1.0 Introduction

1.1 Foreword

This document has been produced by OWAL Architects in support of the application seeking pre-application advice for the redevelopment of the site, Caversham Park.

The scheme seeks to provide new development on specific areas of the site within the site boundary north of Caversham Park Stately Home. In addition, the proposal seeks to reinstate the grade II listed house back to its original historic footprint, removing the later additional annex buildings. It is proposed to convert the interior of the house into residential apartments.
The site is located in the suburb of Caversham, approximately 3.5 kilometres north of Reading town centre.

The 40 hectare site consists of the Grade II listed manor house that is in ownership by the BBC. The manor house currently accommodates the BBC monitoring centre and BBC Radio Berkshire.

The manor house and landscaped garden are situated in the northern half of the site boundary and lie on a plateau at the top of a south-east-facing slope.

The immediate surrounding areas consists of mid-late twentieth century low-rise/low density residential development known as Caversham Park Village. This was developed over the existing surrounding parkland.
2.0 Site Analysis

2.1 Existing Site Access

The site is bounded on the north, east and west via vehicular roads; Peppard Road on the western boundary and Lowfield Road on the north and east. There is currently one vehicular access into the Caversham park grounds and manor house which is situated on Peppard Road. The entrance is fronted by a gate leading onto Caversham Park Drive. Peppard Road in turn connects with the B481 approximately 185 meters north of the access junction.

The BBC Written Archives are accessed from a separate T-junction to the south of the main access at Caversham Park Drive.

A so called “ransom” strip of land under other ownership is situated along the eastern boundary line of the site on Lowfield Road preventing access onto the road from other locations.
2.0 Site Analysis

2.2 Existing Heritage Assets

1. Registered Park and Garden (RPG) - Grade II
The RPG is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 for its special historic interest, registered in 1987. The gardens consist of formal 1720s and mid 19th century terraces descending south from the garden front of the house, flanked by wooded pleasure grounds containing further remains of the formal 1720s layout.

2. Manor House (LB) - Grade II
The Caversham Park manor house building is listed under the Planning Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest registered in December 1978.

3. Temple (LB) - Grade II
The Caversham Park temple building is listed under the Planning Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest registered in December 1978.


4. Inner Park Walls (LB) - Grade II
The Caversham Park inner park walls is listed under the Planning Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest registered in December 1978.

Mid 19th century or possibly retained from the 18th century. Designed by Capability Brown.
The existing buildings on the site comprise the Grade II Listed stately home, a small collection of post-war outbuildings that have been added around the western wings of the main house; buildings which appear to include the former gatekeeper and staff houses (likely to be ‘curtilage listed’) beside the historic gatehouse, the BBC’s Written Archives (to the west) and various BBC satellite dish installations which are scattered around parts of the eastern end of the site.

The three-storey ashlar house was built in 1858 by architect Horace Jones who was inspired by Italian baroque palaces. The house was constructed in a Neo-Georgian style, illustrating the continued trend for Classical design during the mid-19th century and of the houses located at Caversham Park.

In major building works in the 1980s, the BBC Architectural & Civil Engineering Department restored the old interior, removed utilitarian brick buildings put up alongside the east side of the mansion during the war, converted the existing orangery for use as a canteen and editorial offices, and built a large new two storey west wing housing the listening room. This included a new glazed atrium facing the original stable block. A further major building project in 2007–08 saw the west wing converted to house all of Monitoring’s operational staff.
2.0 Site Analysis

2.4 Existing Green Space

The site consists of a substantial amount of green open space amongst dense tree cover which forms a separation barrier between the north and southern section of the site. The majority of the site consists of the Registered Park and Garden (RPG).

The northern section of the site sits upon a plateau that is now largely given over to playing fields with trees planted around the northern perimeter. A large carpark takes up a significant proportion of land directly in front of the house that is not being occupied to its full capacity.

The formal garden and pleasure ground designed by Capability Brown in the early 18th century, sit north of the dense tree line and beyond this the large open meadow. Pockets of green space are hidden out of view from the houses behind the dense tree cover.
To the immediate south, the site is bounded by Reading Cemetery and Crematorium which contribute to the green landscape settings widely visible from various viewing points south of the site, in Reading and along the River Thames.

This diagram demonstrates the aspect ratio of the views between the northern perspective of the house and the southern perspective. Due to the topography of the land we can see that the southern view extends a much larger range than that of the northern part of the site.

Areas highlighted in blue show pockets of space that are out of view from the manor house.
Analysis of the site has identified key areas that are potentially viable for development with the least impact on the existing environment, this is in terms of ecology, transport and heritage.

Areas that are out of view from the house will cause minimal impact on the setting of the house and the views from within the house. Caversham Park Drive is the only existing vehicular access route to the manor house providing the formal approach into the site.

The BBC Written Archives are a prominent and important part of the site and are to remain as existing and are outside of the proposed development area.

The existing farmers gate along Peppard Road provides a potential entrance into the site on the land directly north of the BBC Written Archives.

Lowfield Road forms a strong east and west axis to the northern most point of the site that has been mirrored within the boundary via pedestrianised tracks behind the boundary line.
The analysis shows that the northern half of the site has most potential for development. A proposed roadway runs parallel to Lowfield Road away from the boundary line to provide a green buffer around the boundary, whilst also being routed to respect the positions of the existing trees by meandering between them.

The existing open park is landscaped to the north of the house allowing uninterrupted views of green space from the existing property, maintaining the playing fields, pavilion and parking.

The existing tree cover has guided the specific housing locations, with an informed understanding of tree statuses.

The pockets of development are designed to fit in between and amongst the existing trees as part of the overall landscape strategy.

The existing tree lined formal approach to the Manor House is retained as this forms an important arboricultural feature. The traditional orchard also remains untouched.

The pocket of land north of the BBC Written Archives is outside of the Registered Park and Garden and has a potential entrance through the existing farmers gate, with sensitive treatment of the existing boundary hedgerow along Peppard Road.
The key points:

- Density and scale of development in keeping with the surrounding residential context;
- Arboricultural constraints understood and considered as a result of a full tree survey, arboricultural impact assessment, and management plan;
- Proposed housing development positioned to fit in amongst the existing trees and landscaped features;
- The playing fields and facilities retained;
- Existing driveway approach retained with no development proposed along it;
- Proposed development pockets brought inwards away from the boundary line to retain green buffer to Lowfield Road;
- Scale and density is respectful to the setting of the Listed Building and the context of the Registered Park and Garden.
The proposal consists of different character zones, the proposed quantum and density of housing for each character zone is relative to its context.

4.0 Proposed Scheme

4.2 Proposed Site Plan

- Gateway - 6 Units
- Caversham Drive - 21 Units
- Park Mews - 20 Units
- Woodland Park Road - 4 Units
- Archive Court - 23 Units
- Caversham Park House - 48 Units
- Retirement Apartments - 70 Units
5.0 Character Zones

5.1 Gate House

- Existing lodge and ancillary school buildings converted to residential accommodation - consistent with their architectural character, historic function and most recent use.

- No new development proposed along the existing main entrance.

- Removal of kiosk and ancillary features to enhance significance of the RPG and setting of these structures.
5.2 Caversham Drive

- Houses are proposed away from the site boundary to retain existing green buffer along boundary with Lowfield Road.
- Proposed Caversham Park Drive road to meander between existing trees.
- Proposed housing informally arranged within the landscape setting, retaining existing trees and landscape features whenever possible.
5.3 North Park

- A larger open space is created at the hinge point of the site allowing landscape vista from the north side of the manor house.
- Retained sports fields.
- Access via Caversham Park Drive.
- Large areas of green space for public use.
- Park marks change in density through the overall site.
5.0 Character Zones

5.4 Park Mews

- Houses are proposed away from the site boundary to retain existing green buffer along boundary with Lowfield Road.
- Proposed Park Mews road to meander between existing trees.
- Proposed housing informally arranged within the landscape setting, retaining existing trees and landscape features wherever possible.
5.0 Character Zones

5.5 Woodland Park Road

- Existing opening within tree line retained for access.
- Houses arranged in relation to existing trees.
- Plot layouts designed in accordance to the existing tree line boundary to maintain the existing site ecology.
- South facing houses with large gardens to the rear and proposed tree line boundary to strengthen historic axis.
5.0 Character Zones

5.6 Caversham Park Manor House

- Principle of conversion of the main listed building is acceptable in heritage terms.
- Existing mid-late 20th century ancillary structures removed to reveal the original historic form and fabric of the manor house.
- Existing house under office use restored and rationalised to return it to its former residential grandeur.
- Removal of later partitions to better reveal historic plan and retain areas considered to be most significant.
- Residential units designed around the hierarchy of the historic structure.
- Access via Caversham Park Drive through private gated entrance.
5.0 Character Zones

5.7 Retirement Apartments

- Proposed new development - Care Home Facility - to rationalise and consolidate the existing mid-late 20th Century auxiliary structures to the west of the principal listed building, which have an adverse impact on the significance of the heritage assets and therefore are proposed to be demolished.

- Building positioned to create greater degree of separation from main listed building.

- Built form set away from the listed inner park walls. Set into dense tree cover to reduce impact when approaching main listed building along the sweeping driveway.

- Centred around a light filled courtyard with views to the south over the RPG.
5.0 Character Zones

5.8 Archive Court

- Independent entrance from Peppard Road via existing farmers gate entrance.

- Situated outside of the RPG boundary, Archive court accommodates a higher density development providing two storey mews and terrace houses.

- Houses located in relation to existing trees and RPGs of Veteran Trees.

- Development utilises the existing open site.
6.2 Overall Site Perspective
### Summary

#### 6.3 Unit Area Schedule

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**Areas**
- **AFFORDABLE**
- **PRIVATE**
6.4 Executive Summary

It has been established that there are no heritage impediments to the principle of a sensitive conversion of the principal listed building to facilitate a form of residential use.

As part of any such conversion, the proposals have the opportunity to address harmful and/or less appropriate interventions arising from its more recent phases of use. The proposals also allow the consolidation of existing ancillary structures of no heritage interest to provide an improved relationship to the principal listed building and inner park walls and reduce their impact on the significance of the RPG.

Development located outside of the boundaries of the RPG will respond to the assets' varied suburban and domestic context, and preserve the particular significance of the heritage assets.

The number and layout of the units within this section of the site responds respectively to the surrounding context, and to minimise its impact in any views from the listed building.

The proposed residential development within the grounds of the RPG is thought to cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the principal listed building, and offer some public benefits that may outweigh the harm.