

Consideration of Mr Sheehan's representation in response to the draft Conservation Area Appraisal, concerning his garden to the front of Epcombs.

J.Bosworth February 2014.

Summary of representation. Mr Sheehan considers references to the immediate gardens at Epcombs between the house and the river as forming part of a Locally Important Historic Park and Garden, to be incorrect.

The entry for Epcombs in EHDC Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) reads as follows:

Epcombes, Hertingfordbury

Description: Formal Gardens between the house and the river appear on the Dury & Andrews map of 1766, together with a very large enclosure to the east of the house but it is not clear whether this is a walled garden or canal or some other feature. (If canal it could be similar to that recently discovered at Broadfields). The 1st edition OS also shows a drive from the lodge on the Hertford Road to the house. The 2nd edition OS shows this carriage drive from the lodge on the Hertford road with a sweep to the western entrance and a service road branching off the main drive to the east of the house. A site visit showed interesting 'bumps' in the area of the D&A formal gardens which could be the remains of the paths/other features.

Epcombs is described as being a Locally Important Historic Park and Garden and its inclusion in the SPG document forms part of a list compiled through work undertaken by the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust. A Locally Important Park or Garden is one considered by the District Council to be of sufficient quality to warrant appropriate preservation and protection when considering development proposals under Policy BH16.

Note: the description included in the document refers to two elements, firstly to the gardens between the house and the river and secondly to a large enclosure to the east of Epcombs. It is the former with which the owner takes issue.

Consideration. Hertfordshire Gardens Trust (HGT) has been contacted and they confirm it is their view that the immediate gardens to Epcombs between the house and the river and the garden area to the south of the river form part of the description set out above. A map identifying this area of land was sent to them and HGT confirmed in their view the area formed part of the above description (see Appendix 1).

In the approximate area marked A on the Appendix plan, HGT interpret as being remains of a formal garden layout based on aerial photographs taken in 1968 held by HCC (ref HCC UID 8420-8423).

In the approximate area of B is a garden ornament believed to be a Venetian well head with metal overthrow. At C, what appear to be steps on the bank of the river; at D, a high brick wall and at E a modern well designed bridge. The latter location is the position of a Listed Building being Garden Gates to Epcombs at Bridge over Mimram - List entry no 1268857 described as: *Wrought-iron gates in substantial oak posts with cut ogee tops c1901, part of substantial remodelling of house and grounds... gates in C18 style, influenced by Adam, with scrollwork, leaves and drops.* This structure no longer exists at location but the owner advised the gates may still be in store elsewhere on site.

Epcombs itself is a 17th century small country house much altered and remodelled with a subsidiary wall feature with niches for sculptures (the owner advised the latter had been rebuilt). A Historic note following the Listed Building description (List Entry Number 1268856, (1973 and amended 1996) reads *Epcombs originated as a pre-Conquest farm, but the later history of the estate is uncertain. The Gardens extend on both sides of the River Mimram. The house was reputedly the model for 'Longbourn' the home of the Bennetts in Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice'.*



Picture 1- Epcombs viewed from south side of river. The picture shows what is interpreted as being a Venetian well head. Importing and or copying these and their use as garden ornaments was popular in the late 19th/ early 20th century. The date of this one and its arrival on site are not known but it would be entirely consistent with the Listed Building description regarding the remodelling of the grounds.

Conclusion: The area to the front of this small country house with long historical associations now consists of an extensive grassed area divided by

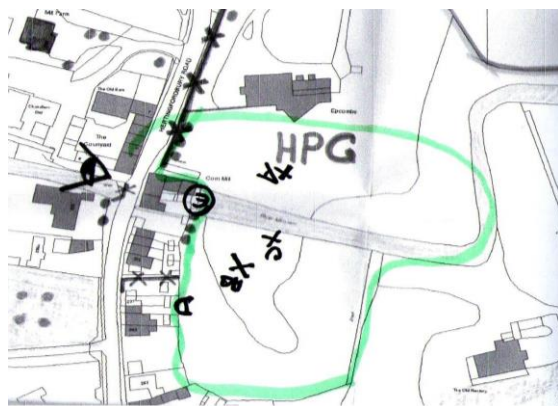
the River Mimram. The space sets off the main building and is enclosed by walls and vegetation. References/ footnotes in both Listed Building descriptions relate briefly to the garden, one specifically to its remodelling circa 1901. 19th century mapping shows a path leading from the house to the river which is crossed by a footbridge. Another footbridge appears on later mapping from 1920 and this is the location of the wrought iron gates described by Listed Building entry 1268857, being described by that document as being part of substantial modelling of the gardens. There is evidence of formal layout and remains of other structures whose dating and purpose is uncertain. Whilst the date of the Venetian well head is not known, its possible arrival on site in the early 20th century south of the river would be consistent with Listed Building description reference to the remodelling of the grounds at that time. Importantly HGT have confirmed it is their view that the area to the south of the house is properly included as part of a Locally Important Garden.

Appendix 1.

John Bosworth jbbosworth@googlemail.com 16 Feb (2 days ago)

to Kate

Dear Kate Harwood I visited Epcoms yesterday and enclose a map showing the broad area of gardens to the south of the house and both sides of the river Mimram. Can you please confirm that the area edged green forms part of the description of a locally important historic park and garden Epcomes (sic) as identified in EHDC's Supplementary Planning document.



Kate Harwood 16 Feb (2 days ago)

to me

Dear John

The green area is roughly correct as the historic garden area.....