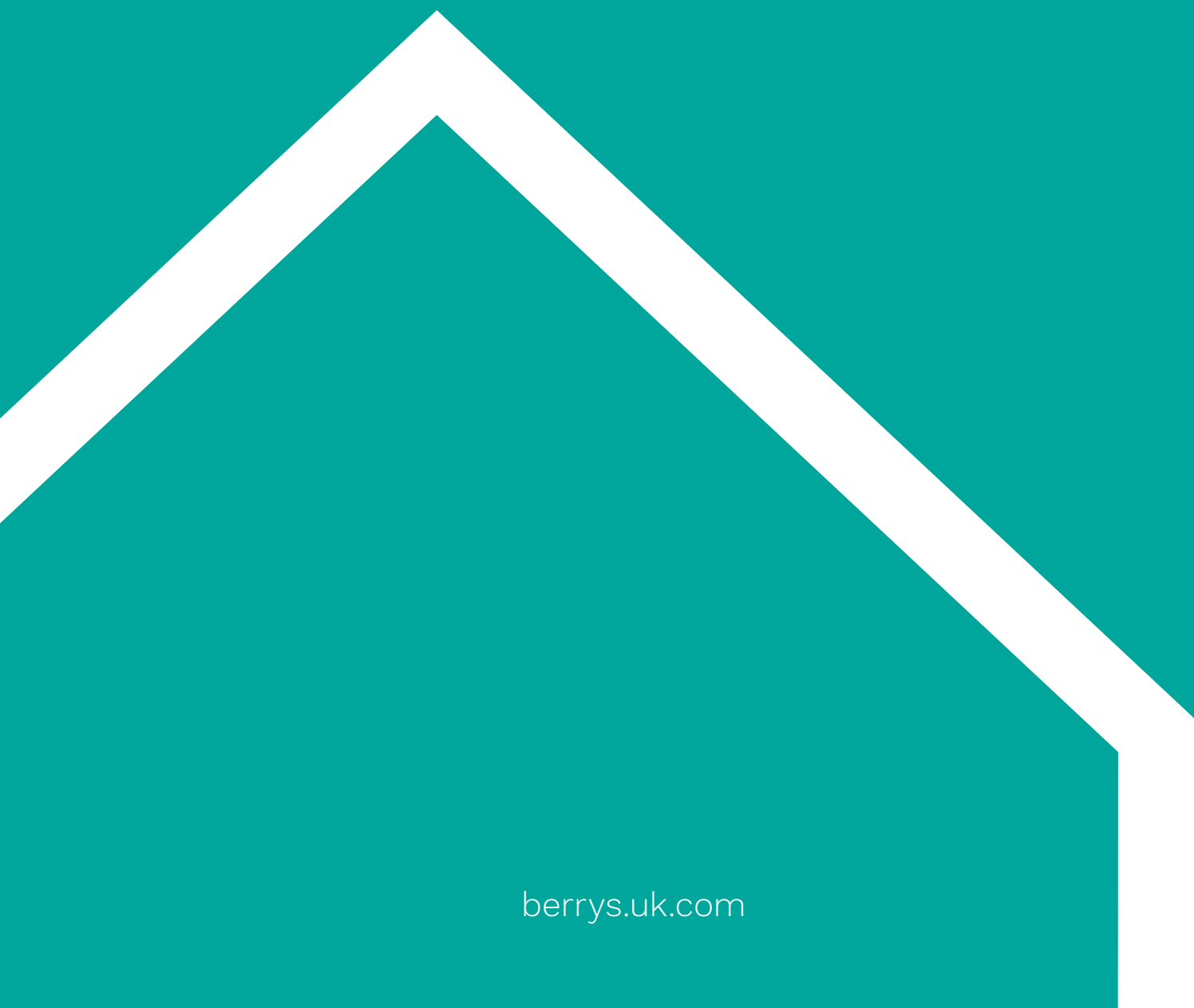
The works carried out in the square block for Arkwright appear to have consisted of opening up this new corridor through the house on the ground and first floors and involved burrowing through a huge stack shown in the survey drawing and replacing the small staircase with a lobby on each floor. The bedrooms were also subdivided, a process which has continued more recently with the creation of en-suite bathrooms. The cornice in these corridors and in the lobbies is the same as in the new entrance hall but original C18 plasterwork survives in the first floor lobby, on a scale too large to have been designed to be viewed, as is now possible, close to, but completely appropriate when seen looking up from the ground floor below, as originally intended. Part of the C19 work involved the removal of the wall between the original entrance hall and drawing room and the making good of the wall mouldings as well as the removal of the drawing room fireplace. In the present panelled room, formerly the dining room, the panelling was probably brought in at this time as it dates from the C17 and was clearly not made for the room. However, the fireplace is mid C18, possibly with some alterations, and may be part of the 1770s work. The ceiling is mainly C18 plasterwork, but the lowest coved cornice moulding in each of the compartments could be late C17 and it is possible that there were some mid C19 additions as well. In the present bar, which was a lobby in the early C19, there are C18 plaster roundels with relief profiles of Classical heads. This room was altered in the mid C19 when part became the beginning of the corridor and a further roundel was added to the decoration in a different style. Some further swags were probably also added.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION Knuston Hall and its outbuildings are designated at grade II for the following principal reasons: * The building retains fabric from several epochs which possess architectural interest, and which is highly characteristic of an evolved gentleman's seat * The Hall has an important series of rich later C18 plasterwork decoration in the ground floor rooms of the square block. * The various ranges, including a service range and outbuildings to the north, have a structure which has evolved since the C17 and elements of interest survive from the C17, C18 and C19.

SOURCES RIBA Drawings Collection: JB Papworth Collection PB1327/PAP [206] (1-2).
www.knustonhall.org.uk/history.htm

Legacy

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



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