



## Licensing Sub-Committee

**Date:** Tuesday, 7 September 2021  
**Time:** 10.00 am  
**Venue:** A link to the meeting can be found on the front page of the agenda.

**Membership: (Quorum 3 )**

Councillors Jon Andrews, Les Fry and Emma Parker

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**Chief Executive:** Matt Prosser, County Hall , Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

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# **A G E N D A**

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**7      SUPPLEMENT**

**3 - 8**



Mr Daniel Hardy  
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Our ref:  
Your ref:  
[REDACTED]

10 September 2018

Dear Mr Hardy

**Re: Parnham House, Beaminster, Dorset**

You have requested guidance from Historic England for prospective purchasers of Parnham House regarding its restoration/reinstatement and reuse. Please see our position statement below, which we are happy to be circulated to prospective purchasers. It has also been discussed with the Conservation Officer of West Dorset Council, who is in agreement with its overall principles.

I would stress though, that this is outline guidance only, which cannot deal with every potential scenario that might arise in relation to Parnham. We are happy, therefore, to provide more detailed advice in response to specific proposals that might be made by individuals who have a serious interest in the property. We would do so through our formal pre-application enquiry process, details of which are available on Historic England's web-site, or through enquiry to myself at the email address at the foot of this letter. As the Inspector for West Dorset I am happy to respond to enquiries about Parnham.

**HE Position Statement regarding the restoration of Parnham House**

Parnham House is a listed building which falls into the highest category of listing – grade one. This indicates it is a building of outstanding architectural/historical importance which merits the highest level of protection.

In a case of disaster which causes severe damage to a listed building, it is generally expected that the building should be accurately reinstated to its form prior to the disaster. That applies unless it proves to be damaged beyond repair or other exceptional circumstances pertain which mean that its repair is not feasible. Historic England recommends that listed buildings are insured on the basis of like-for-like restoration to ensure that funds are available for this level of reinstatement.

Cases can occasionally occur where a departure from that approach is agreed and full reinstatement is not required. Examples are where extreme damage has occurred to a part of the building which is of comparatively low significance, or where the historic elements that have been destroyed (such as ancient wall paintings) are so unique that they cannot reasonably be replicated. Sometimes the precise form of decorative elements that have been destroyed cannot be determined, so a degree of interpretation is needed in their reinstatement.





In some buildings, a disastrous fire can reveal unexpected aspects of its construction, which can either add to, or detract from, its perceived historic value, and may inform its reconstruction. Thorough recording and interpretation of a building's surviving fabric, by recognised historic building specialists, is a prerequisite for informing discussions and decisions regarding its restoration.

The employment of consultants with the requisite experience of conserving buildings of a similar significance is essential, not only for achieving the best practical outcome but also for conducting negotiations most effectively with the local planning authority and Historic England.

Although the loss of historic fabric and features inevitably reduces a building's historic value, their reconstruction using traditional methods and materials is important to maintain authenticity and architectural value, even where they will be hidden from view by other finishes. Sometimes, however, structural engineering requirements can justify the use of modern materials such as steelwork, where its use can be concealed and will permit the greater retention of historic fabric in the building. Overall, we would advise continuity in the use of historic construction materials, as informed by analysis of the surviving fabric, unless a convincing justification can be made to do otherwise.

In respect of Parnham, whilst the damage to its interior has been very severe, the survival of the principal internal masonry walls means that it retains the distinction between its main ranges. Consequently, we believe that the ground floor plan of its principal rooms, at least, largely survives. The historic plan of the building is well known, and illustrated in the West Dorset volume of the inventory of the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments for England. Due to the significance of the building's plan form and evolution, we would expect that layout - within the areas of highest significance - to be respected in any reinstatement of the dwelling. Where later lightweight partitions have been lost there may be some scope for varying that approach in discussion with a new purchaser. However, the case for alteration is likely to be weak where such partitions are known to have been in the position of an earlier division – such as that to the screens passage.

Parnham is a house which had an eclectic interior that illustrated several different phases of its history as well as the varying tastes of its previous owners. We are happy to enter into constructive discussions with an owner who has particular interior design preferences which are compatible with a high quality reinstatement of the house and fully reflect its architectural status. Incorporating new elements into the house, should, however, have a clear design rationale. It should not mislead future generations as to their provenance, nor be at the expense of the repair of historic fabric, or the restoration of important features (where evidence exists to do so).

Externally, whilst the roof has been completely lost over much of the house and some damage has occurred to its walls, the envelope of the building has survived to a remarkable degree and it is hard to see how an argument could be made not to reinstate it to its picturesque form immediately prior to the fire. The element which has suffered the greatest damage is the Nash dining room range on the west side of





the house. As this range had been subjected to considerable change since its design by John Nash, and its condition is particularly poor, it might offer some opportunity for a reinterpretation in its reconstruction.

The external appearance of Parnham has changed more in the last 400 years than might seem immediately apparent (see the eighteenth century engraving of the house in the Dorset Pevsner volume). However, successive owners have been careful to maintain its picturesque form and overall 'Tudoresque' design, and it would generally be advocated that new owners should respect that approach in new work.

To date, no salvage exercise has been undertaken to ascertain what, if any, damaged historic elements are retrievable from the building, to either be salvaged for its restoration or to inform its reinstatement. This will be one of the first discussions we wish to have with a new owner once short-term protection has been provided to the building, to ascertain what is feasible in terms of the salvage of materials.

Regarding proposals for alternative uses for Parnham House, we would assess those in the way we would make that assessment for any grade I listed country house – according to the potential impact and the justification put forward. The original use is generally the preferred one unless it places unacceptable pressure on a historic building. However, other uses that maintain its significance will always be considered, subject to meeting other planning criteria on which the local authority can advise, along with other planning matters.

In relation to Parnham, important factors to conserve are its plan form, its surviving historic features, its picturesque setting and its architectural status. Consequently, any subdivision of the building, or fragmentation of the property's ownership, is unlikely to be acceptable. However, functions that maintain it in single use and preserve its relationship with its designed grounds and landscape, such as corporate headquarters or boutique hotel, might not be unacceptable. This, however, would be subject to the need for internal alterations to its plan form or any development in its grounds or changes to its setting being minimised and fully justified.

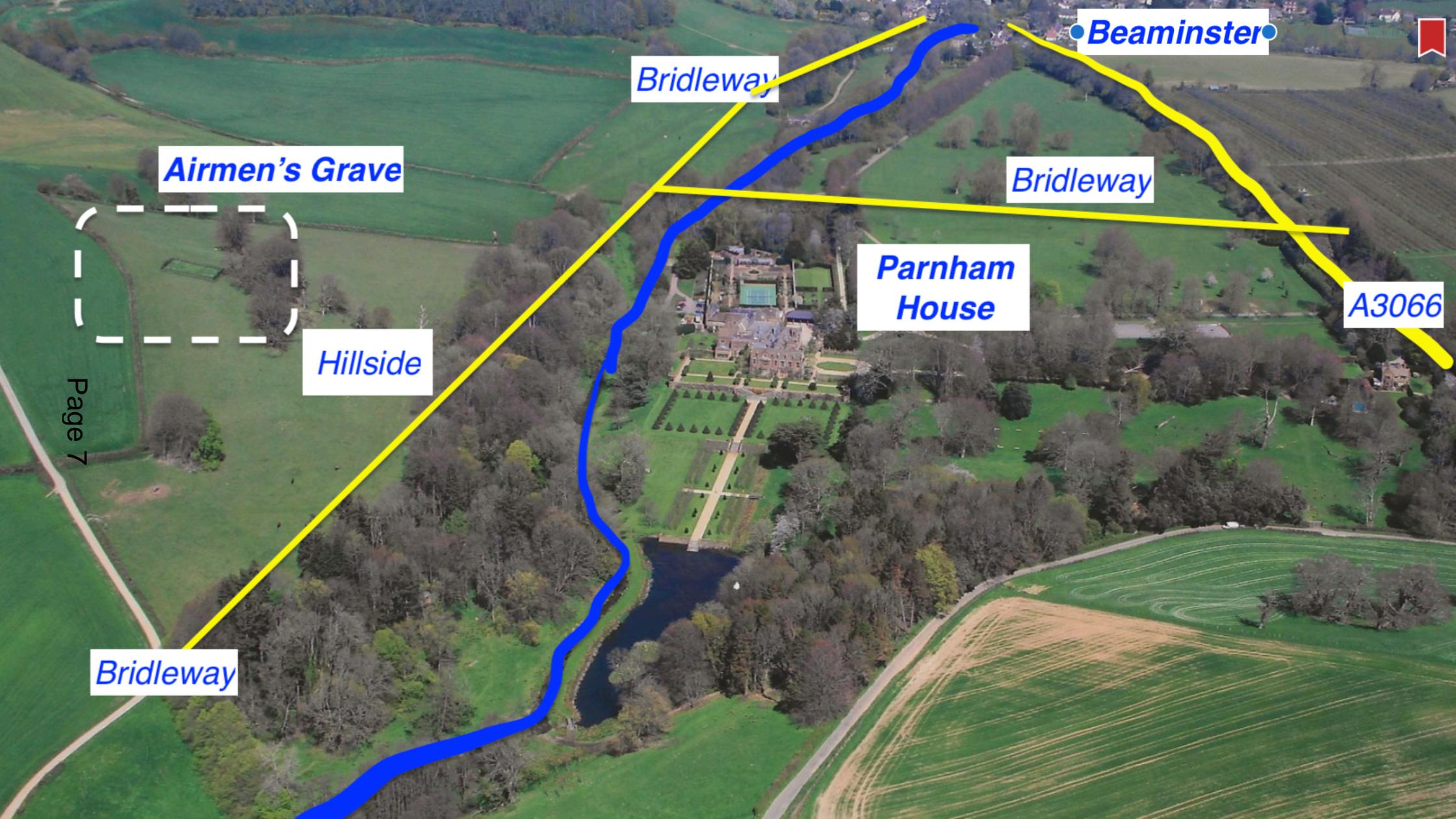
Historic England continues to monitor the condition of Parnham House, and we consider it imperative for urgent stabilisation works to be undertaken whilst proposals to secure its long-term future are being developed and discussed. The fact that those works have still not been undertaken 16 months after the fire occurred is highly regrettable, and we are aware of the building's very precarious condition. We would wish to enter into discussions with a new owner at the earliest stage possible regarding the stabilisation and protection of the building.

Yours Sincerely,

Jenny Chesher  
Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas  
jenny.chesher@HistoricEngland.org.uk



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● **Beaminster** ●

**Bridleway**

**Bridleway**

**A3066**

**Parnham House**

**Airmen's Grave**

**Hillside**

**Bridleway**

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