

GUYSFIELD, WILLIAN ROAD, LETCHWORTH
HERITAGE STATEMENT
ISSUE 03 : JULY 2024



A team of experienced consultants from Purcell jointly contributed to the completion of this Heritage Statement.

Name	Position and Qualifications	Role
Will Holborow	Associate Heritage Consultant	Author
Hettie Dix	Associate Heritage Consultant	Author
Tracey Rowe	Senior Graphics Assistant	Report Design

Date	Issue	Revision	Reviewed	Approved
February 2018	01	First report to Caring Homes Group	WH	WH
May 2020	02	Second Report to Caring Homes Group	WH	WH
July 2024	03	Third Report to Caring Homes Group	HD	HD

GUYSFIELD RESIDENTIAL HOME, LETCHWORTH: HERITAGE STATEMENT

CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	04	5.0	LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE	20
			5.1	Statutory Test to Preserve or Enhance	20
			5.2	National Planning Policy Framework	20
			5.3	Local Planning Policy	20
2.0	THE BUILDING	05	6.0	STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	21
2.1	Exterior Description	05	6.1	Assessing Significance	21
2.2	Interior of the Original House	10	6.2	Assessment of the Heritage Value	21
3.0	SETTING AND CONTEXT	12	7.0	HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	22
3.1	Location	12	7.1	Proposal	22
3.2	Willian Conservation Area	13	7.2	Impact on Heritage Assets	22
3.3	Setting	14	7.3	Suitability of the New Design	22
3.4	Designated Heritage Assets	16	7.4	Conclusion	22
4.0	HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT	18	BIBLIOGRAPHY		23
4.1	Summary Timeline	18			
4.2	Brief History of Willian	18			
4.3	Development of Guysfield	18			
			APPENDICES		
			A: Willian Conservation Area		24

SECTION 1.0: INTRODUCTION

This report describes the historical development and heritage significance of the residential care home now known as Guysfield. The property was built in 1884 as a private residence, then known as Guys. Following its conversion to a residential care home in the 1980s, the building has been significantly extended with the addition of two new wings.

The site is included within the designated Conservation Area of Willian, immediately south of the built-up area of Letchworth in North Hertfordshire District. The existing building is not listed, nor is it recognised as a locally listed building. The purpose of this report is to clarify its history, heritage significance and the contribution it makes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The report was amended in April 2020 to include an assessment of the impact of proposals to demolish and replace the existing building with a new purpose-built care home. Following subsequent design revisions, this iteration of the report has been updated and re-issued to form part of a renewed planning application package.



SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING

2.1 Exterior Description

2.1.1 Original House

The original house is of two principal storeys plus attic and a small cellar. The plan form is compact yet irregular, having a number of projecting bays. It is constructed from dark-red brick, with a brick dentil course at first-floor level and at eaves level. The roof is slated and retains a number of tall brick chimney stacks. The ridge line is ornamented with decorative finials and a mixture of terracotta and iron cresting. The principal elevations face south and west across landscaped gardens.



West façade of the original house

The west façade was originally the main entrance façade. It incorporates the original open porch to the main door to the house (no longer in use). Inscribed bricks on the low walls to the front of the porch are marked with the initials 'C.S. 1884' and 'F.S.1884'. The exact identity of these initials has not been confirmed, but they are likely to refer to the Sworder family (Mrs Sworder being recorded as resident in the 1890s).



Inscribed brick to RHS of entrance porch



Inscribed brick to LHS of entrance porch

There is a projecting gabled bay to the left-hand side of the entrance which contains a two-storey square-sided bay window.



Entrance porch

SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING

The south facade is the garden façade of the house. The left-hand bay projects forwards under a gable and incorporates a two-storey canted bay window, all constructed in brick. To the right of this bay, there is a projecting pentice roof at first floor level supported on timber brackets, with simple acorn motif drop finials. This roof returns along the east elevation of the original house, and has been extended across the front of the adjoining extension.



South façade of the original house, with 1980s extension to the right



East façade of the original house



Junction between the original house (left) and the 1980s extension (right). Note the difference in brickwork either side of the expansion joint at first floor level.

SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING

The north façade of the original house is partly concealed behind the extension built in the 1980s.



North façade of the original house: Upper floor, with 1980s extension to the left



North façade of the original house (right), 1980s extension to the left

SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING

2.1.2 1980s Wing

The original house has been significantly extended on its east side, first in the late 1980s and again in the early 1990s. These two extensions are separated by a single-storey conservatory structure, which now incorporates the main entrance to the home. The 1980s extension was designed to replicate many of the design features of the original house, including brick gables, sash windows, brick dentil courses at first-floor and eaves level, and the use of similar materials (brick walls in Flemish bond and slate roof covering).



1980s wing: South façade



1980s wing: North façade



Conservatory entrance, rebuilt in 2013



West end of the 1980s extension

SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING

2.1.3 1990s Wing

The 1990s wing is a north-south range on three levels, attached to the conservatory link block. Owing to the falling ground levels, it is divided into two main sections, one at the upper level and one at the lower level. Like the 1980s extension, this wing was designed to replicate many of the design features of the original house, including brick gables, sash windows, brick dentil courses at first-floor and eaves level, and the use of similar materials (brick walls in Flemish bond and slate roof covering).



1990s wing: West façade



1990s wing: East façade



View towards entrance conservatory

SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING

2.2 Interior of the Original House

2.2.1 Ground Floor

The ground floor hallway is entered via a panelled entrance door with semi-circular over-door light. This hallway gives access to two reception rooms, now used as day rooms, at the front of the house. One retains a Victorian marble fireplace with cast-iron fireback incorporating tiled side panels.

The original staircase rises from this hallway in two flights to the first floor. The staircase retains an elaborate newel post with large ball finial, painted timber balustrade and open treads.

2.2.2 First Floor

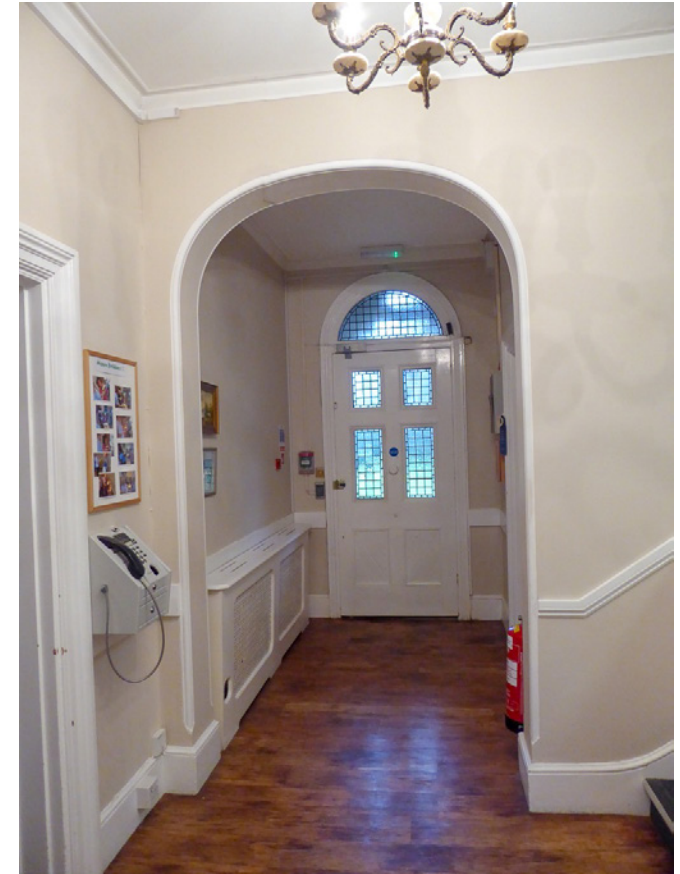
Three of the original bedrooms on the first floor have been adapted to incorporate en-suite toilets. These rooms were not inspected.

2.2.3 Second Floor

These rooms were not inspected.



Main staircase



Entrance hall

SECTION 2.0: THE BUILDING



Ground floor reception room



Living room fireplace



Main staircase at first floor level



Ground floor reception room

SECTION 3.0: SETTING AND CONTEXT

3.1 Location

The property is located on the west side of the village of Willian. It falls under the jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire District Council. Guysfield occupies a roughly triangular site on rising ground adjacent to Willian Road.

Immediately to the north of Guysfield on slightly higher ground is a modern residential development of detached houses arranged around a curving access road – Greenway. This is the southern edge of Letchworth Garden City.

To the south of the site is Willian Road and beyond that open agricultural land.

LOCATION PLAN

Site Location

01

 Puncharden Hall

This plan is not to scale



Plan showing site location. Base plan © Google 2018

SECTION 3.0: SETTING AND CONTEXT

To the east is a large open field crossed diagonally by a public footpath which leads from the Green through to the modern suburbs of the south side of Letchworth. A cycle path runs along the western edge of this field, immediately adjacent to the boundary with Guysfield. A broad strip of mixed tree planting runs along the eastern boundary of the garden to Guysfield. This almost totally obscures views of the house from the direction of the village centre.



View from the garden of Guysfield towards Willian Road and farmland beyond



View from the garden of Guysfield towards houses in Greenway



View from the garden of Guysfield towards houses in Greenway

3.2 Willian Conservation Area

Willian was designated as a Conservation Area in January 1973 and is characterised as an isolated, linear settlement within an immediately rural setting. The boundary map is included at Appendix 1. Guysfield is located at the western edge of the conservation area, and the boundary follows the fence line which separates the garden of Guysfield from the modern houses to the north. The appraisal prepared in 2020 identifies Guysfield as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Willian Conservation Area. This is by virtue of the original building's characteristic use of brick, 19th-century construction date and modest architectural value.

The conservation area covers the village centre and surrounding fields and contains a number of listed buildings. None of these are directly comparable to Guysfield in terms of their age or character. Nor can Guysfield be said to form a group with these or other buildings in the conservation due to its detached location on the edge of the village. Furthermore, there are no clear visual links between Guysfield and other buildings in the village on account of the distance between them, and the interruption of views by intervening trees and boundaries. Guysfield is not a primary feature in any of the key views identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The boundary planting neighbouring the site to the east is identified as a significant area of trees, however, and contribute to the distinctive green space that separates the main village from the suburban edge of Letchworth Garden City.

SECTION 3.0: SETTING AND CONTEXT

3.3 Setting

The setting of a property provides its physical context, reflecting the townscape or landscape character around it. It can contribute both positively or negatively to the significance of a site and can provide evidence of the historic context of a place.

The original setting of Guysfield was entirely open, having no immediate neighbours, and was predominantly rural in character, being surrounded by agricultural land.

This original setting has undergone a number of changes: the extensions of the 1980s and 1990s, whilst designed to be in keeping with the original house, have significantly enlarged the footprint of the house and encroached on the garden area. The residential development to the north has replaced the original rural outlook in this direction.

The growth of trees around the site, especially the belt of mainly young trees along its eastern boundary, has reduced intervisibility between the site and the village centre, but is nonetheless identified in the Willian Conservation Area Appraisal as a significant area of trees. Thus the setting of Guysfield is essentially limited to its own garden.



Entrance driveway to Guysfield, showing the impact of mature garden trees in screening views from Willian Road



Modern residential development in Greenway, to the north of Guysfield



View from public cycle path towards Guysfield (obscured by tree belt)



View from public cycle path towards Guysfield (obscured by tree belt)

SECTION 3.0: SETTING AND CONTEXT

3.3.1 Views

Views form part of the contribution of setting to the significance of properties. They may include views from, to and across a property, taking into consideration the site's

surroundings, the local topography, natural and urban features, and relationships with other buildings and spaces. As mentioned above, local views of Guysfield are restricted by tree planting, and there are no unobstructed views of the house from public areas. Views from Greenway (the housing

estate to the north) are obscured by intervening fences, buildings and trees. Views from the east, including from the Green and the village centre, are obscured by the belt of trees along the site's eastern boundary.



View across the village pond and the Green towards Guysfield – just visible behind tree belt



View across the village pond towards unlisted pair of cottages on Willian Road (left) and Guysfield (centre, obscured)



View across the Green looking north-west along the public footpath towards Letchworth



View across the Green looking south-east towards Willian (Guysfield garden boundary to right of image)



View across the Green looking south-east towards All Saints Church in Willian



View towards Guysfield from the Green showing how the extent to which views of the house are obscured by intervening trees and shrubbery

SECTION 3.0: SETTING AND CONTEXT

3.4 Designated Heritage Assets

There are seven designated heritage assets within the Conservation Area, as listed below. None of these are closely associated with Guysfield, either in terms of proximity, intervisibility, date or architectural style.

- 01 Puncharden Hall, Grade II* (UID 1295498). An early 17th-century house, re-fronted in the mid-18th century.
- 02 The Three Horseshoes Public House, Grade II (UID 1347290). Late 18th-century.
- 03 Lordship Farmhouse, Grade II (UID 1347668). A mid 19th-century farmhouse.
- 04 Roxley Cottages, Grade II (UID 1102822). An early 19th-century range, formerly four cottages.
- 05 The Old Vicarage, Grade II* (UID 1295503). A 16th-century house, partly rebuilt in 1925.
- 06 Church of All Saints, Grade II* (UID 1174914). Two-bay nave and chancel dating from the 12th and 13th century. The tower and south porch date from the 15th century.
- 07 Willian Bury, Grade II (UID 1102821). A late 18th-century or early 19th-century country house.

DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS	
	01 Puncharden Hall
	02 The Three Horseshoes Public House
	03 Lordship Farm House
	04 Roxley Cottages
	05 The Old Vicarage
	06 Church of All Saints
	07 Willian Bury
This plan is not to scale	



Plan showing designated heritage assets. Base plan © Google 2018

SECTION 3.0: SETTING AND CONTEXT



Puncharden Hall



Church of All Saints



Roxley Cottages



The Three Horseshoes Public House



The Fox Public House on Willian Road (not listed)



A pair of nineteenth-century cottages on the south side of Willian Road (not listed)

SECTION 4.0: HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Summary Timeline

1884

Guysfield is constructed for Charles F. Hancock. The complex is composed of the main house, and a stable building to the north-east of the property.

1903

Part of the Manor of Willian is sold to the Letchworth Garden City Company.

By 1922

The garden is extended to the east of the site and a greenhouse erected.

By 1966

The 1920s greenhouse is demolished and a new one erected at the south of the stables building.

1986

The property is converted for use as a nursing home. This involves the demolition of the stables, and the erection of an extension on the north-east side of the main house.

1987

Front boundary walls are erected.

1988

The attic space is converted to further living accommodation.

1991

A second extension is erected to the east of the main house, connected to it by a glazed conservatory.

2013

The conservatory roof is replaced, and a new lantern added.

4.2 Brief History of Willian

Willian is a small village in north Hertfordshire. Along with Norton and Old Letchworth, it was one of the original villages around which Letchworth Garden City developed in the early years of the 20th century.

The village is originally a Saxon settlement, presided over by Earl Leofwin; at Domesday, it was recorded as being owned by Geoffrey of Bec, who owned substantial land holdings in the county.⁰¹ The church is the oldest building in the village, with fabric in the nave and chancel dating to the 12th and 13th centuries.⁰² Despite sitting on the main road from Hitchin to Baldock, the village appears to have been based around an agrarian economy, reflected in the names of several properties today.

In 1903, part of the village was acquired by the First Letchworth Garden City Company. This company had been founded to realise Ebenezer Howard's ideas about town planning. Howard's term Garden City was coined to represent his belief that towns should be encircled within an area of green belt. Letchworth was the first Garden City, constructed between 1903 and c.1920.

Despite the proximity of the new development at Letchworth, Willian maintained its distinct character. At a time when alcohol was banned in Letchworth (1903–1958), two village pubs (the Fox and the Three Horseshoes) remained open.

4.3 Development of Guysfield

Guysfield was built on land which was formerly arable on the north side of Willian Road. A datestone on the building inscribed 'C.F.H 1884' suggests it was built in this year; this is borne out from map-based analysis, which shows the house appearing between 1870 and 1898.

As shown on the 1898 Ordnance Survey, the house was built in the north corner of the triangular plot. It is a roughly square-shaped building, with an L-shaped service range projecting from the north-eastern corner. In addition, there was a detached L-shaped service building, probably a stable, located to the north-east of the main house. Access was provided at this date via two drives, approaching from the south and west from Willian Road, and the property is labelled as 'Guys'.

'C.F.H' is likely to refer to Charles Frederick Hancock, a London jeweller who purchased the Manor of Willian in 1868. Hancock employed Owen Jones to design new workers' cottages in the village, as well as draining the village. The cottages built at this time include the western range of Roxley Cottages (1870). Hancock lived in the mansion he built in the village – Roxley House – and also at Hendon Hall in Middlesex.⁰³ On his death in 1891 the Manor passed to his son Col. Mortimer Hancock, and subsequently to Captain Mortimer Pawson Hancock DSO, who sold part of the Manor to the Letchworth Garden City Company in 1903.⁰⁴

It appears that the house was occupied during the 1890s by a Mrs Sworder.⁰⁵ The Sworders were well-known local residents and farmers, the main branch of the family residing at Manor Farm. Curiously, the house is not listed in directories after 1899.

⁰¹ <http://opendomesday.org/place/TL2230/willian/>

⁰² <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1174914>

⁰³ *Kelly's Directory for Hertfordshire, 1882*

⁰⁴ William Page, 'Parishes: Willian', *A History of the County of Hertford. Volume III*, (London, 1912), pp. 177–181

⁰⁵ *Kelly's Directory for Hertfordshire, 1895 and 1899*

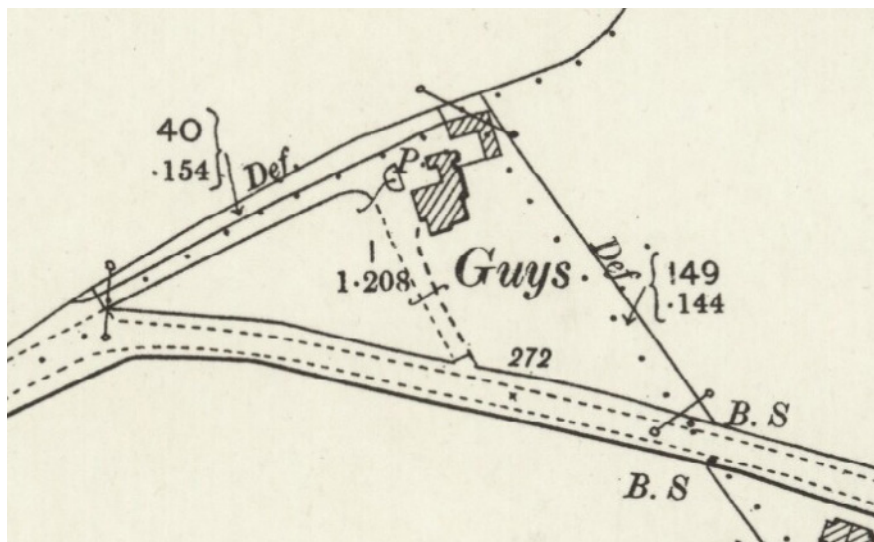
SECTION 4.0: HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The 1922 Ordnance Survey shows that the garden had been extended eastwards to incorporate part of the open field, and belts of trees are shown on the boundaries of the west side of the garden.

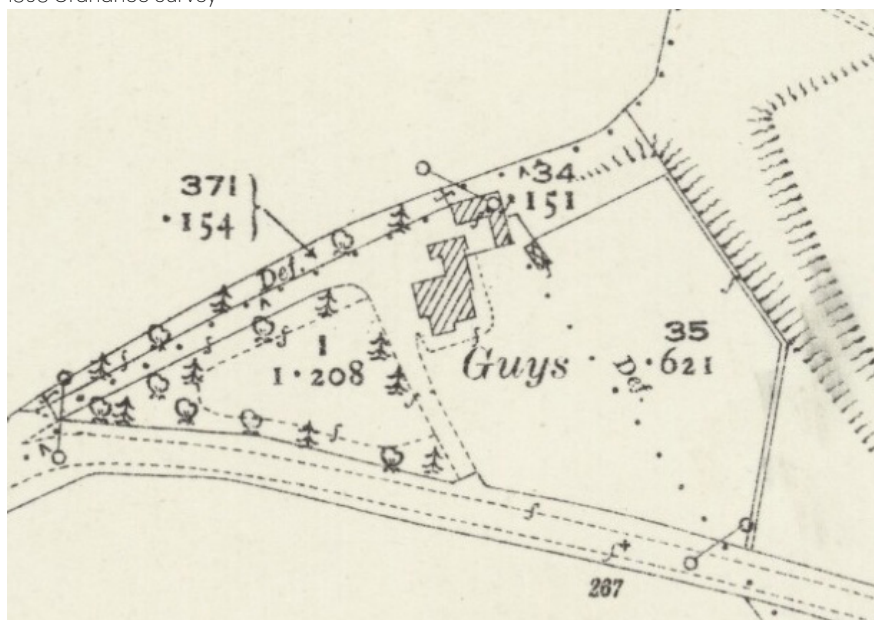
Little physical change is shown to have taken place to the house before its conversion to a nursing home in 1986. Change in the mid-20th century mainly consisted of the construction and demolition of garden buildings, including the construction of a new greenhouse to the east of the site (by 1922), and its demolition and replacement by a greenhouse at the south of the stables (by 1966). A small extension had also been added to the east side of the stables by 1966.

In 1986 planning permission was awarded for the erection of a two-storey extension to the property (now known as Guysfield) in conjunction with its conversion to a nursing home. It appears that this involved the demolition of the historic stables. A two-storey extension was added to the north-eastern corner of the main house. Further change in the 1980s associated with the property's conversion to a nursing home include the erection of front boundary walls (1987) and conversion of roof space into living accommodation (1988).⁰⁶

A second extension was constructed in 1991, composed of two and three storey elements. This extension was located to the east of the existing house, and linked to it by a glazed conservatory, the roof of which was replaced in 2013, with the addition of a roof lantern.⁰⁷



1898 Ordnance Survey



1922 Ordnance Survey

⁰⁶ North Hertfordshire District Council Planning Portal

⁰⁷ Ibid

SECTION 5.0: LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

5.1 Statutory Test to Preserve or Enhance

Conservation areas are designated under paragraph 69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section of the 1990 Act requires that in the exercise of planning functions ‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance’ of designated conservation areas. The House of Lords in the South Lakeland case decided that the ‘statutorily desirable object of preserving the character of appearance of an area is achieved either by a positive contribution to preservation or by development which leaves character or appearance unharmed, that is to say preserved.’ Thus the replacement of a building which makes a neutral contribution to the character of a conservation area with another building which makes a neutral contribution would meet the statutory test.

5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

With regards to the proposals, the following points of the NPPF should be considered:

200. 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. ... 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.

203. In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

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

205. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

208. 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 securing its optimum viable use.

209. The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Paragraph 201 states that:

Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.

5.3 Local Planning Policy

The North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 sets out the relevant planning policies against which applications are determined. Of principal relevance is SP13: Historic environment:

The Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset’s conservation and the management of its setting. We will pursue a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment through:

- a Maintaining a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance;
- b Identifying sites on the national register of Heritage at Risk or on the Council’s ‘At Risk’ register;
- c Periodic reviews of Conservation Areas and other locally designated assets; and
- d Publication of detailed guidance.

SECTION 6.0: STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

6.1 Assessing Significance

Significance can be defined as the sum of the cultural, social and/or natural heritage values that make a place important to this and future generations. Understanding the significance of a place is vital to inform sensitively managed change to ensure that the significance is maintained and, where possible, further revealed, reinforced and enhanced. This assessment of significance has been based on a site visit and desk-based research. Where appropriate, reference has been made to the different types of values identified by Historic England. The relative contribution of the heritage values to the significance of the site are graded as either high, medium, low, neutral or detrimental. These are defined as follows:

Value	Definition
High	An aspect of value that strongly contributes to the significance of a place.
Medium	An aspect of value that will make a modest contribution to the significance of a place.
Low	An aspect of value that will make a slight contribution to the significance of a place.
Neutral	An aspect of value that neither adds to nor detracts from the significance of a place.
Detrimental	An aspect of the place that detracts from its values and therefore its significance.

6.2 Assessment of the Heritage Value

6.2.1 Evidential Value

Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity, for example through the analysis of buried archaeological remains or the built fabric incorporated within standing structures. The site of Guysfield was open agricultural land prior to its construction. The house does not show any evidence of incorporating any earlier structures (pre-1884) and as a Victorian villa residence it is not an unusual type of building. The reordering of the interior to adapt it to a care home has result in numerous alterations and extensions to the original fabric, with a consequent loss of authenticity. Its evidential value is therefore considered to be low.

6.2.2 Historic Value

Historic values can be either associative or illustrative. The date stones on the house and archival research have suggested the identities of the owner and occupier of the house when first built. Neither are of more than local note, and the associative value is therefore considered to be low.

Illustrative value arises from the way in which a heritage asset illustrates a past way of living or technology. Suburban houses of this period survive in relatively large numbers compared to other older or more specialised types of heritage asset. Guysfield has been subject to internal reordering, such as the installation of en-suite WCs, and a number of extensions. This has resulted in an erosion of the original character and some undermining of the authenticity of the original domestic living environment. The illustrative value is therefore considered to be low.

6.2.3 Aesthetic Value

The style of architecture shows the influence of the Gothic revival on Victorian domestic villas. Features associated with this style are the irregular plans with projecting bays, steep roofs, tall chimneys and varied roofline. The pentice-type roof on the south and east fronts is an unusual feature, but its detailing does not exhibit any originality or refinement.

Externally the west (entrance) front and south front are little altered, retaining original sliding sash windows and decorative brickwork. Internally, there have been numerous changes to the interior which have detracted from its aesthetic value. Overall, the aesthetic value of the original house is considered to be medium.

6.2.4 Communal Value

As a residential care home, the communal significance is slightly more than that of a private house. However this use only dates from 1986 and is therefore relatively recent. The communal value is considered to be low to medium.

6.2.5 Group Value

The house does not form part of a group or part of the setting of other heritage assets. Its group value is therefore neutral.

6.2.6 Summary

The heritage values of the former Guys house are:

Evidential value:	Low
Associative value:	Low
Illustrative value:	Low
Aesthetic value:	Medium
Communal value:	Low to Medium
Group value:	Neutral

The overall heritage significance of Guysfield is therefore low. The modern extensions are not significant by virtue of their recent construction and severely limited architectural quality.

SECTION 7.0: HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Proposal

The proposal seeks to retain and refurbish the surviving 19th-century portion of Guysfield, and replace the 1980s/90s extensions with a new accommodation building comprising four storeys, the lowermost being sunk down below the plinth of the original house.

Previous iterations of the scheme sought the full demolition and redevelopment of the site. However, pre-application consultation and revision of the brief has enabled the retention of the original 1880s Guys building.

7.2 Impact on Heritage Assets

The proposals will retain the original 'Guys' house dating from 1884 and thereby also retain its positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Willian Conservation Area. Additional benefit is offered through the relocation of the car parking spaces on the south side of the house and repositioning of the garden closer to the building. The location of the main entrance to the new extension to the east of the 1884 building also helps reinstate some of its traditionally domestic character and enables a slight detachment from the new development that assists in being able to appreciate the older building in its own right.

The significant area of trees along the eastern edge of the site and several other planted belts/standalone trees will be retained, with additional planting and garden landscaping increasing the quality and visual amenity of the green open spaces which characterise the immediate setting of the historic village centre (and thereby the Conservation Area).

7.3 Suitability of the New Design

The extension follows the same L-shaped configuration as the existing modern blocks, but with increased massing on its eastern edge where there is existing tree cover to soften visibility. An L-shaped plan form has historic precedent on this site with the stable block originally occupying the northern corner of the triangular plot.

Whilst larger in footprint and massing than the existing modern development, the proposals reduce the amount of abutment with the historic building, which enables a better appreciation of its standalone heritage value. Design cues such as brickwork detailing and regular fenestration contextualise the new development and ensures that it harmonises with the historic building, with complimentary contrast offered by the judicious use of zinc cladding. This offers an improvement over the pastiche style of the existing 1980s and '90s extensions, which dilutes the architectural quality of the original building and disguises old from new in a manner that is not to the enhancement of the original house.

The increase in massing is mitigated to an extent by the stepped profile at its south-eastern corner, which occupies the forefront of localised views moving along Willian Road. The addition of more planting will decrease the current size of the gaps in the boundary and further reduce the degree to which the new development will be visible, in a manner that aligns with the Conservation Area's rural character.

The relocation of the hardstanding currently facilitating car parking on the south side of the building to its west side will enhance the character of the Conservation Area to a small extent as the immediate setting of Guys will be more readily appreciable from the road as a green landscape, as it was historically.

7.4 Conclusion

Overall, the low significance of Guys will be enhanced by a small, but noteworthy, degree as a result of the reduced abutment of new development on its north-eastern corner to better reveal its original footprint, the landscape improvements to the south, and general increase in the quality of the new architecture within its immediate setting. The character of the Willian Conservation Area will not be materially altered by the proposals but minor benefit is offered through the landscape scheme and replacement of modern development with architecture of a considerably higher quality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Published Sources

Historic England, Listing selection guide: Domestic 3: Suburban and Country Houses October (2011)

Wedd K., The Victorian Society Book of the Victorian House, 2007

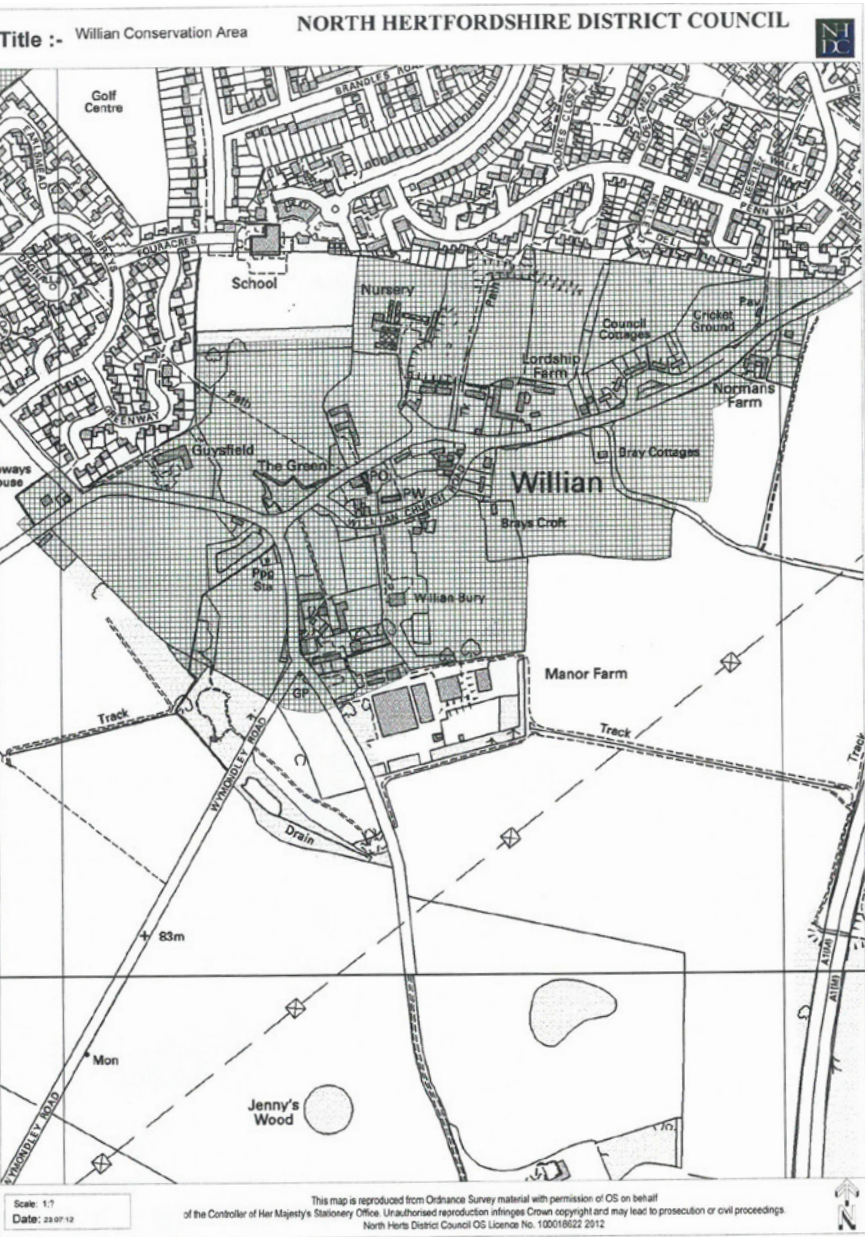
Archival Sources

<http://opendomesday.org/place/TL2230/willian/>

Kelly's Directory for Hertfordshire, 1882, 1895, 1899

William Page, 'Parishes: Willian', *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume III*, (London, 1912), pp. 177-181

APPENDIX A: WILLIAN CONSERVATION AREA



All rights in this work are reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means (including without limitation by photocopying or placing on a website) without the prior permission in writing of Purcell except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Applications for permission to reproduce any part of this work should be addressed to Purcell at info@purcelluk.com.

Undertaking any unauthorised act in relation to this work may result in a civil claim for damages and/or criminal prosecution. Any materials used in this work which are subject to third party copyright have been reproduced under licence from the copyright owner except in the case of works of unknown authorship as defined by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Any person wishing to assert rights in relation to works which have been reproduced as works of unknown authorship should contact Purcell at info@purcelluk.com.

Purcell asserts its moral rights to be identified as the author of this work under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Purcell® is the trading name of Purcell Architecture Ltd.

© Purcell 2024