THE HUNT KENNELS,

CHITTOE, NEAR BROMHAM

Heritage Impact Assessment



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Carefully managing change

in the historic environment

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Frontpiece : Photo 1 – The main block of the hunt kennels

1. Introduction

1.1 I have been commissioned by The Avon Valley Hunt and their agents Dolman Building Surveyors to provide a heritage assessment intended to accompany an application for planning permission concerning the retention of a building at the hunt kennels, Chittoe, Near Bromham SN15 2PS. The site lies close to Spye Park which is a registered park or garden and this report is largely aimed at identifying any impact the building has upon its heritage significance.

1.2 National planning policy requires an applicant to describe the significance of heritage assets that may be affected by new development, and an appropriate level of specialist expertise is expected to be applied to the decision-making process. The assessment is informed by guidance within *The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning* (GPA3 Second Edition) published by Historic England.

1.3 I am a retired chartered town planner with over 40 years experience of appraising development proposals in the historic environment. I am also a current member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation, a past member of the Central Council, and Chairman of the South West Branch. In 2021 I joined the Disciplinary Panel of the Institute.

1.4 The report is largely based upon research, and an inspection of the site undertaken on the 3rd July 2023.

2. Background Context

2.1 Chittoe has been described as a very shrunken village. Long ago it was a detached tithing of Bishops Cannings with its own mill and a chapel of ease. For a brief time from 1883 Chittoe was recognized as an independent civil parish but in 1934 it was merged into Bromham [i].

2.2 In 1980 the church at Chittoe was declared redundant, and subsequently the church and vicarage were converted to private residences.

2.3 An outcrop of Corallian geology to the north of Chittoe proved to be an attractive location for the aristocracy to establish country estates. Bowood lies about 2 miles to the north of Chittoe, Bowden Park, and Bowden Hill House of slightly lower standing, are found to the west, and Spye Park immediately to the north.

2.4 The house at Spye Park was built soon after the destruction in 1645 of Bromham House during the Civil War. Sir Edward Baynton abandoned the site of his burned out house and built a new property in Spye Park by 1654 using building materials partly salvaged from the ruins of the old house although it is just possible that an existing hunting lodge was adapted to become the stables for Spye Park House. Sir Edward Baynton, who had married Stuarta the daughter of Sir Thomas Thynne of Longleat, became the first of many generations to reside there [ii].

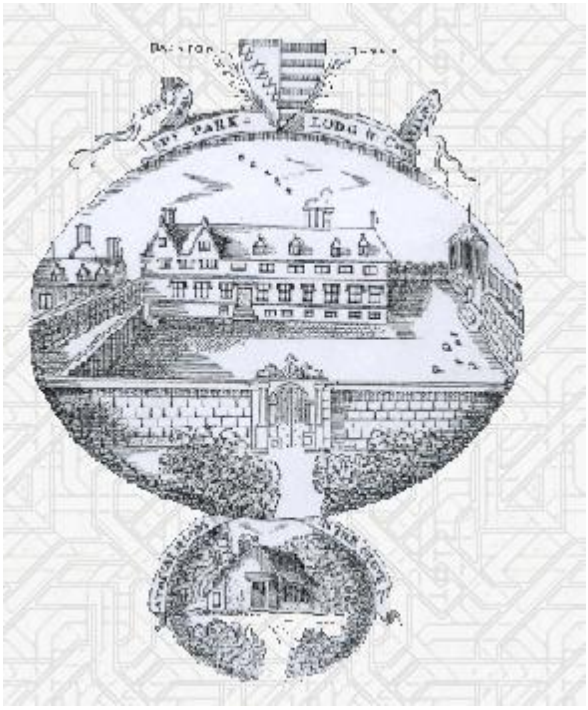

Fig 1. Sketch of Spye Park House in 1684 (Bayntun History: Spye Park House). The stables to the left have chimneys and may have been the original Lodge

2.5 A grand gatehouse at the top of Bowden Hill was built around the same time. It seems that Baynton had the structure moved from its original location at Bromham House although it has been conjectured before then it came from the Cistercian Stanley Abbey near Chippenham [iii]. The gatehouse commands the principal entrance to Spye Park from the Lacock Road.

2.6 The Spye Park estate eventually passed into the connected Bayntun Rolt family and later to the Bayntun Starky's. During the Bayntun Rolt's time dramatic changes were made to the house with a large portico added in 1749. In 1864 a financial crisis brought about the sale of the estate to an army officer, Major J.W.G. Spicer. Spicer immediately set about replacing the old house with a red brick building. It was said to be considered an eyesore by Spicer's more urbane neighbours [iii]. However, the new

house was almost immediately destroyed by fire before it was rebuilt again, this time in a mock-Tudor style.



Fig 2. A drawing of the property soon after the alterations of 1749 (Bayntun History: Spye Park House)



Photo 2. Image of Spicer's second house c 1900

2.7 Spicer had a considerable impact on Chittoe. He rebuilt the farmhouses, moved and built cottages and also provided a school. It is reported that some families were moved to outlying hamlets at Chittoe Heath, Westbrook and Sandridge. A walled kitchen garden was also built near the lane leading to Chittoe Heath.



Fig 3. Map of c1880 with the site of the future subject building arrowed

2.8 Unfortunately Spicer's second house was also destroyed by fire in 1974. Today there is little trace of the great Spye Park mansions that once existed. The family moved into the former stable block and converted it into a comfortable dwelling, now taking the name of Spye Park House.



Photo 3. The current Spye Park House from the cricket ground

2.9 The Spicers eventually sold the estate to the Enthoven family of South Africa. In 2005 the new owner was considering the construction of a new Palladian mansion on the site of the original houses but the plan has not been brought to fruition.

3 Development of the Spye Park Parkland

3.1 The centre of the park occupies a high position looking out over the Avon Vale, with the ground falling steeply to the south-west. A small valley crosses the park from the north-west to the south-east.

3.2 Spye Park consists of a late-18th century landscape park and pleasure grounds with the remains of early-18th century work by Stephen Switzer. Further landscaping dates from the late-19th century, when a cricket ground was added on the plateau [iv].

3.3 Switzer was an English garden designer. He hailed from humble beginnings in a Hampshire farming family but is often credited as an early exponent of the English landscape garden. Switzer's schemes for the more distant parts of sites from the house seem to have firmly remained woodland rather than garden. At the time of Switzer's work at Spye Park was in the ownership of the Bayntun Rolt family.

3.4 The value of the parkland at Spye Park was recognized in 2002 when it became a nationally registered park or garden at Grade II. It is described in accompanying narrative thus

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Spye Park, c 315ha (as here registered), is located c 6km south-east of Chippenham in the county of Wiltshire. The park is set in an area of farmland and other designed landscapes, with Bowden Park immediately to the north-west, Bowood (qv) c 2km to the north-east, and Lacock Abbey (qv) c 3km to the north-west. The park is bounded by the Lacock road and the village of Bowden Hill to the north-west, the Lacock road along the north side, by open farmland to the south-west and south-east, by Devizes Road and the village of Sandy Lane to the north-east, and by Clink Lane and the village of Chittoe to the south. The centre of the park occupies a high position looking out over the Avon Vale, with the ground falling steeply to the south-west. A small valley crosses the park from the north-west to the south-east. There are good views from the house site, the gardens, and from the higher ground in the park, to the south-west. The boundaries are marked by a mixture of fences and walls.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Three drives lead through the park to the site of the house, one from the north-west, one from the north-east, and the third from the south. The main drive is from the Lacock road and enters the north-west edge of the park through an early C16 Tudor gatehouse, Spye Arch (listed grade II*), which is situated c 1km north-west of the site of the house. It is built of ashlar with a stone slate roof and is of two storeys with a battlemented parapet. There are C18 gothick ogee-

headed niches to either side of the arch, and an oriel window on the first floor. The apron panels bear the arms of Henry VIII. The gatehouse was built for Bromham House and was moved to Spye Park in the late C18, when it was remodelled slightly.

A drive leads through the arch and then runs east for 200m, lined by an avenue of late C18 or early C19 limes and horse chestnuts, with additional mature sycamore. A side drive from the north-west joins the main drive at the end of the avenue, giving access to Spye Arch House and some estate cottages. The drive then curves for 300m through Powney's Wood, where it is lined by mature laurels, to the C19 red-brick Middle Lodge. The drive then enters the western park and runs south-east for c 400m, flanked by ancient oak trees to the south, and then divides into three. The southern drive leads south for c 200m to the turning circle in front of the platform and surviving portico of the former house. The middle drive leads first south-east, then south-west to Spye Park House (the former stables), the Dairy Farm, and finally south (c 900m in total) to a lodge (c 450m south of the former house site) and the kennels at the Chittoe entrance. The northernmost of the three branches of the drive leads east for c 400m, alongside the upper pond, and then curves north-east across the northern park for c 800m to White Lodge (c 1.1km north-east of the former house site, now a stables and equestrian centre) on the Lacock road.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Spye Park was built in 1863-8 by William Burn for J W G Spicer. It was demolished in the 1990s after a fire. All that remains of the house is the entrance porch and the house platform, from which there are excellent views to the south-west. Pevsner (Cherry and Pevsner 1975) described the house as 'symmetrical gabled Tudor'. It had a low extension on the north-west end of the garden front and a circular tower to the right which were both added in 1871.

Spye Park House (listed grade II) stands c 250m to the south-south-west of the site of Spye Park. It was the former stables and coach house to Spye Park and is now the main residence. The original range, in ashlar with a stone slate roof, was built in the mid C17 for the Bayntun family. There are C19 additions including a stable range, probably built for J W G Spicer after 1864.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The site of the former house lies between two large lawns. That to the north-east is largely open, giving views to the north and north-east over the valley of a stream, framed by scattered C18 oaks. Towards the southern end of this lawn, c 100m east of the former house site, is the Game Larder (listed grade II), built c 1870 in red brick with ashlar dressings. It has a steep, octagonal roof with bellcast eaves and an octagonal lantern, and a projecting gabled porch on the west side.

To the south-west of the house site is an extensive lawn lined by trees within the pleasure grounds, which frame the views. The trees include C18 oaks, ash, and horse chestnuts, supplemented by C19 and C20 ornamentals, and with an understorey of yew, hazel, and holly. At the north-east end of this lawn are the footings of the former house, raised on a platform and faced in stone (and formerly with balustrading which has been relocated to the north-east of Spye Park House). Below the plinth is a long grass terrace, formerly reached by a flight of semicircular steps (now gone) at the north-west end. At the south-east end of the terrace there is a stone loggia or gazebo, with glazed sides and an open front with four pillars. To the north-east of the loggia is a partly walled flower garden, with a service area and garages beyond. Between the flower garden and the south terrace is a raised circular area planted with C18 limes. A narrow canal is situated on the lawn, c 15m to the south-west of the terraces, with a covered seat at the north-west end. The planting in the pleasure grounds to the north-west of the lawn includes C19 pines, cypresses, and blue cedar, with some older trees and areas of shrubs. A large,

roughly circular feature, possibly an early C20 croquet lawn, lies c 100m to the west-south-west of the house site. It consists of an area of grass surrounded by a slightly raised mound.

The south-west end of the lawn terminates at a steep slope which acts as a ha-ha. It was designed to be open but now has scrubby trees growing on it. It was referred to by Switzer as the 'precipice', and on it have been found remains of water features, possibly those by Switzer (Trafford-Roberts 2001).

PARK There are three areas of park, located to the north, west, and east of the site of the former house. The planting largely dates from the late C18, with some ancient oaks. A stream runs from north-west to south-east through the park, dividing the north park from the western and eastern areas. There are two ponds along the course of the stream, the upper pond immediately north of the drive to White Lodge, and the lower pond, c 600m east-south-east of the former house. The ponds, along with several others along the stream, are shown on the OS map of 1886. The northern part of the west park, lying to the south of the main drive, is in pasture but the land running from the west side of the pleasure grounds down to Clink Lane is now partly in arable (2002). In the north park, which is now in arable, there is a clump of C19 Scots pine on the rising ground to the west of the drive. The small eastern park is mainly pasture, with a cricket pitch and pavilion c 200m to the south of the site of the former house.

There are two large areas of woodland in the park, Powney¿s Wood to the north-west, and Pond Moor to the south-east, both of which are shown on Andrews and Dury's map of Wiltshire (1773) and the OS map of 1886. These are predominantly oak and ash, with understorey planting of laurel, yew, and holly. Woodland now (2002) extends north from Pond Moor up to White Lodge, occupying an extensive area of former parkland.

The semicircular eastern tip of the park, beyond the woodland, is now (2002) managed as farmland belonging to Home Farm, which is situated c 150m south of the Lacock road. The area is bounded by a woodland belt around the curving north-east and east side, and has an early C20 irregularly shaped pond with an island, Leech Pond, located just south of the centre and surrounded by woodland.

KITCHEN GARDEN An extensive walled garden is situated c 500m south-east of the former house site. The red-brick walls and the Garden Lodge (for which the walled garden is now a private domestic garden) were built in 1876.

3.5 The 20th century witnessed a partial fragmentation of the estate particularly in the area around Chittoe. Apart from the conversion of the stable block into the principal house, other conversions took place including new dwellings at the kitchen garden. A couple of new properties have been built and most recently a new cricket pavilion has been constructed. Also, as noted below, the kennels have been sold away to the Avon Valley Hunt. Management of the main part of the parkland seems to be enjoying a renaissance under the stewardship of the current owner but there has been some loss of historic integrity near the Chittoe access point.

4 Spye Park and the Avon Valley Hunt

4.1 Historically this part of Wiltshire was hunted by the Beaufort Hunt. However, in the 1880s a stretch in the centre of the county was 'lent' to John Spicer of Spye Park. Spicer had his own pack of hounds kennelled at Spye Park, and he undertook to hunt the 'country' twice a week [v]. The main kennel block is not shown on the 1880 OS map but appears to have been constructed soon thereafter.

4.2 In 1912 the Duke of Beaufort finally gave up the 'country' and Lieut.-Colonel J. S. H. Fullerton became the first master of the newly formed Avon Vale Hunt. New stables were built at a cost of £750 subscribed by residents in the 'country' [v]. These buildings were possibly located at Semington.

4.3 In 1941 the hunt was re-connected with Spye Park when the kennels were reinstated there and Captain F. Spicer became the master. He remained in post until 1951.

4.4 The kennels compound at Chittoe is located on the edge of the parkland near the secondary south entrance lane. The site is tucked away on the far side of Scutt's Copse, in a small coombe about 25m lower than the site of the Spye Park mansions.

4.5 The compound consists of a set of buildings of different ages and varying architectural character. The late Victorian block, built of Caen brickwork, survives and includes a flat at first floor level. The buildings are arranged informally with low timber buildings and taller steel framed structures. There is also a 'horse walker' with a circular footprint, and access through the site to Francome House which also belongs to the Hunt. The kennel compound proper currently has a low level of usage.



Photo 4. The kennels compound with the main block to the right and the subject building mainly obscured in the background

5 The significance of relevant heritage assets

5.1 The Spye Park estate contains four listed structures – the converted stables now known as Spye Park House, a freestanding game larder, Spye Arch Lodge, and Powney's Cottages. All are distant from the area of the kennels and there is no visual connection with the site under consideration. There are no other designated assets such as World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Battlefields or Conservation Areas to be considered. The registered park or garden is thus the only designated asset relevant to the subject building.

5.2 Although registration is a statutory designation, there are no specific controls for registered parks and gardens unlike listed buildings or scheduled monuments. The general approach of Historic England towards registered parks is to increase awareness of their significance, and to encourage appropriate long-term management. Paragraph 200 of the National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, substantial harm to or loss of:

- any designated heritage asset of the highest significance, which includes, registered battlefields and Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, should be 'wholly exceptional'
- any Grade II registered park or garden should be 'exceptional'

5.3 At a more local level the Wiltshire Core Policy contains relevant policies: CP51 aims to ensure the character of landscapes is not harmed, and CP58 that the historic environment is conserved.

5.4 For development likely to affect any park or garden on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England under the provisions of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 Local planning authorities are required to consult The Gardens Trust.

5.5 Chittoe is relatively remote as vehicular traffic accesses via a narrow cul-de-sac lane. There are no rights of way for the general public through the estate although visiting cricketers have had access for matches played since 1880s.

5.6 The importance of Spye Park is weakened by the absence of a purpose-designed mansion house at its heart. Nevertheless, taken as a whole Spye Park, as a Grade II

registered park or garden, should be considered as having medium heritage significance.

5.7 The area of the kennels however lies on the fringe of the estate near one of the secondary access points to the estate. Land and buildings in the vicinity have been sold away and are subject to separate maintenance regimes. The kennel compound has been in separate ownership to the estate since at least 1941.

5.8 The kennels lie well beyond the historic domestic garden, and pleasure grounds belonging to the destroyed mansions. They are to the south of the east area of the park which mainly consists of mixed woodland with heather and bracken. The kennels in fact lie beyond a major tree planting, known as Scutt's Copse, and in a small valley, that separates the parkland from the Chittoe hamlet. The kennels and the subject building thus lie well outside the vista to the south west originally provided for the Spye Park mansions.



Photo 5. Scutts Copse looking from the area of the cricket nets which are on the higher plateau. The dotted red line is at estimate of the location of the northern gable to the subject building beyond the woodland

5.9 Chittoe itself has been recently described as "some scattered C19 estate cottages" that compares unfavourably with Bowood's picturesque village found at Sandy Lane

[vi]. The importance of the area of the kennels therefore lies low down on the theoretical continuum of heritage significance.

5.10 Parts of the Spye Park estate have also been noted as a Biological SSSI. The subject site however is not included within the notified area, and as this report is not intended to comment on matters of nature conservation they are not discussed further here.

6. The subject building and its impact on the registered park or garden

6.1 The subject building is a modern steel framed general agricultural building. It is clad in 'forest' coloured sheeting, although roller shutter doors are of natural steel colour. Its design echoes the form of a couple of pre-existing structures within the compound.





Photo 6 (left) The subject building beyond the brick built kennels, and Photo 7 Two of the pre-existing buildings within the kennels compound.



Photo 8 shows the front of the subject building with Scutt's Copse behind

6.2 The building is not visible from the higher plateau occupied by the cricket ground and the more distant site of the lost mansions, or from the subsidiary access drive from Chittoe. This is largely because of its location at a lower level than the parkland area, and the existence of Scutt's Copse and other mature tree cover. It is also tucked away behind other buildings within the kennels compound.

6.3 The site of the building was previously used as a hardstanding for parked vehicles and the erection of the building did not result in the loss of any trees or other landscape features. The visual impact of the building on the registered park is minimal and there has been no loss to its overall significance.

6.4 The subject building is therefore in broad conformity with the national and local policies relating to registered parks or gardens.

7. Conclusion

7.1 In wrapping up, the parkland at Spye Park is a designated heritage asset, with medium heritage significance. The subject building lies within a compound belonging to the long established Avon Valley Hunt. The compound is accessed from a subsidiary access to the park and is well screened by Scutt's Copse, other tree cover, and the landform. The new building is located deep within the compound and is not visually prominent. Wiltshire Council, as local planning authority, has not required the building to be removed but an application to regularise the situation has been invited. In considering the application, it should be noted that the significance of the designated heritage asset has not been harmed by the construction of the subject building.

8 References and documents consulted

8.1 The following outlines the framework of research and documents consulted considered in the preparation of this assessment**:**

i) Victoria County History of Wiltshire Vol. 7, 1953
ii) https://www.bayntunfamilyhistory.com/
iii) Wikipedia.com
iv) Wikimapia.com
v) Victoria County History of Wiltshire Vol. 4, 1959
vi) The Buildings of England Wiltshire, Orbach, Pevsner & Cherry, 2021
vii) National Heritage List – web site

viii) The National Planning Policy Framework (revision 2020) Section 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' is of special relevance.

ix) Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) Published December 2017

Photo 9. The gatehouse to Spye Park on the Lacock-Sandy Lane road, over one mile away from the subject building 'as the crow flies'

