

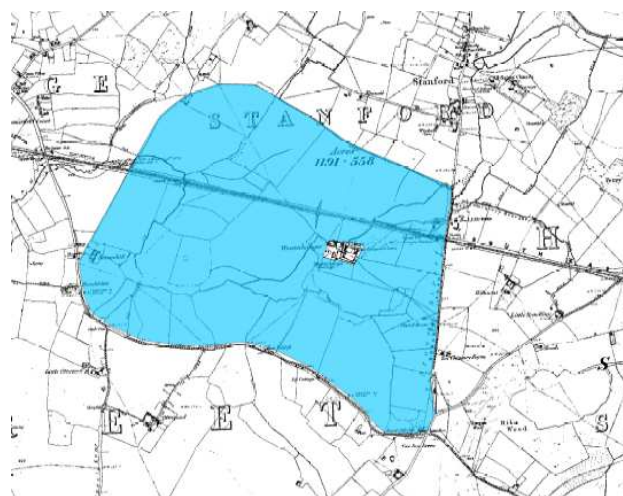
## The deer park at Westenhanger and historic landscape issues for Otterpool Park.

The former existence of a once extensive deer park, with the mansion formed out of the moated castle lying at its centre, is confirmed by historic records, including its association with Henry VIII and his children. The best illustration of this park is Bowen's map of Kent dated 1740 (but archaic in its content).



The park pale here shown as a wooden fence circumscribed the park, serving to keep deer and other game in and intruders out. This boundary of the park can be reliably traced through a combination of archaeological remains (ditches) and known landscape features, some still current such as the A20 road and others being former field boundaries (including the parish boundaries).

Reconstruction of the shape and size of the Westenhanger deer park based on the available evidence results in the depiction on the map below and an area of 237 hectares (586 acres). The full extent of the park was probably larger still as the maps depict it also running east of Stone Street but its boundary here is presently unsure. A 17<sup>th</sup> C inventory describes the park as being of 400 acres.

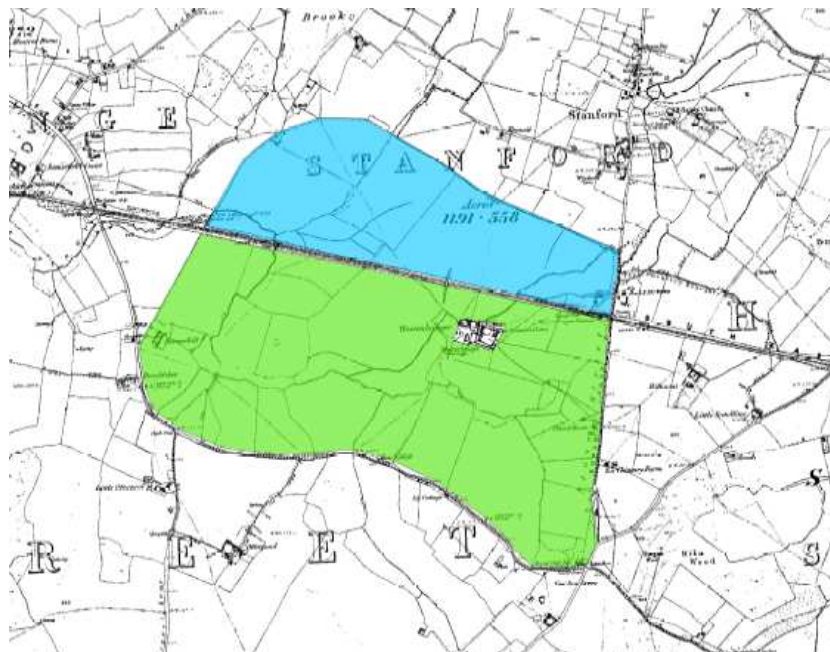


Mapped extent of historic deer park.

When the above park was “disparked” is uncertain but this was before 1700. Its boundaries are still however present in the late 18<sup>th</sup> C map below, albeit with large fields and woodland created out of its space.



The next major change within the landscape came with the construction of the railway in the 19<sup>th</sup> C, to be followed by first the M20 and then HS1. This transport infrastructure resulted in physical but not visual severance of the northern part of the former deer park from the land containing the main house. This affected 72 hectares or 30% of the original park and is the land coloured blue on the map below.



Map of severance caused by railways and motorway.

Remarkably the presence of such major intrusions is not highly visible in many views of the present day landscape around the castle. This is especially true of views looking north from the A20 in which the castle is centre ground and agricultural land

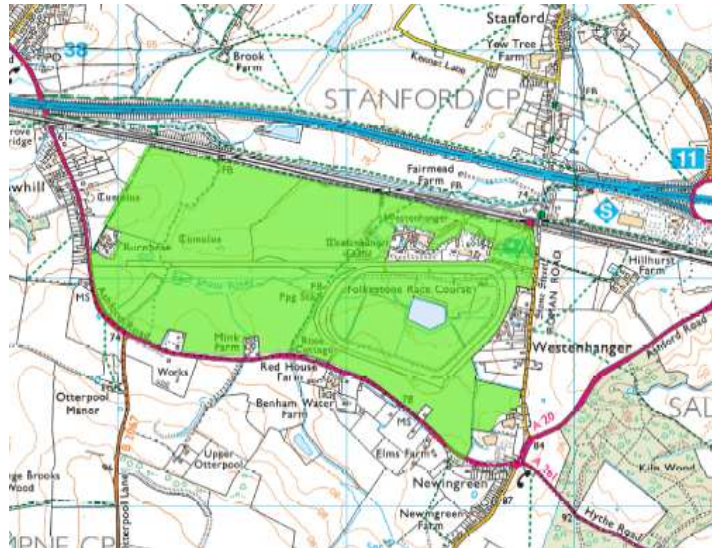
beyond the railway forms the background to it, with the escarpment of the Downs rising up behind. This view is of critical importance to experiencing the castle in an extensive open landscape and hence to understanding the significance of it and its park.

The principal historic approach to Westenhanger was by a tree lined avenue arriving from the south (off the present day A20) and this now survives as an earthwork feature. It was almost certainly designed to create an impressive sense of arrival at what was then a large country house, by traversing the parkland. Evidence from the 17<sup>th</sup> C inventory supports the southern side of the castle building as containing named chambers which clearly overlooked the park. There is also growing evidence for walled enclosures south of the castle in locations which would fit with the presence of formal gardens here, probably overlooked by terraces shown on historic mapping and still evidenced by some physical remains. Comparison with other 17<sup>th</sup> C great houses as depicted in historic images makes it very likely that highly designed areas of formal landscape would have been created closest to the main house with these surrounded by the more natural and extensive parkland. Reference to the *waters* of Westenhanger in historic publications suggests the manipulation of water as part of the landscape for both functional and aesthetic reasons and this is supported by the water courses and “pond like” features identified south of the castle. Another reference to *fisheries* could imply fish ponds. These are discussed in more detail below as an intrinsic part of the design of the historic park.

Today the southern side of the moated area of the castle has been planted with trees to screen it from the noise and visual intrusion of the former racecourse. These hinder an appreciation of the castle/house set within its surrounding landscape but this effect is readily reversible by selective tree felling and winter time views confirm how the castle site could be returned to visual prominence in views from the south. The proposed clearance of “modern” stables and other buildings from the outer court will be a very positive step to restore the barns as part of long views, and with this more of the historic character and appearance of the site. Any proposed new structures within this part of the site will therefore require very careful consideration.

In the very late 19<sup>th</sup> C the creation of the racecourse was the next major change within the Westenhanger landscape. This by the nature of the use did not however remove the majority of the open land around the castle. The largest changes were to the east of the moated area by the creation of the grandstands and other racecourse buildings. The track itself changed the character of what had become agricultural land but the use preserved the sense of openness. In the 20<sup>th</sup> C the racecourse itself developed further and housing grew up along Stone Street. The creation of the reservoir for watering the course introduced a new element in the landscape but its shape is derived from the historic water features shown on historic maps and old air photos. The bunding around the reservoir is now tree covered which serves to screen the water itself and to interrupt some views from the castle in the direction of Newingreen. The map below shows the existing situation and how the area of open land representing the former parkland has been little eroded by the racecourse and yet more recent development. 142 hectares remain as unbuilt upon and largely green land. This is 60% of the original park.

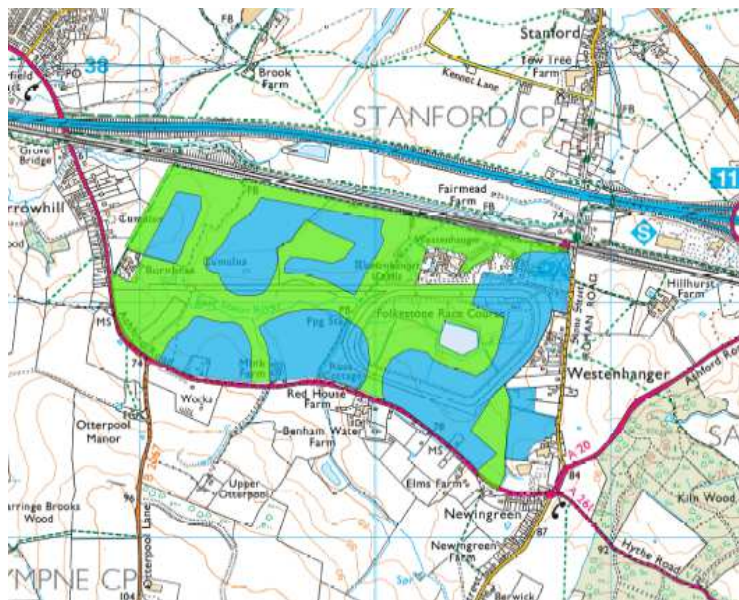




Map of present day unbuilt upon land.

Turning to the Otterpool Park illustrative master plan and the proposed areas for development, it has proved difficult to accurately depict these on a base map but that below is a reasonable approximation. It depicts in green the land which would be left as undeveloped and this amounts to an area of 74 hectares. This is just 31% of the original extent of the Westenhanger deer park (237 hectares) and 52% of the existing open land (142 hectares) south of the railway.

The map illustrates how the castle as the epicentre of the historic place would be almost entirely ringed by proposed development. This has serious consequences for how it might then be experienced and enjoyed.



Map derived from the proposed illustrative master plan for Otterpool Park.

The above map suggests that circa half of the existing open land would be kept undeveloped but when considering the setting of Westenhanger castle it is the land closest to it which contributes most to an understanding and enjoyment of its significance as a once great country house - fit for occupation by royalty and

aggrandised by some of the richest and most influential families of late medieval and Tudor England. Open land in the western part of the former park can be substantially discounted for what it can contribute to the future setting of the castle. It is the land that can be seen most clearly from the castle and through which it will be approached that contributes the most. The railway station creates a focus for future development east of the castle and there is an opportunity to re-use land here taken up by the redundant racecourse buildings. However the illustrative master plan must also place great weight on the setting of the castle and look for opportunities to enhance and reveal its significance in the way that the NPPF advises. Careful attention is therefore also needed regarding views from the castle looking east and from land to its east looking west. The most impressive (grade I listed) standing parts of the castle/house are in the NE part of the moated area and it is these that are most prominent in long views, serving to announce the location of the castle. As discussed above, the historic approach to the castle was from the south and so careful attention is again needed for how the castle will be seen in long views from here i.e. north from the A20, especially with the modern stables and inappropriate tree screening removed, and of course, in the reverse views out from the castle looking south. Views from further north still near Stanford looking south are also important as explained below.



The above air photo illustrates how views north from along the A20 (marked A) and views south from off Kennett Lane in Stanford (marked B) each place the castle in the middle ground with undeveloped green space in the foreground and background. This creates the experience of a large historic asset set within extensive open countryside which in this case was the central part of the former deer park. The views help to define a transect through the park (pale to pale), taking in the historic approach as the way in which the castle was experienced in the past. It is this land which must be kept free of new development if the setting of the castle is to be sufficiently preserved. The yellow lines are suggestions for the boundaries needed if

the new park is to preserve sufficient of the deer park, as a heritage asset in its own right but more importantly to protect the setting of the castle. The precise boundaries will need to be determined by more detailed analysis of views and explored by accurate visual representations based on the location and parameters for agreed developable areas.

These issues are further illustrated by the images below taken at ground level. The quality is poor and the views are much clearer to the human eye. In winter the views are clearer still.



View north from off the A20 at junction of southern approach – location A.



View south from Kennett Lane, Stanford – location B.

(NB. Lack of visibility for railways and M20)

It is a laudable aim of the proposal to create a new park as open land around the castle. It has been described as a “great” park but it is not clear if this is meant as a reference to its size or the experience of being within it or possibly both. Size does matter. Based on the map above it is likely that less than half of the land shown as to be left undeveloped will be within the immediate surrounds of the castle. Much of the open land will be to the west and hence in places where it can contribute much less

to the experience of the castle. It is estimated that perhaps no more than 50% of the land coloured green for undeveloped will be in places that contribute the most to setting, perhaps no more than 30 hectares would be available to form the future “new” park. This is not more than 15% of the original known extent of the deer park and about 21% of the now existing undeveloped land. It is not just about how big a new park might be, but also how open land is configured to best effect will make a real difference to how the castle is experienced in its setting. Some comparison with other historic and existing parks around comparable large mansions is informative.

The authority on Kentish deer parks is Susan Pittman who cites examples ranging in size from as low as 25 acres to a high of 1,600. Westenhanger with a calculated original size of at least 586 acres is at the high end of the scale for size as many examples did not exceed 400 acres.

Royal hunting parks show a range of sizes (including examples which can still be experienced today).

Richmond Great Park – 1,000 hectares

Nonsuch – Great Park 405 hectares & Little Park 272 hectares – total 677 hectares of which only c 120 now survives.

Greenwich - 74 hectares now form this iconic public park.

Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens were once a whole and together are 242 hectares.

Deer parks surrounding houses in Kent of comparable status to Westenhanger at its zenith seldom had deer parks of a larger size.

Knole today has 10.5 hectares of walled gardens and 378 hectares in its wider parkland.

Penshurst has 4 hectares of walled gardens and 178 hectares of parkland.

Cobham is today 22 hectares of pleasure grounds and 316 of wider park.

For comparison Mote Park in Maidstone covers 200 hectares.

The inescapable conclusion is that the land proposed for a future park at Westenhanger will be small in size compared both with its historic extent and in comparison with other extant Kentish and SE examples of great houses still surrounded by former deer parks. This is borne out by how quickly you are able to walk from the castle to the southern boundary of the proposed park at the A20. If it is not possible to significantly increase the overall size of the proposed park and still deliver the level of development sought, it is essential that the layout of a new park must preserve the experience of the castle/main house set within extensive green space. The required outcome is to both integrate the castle with the new settlement in order to deliver a sustainable future for heritage assets of the highest possible importance but also to avoid high levels of harm to the significance of these. The contribution to that significance made by the park as the future setting of the castle is of key importance to avoiding and minimising harm.



Historic England acknowledges that the full surviving extent of the deer park will not remain unchanged but encourages the master planners to look for ways in which the overall size of the proposed park can be increased. It is also essential that undeveloped land is configured in ways that not only avoid or minimise harm but as far as is possible enhance and reveal the significance of the site.

Practical considerations enter into how the castle is to be used in future and include the need for future vehicular access and for parking. These are important issues of detail but deserving of exploration now and not to be left to future discussion once an overall framework and quantum of development has been decided. Such issues should inform how land immediately adjoining the castle is used and thus to form the new landscape setting to it, inspired by but not re-creating what is likely to have once existed. More research about the historic character of the castle, its gardens and its park will be required as part of this.

Turning to the wider setting of the castle it is essential that more analysis of views (past, present and future) is undertaken to inform the master plan. In due course appropriate outcomes based on research backed detailed designs will need to be approved under reserved matters planning applications to flesh out principles established by an outline planning permission. Of specific importance will be the southern approach to the castle but not to the exclusion of other views (both in and out), especially for the western extent of the new development east of the castle, paralleling Stone Street. The nature of future transitions between the park and the built upon areas need thought now. As far as is possible the views out from the castle should preserve the feel of a house set in extensive grounds and not be of new development pressing in upon it so as to best exploit views of the castle and across the park.

On the south side of the castle the indicative master plan fails to preserve enough of the open land that existed here in the past, and which is still present, as racecourse land crossed by evidence for the historic main approach to Westenhanger and containing historic features. The intention to recover the surviving earthwork of the causeway as a tree lined avenue is very welcome but the impact of using this will be severely undermined if it is to become a route between adjacent areas of development. Historic England requires that this part of the master plan be reconsidered if we are ever to be able to give support to the project. As matters currently stands we are very likely to object. If the edges of the proposed locations for development were to be pegged out on site it would be immediately obvious just how close these are to the proposed approach corridor and how new development (particularly at the building heights and density shown on the parameter plans) would be very visible in the important views off the A20 looking north, in views out of the castle looking south and as you move down the recreated historic approach route.

We do not request that all the surviving areas of former deer park be left entirely undeveloped, but we think that if the area of open land is to be sufficient in future to represent the once much greater extent of the deer park it must include a clear corridor (free of buildings) running from the castle as the centre of the estate to the former park pale at the A20. The late 18<sup>th</sup> C map provides an approximate indication



of what could be appropriate (roughly outlined red on the map below). It depicts an orchard like use for this land at that date but later O.S. maps confirm the land to have then reverted to the open character as seen today and representing more of what the old park may have been like.



The 1896 O.S. map depiction below also shows the same land divisions immediately before construction of the racecourse and we think these must also inform the amount of open land south and east of the castle. The southern approach is clearly depicted and any suggestion of orchards has now gone. Other maps show trees lining the drive



Also clearly visible is a secondary road connecting the castle to Stone Street at the location then known as Pound House which we know to have been a house of some quality as might befit the steward responsible for management of the historic estate. Archaeological evidence for the park pale as a ditch is known nearby.

The construction of first the grandstands and then the racecourse reservoir is a complicating factor for how this part of the site is appreciated today and the latter offers opportunities to shield new development in some views out from the castle. The diagonal route way shown connecting Stone Street to the SE corner of the castle is an important clue for how this area might be best developed in future. As you walk around the former race track anti-clockwise you begin to clear the end of the reservoir and the dovecote tower and associated other built parts of the castle then become visible. These views need careful thought, not so that the entire former route way might be recreated but rather to reflect it in the design of the new place. The 1896 O.S. map also shows a rectilinear parcel of land due east of the land now understood to have been the walled garden/orchard. This gives us a further clue as to how this part of the site would have looked before the racecourse was built and it can also suggest how best to prevent new development from encroaching too far west towards the castle and hence into views, including those out from its surviving built elements (grade I listed). Maintaining the western end of this former land parcel clear from development will provide breathing space around the castle. The master plan shows development pressing in too close.

It seems likely that the castle will continue to be approached by most visitors and all cars from the eastern side (as it is now). The historically appropriate entrance is on its western side, over a drawbridge and through a gatehouse with portcullis. This needs to be the main point at which most visitors or users of the castle are encouraged to arrive. It would be served by a reinstated southern approach drive. Arrival from the east requires careful thought as to where future parking should be provided and also for how visitors, in or out of their cars, might traverse the land south of the castle in which recreation of a walled garden is proposed as a key heritage gain. The current track from Stone Street to the castle hugs the northern boundary and if the castle is to be a key part of the new place this begs the question how should the future access be formed and might the castle then have a visible presence from and relationship with any new "High Street". The 1896 map shows several route ways converging on the SE corner of the castle and one of these is very direct from Stone Street and still exists to the rear of the grandstands.

The precise character of the deer park at Westenhanger in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> C is not known but some idea can be gained from maps and artworks of that period. Closest geographically to the site is an image of the former royal park created for Henry VIII at Canterbury as part of his conversion of St Augustines abbey into a palace after 1538. The map below is part of the cathedral archives. It shows a presumably timber pale and illustrates how the land within was a mixture of grassland and mature trees to provide shade for the deer (pollarded to stop them eating any low branches).



At Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire painted wall plaster dated to c 1600 shows a hunting park in use and this again includes a combination of mature trees and open land with in this instance a boar being killed by dogs and hunters on foot



Many other depictions of deer parks date from the 18<sup>th</sup> C during which time these were converted into the classic English country house park by such major architects as William Kent, Lancelot Capability Brown or Humphrey Repton. By this period Westenhanger was already in serious decline and its park was divided for



agricultural not hunting or pleasure use. Images of Greenwich Park in the 17<sup>th</sup> C, though of a higher status site i.e. a then royal palace, give some clue to how aspects of the deer park at Westenhanger may have looked in its final days, including the long tree lined avenue. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> C continental influences saw the increasing taming of the wilder areas of deer park around major houses through the introduction of highly formalised and rectilinear landscaped areas as expressions of the wealth of their owners for the resources needed to create and maintain them.

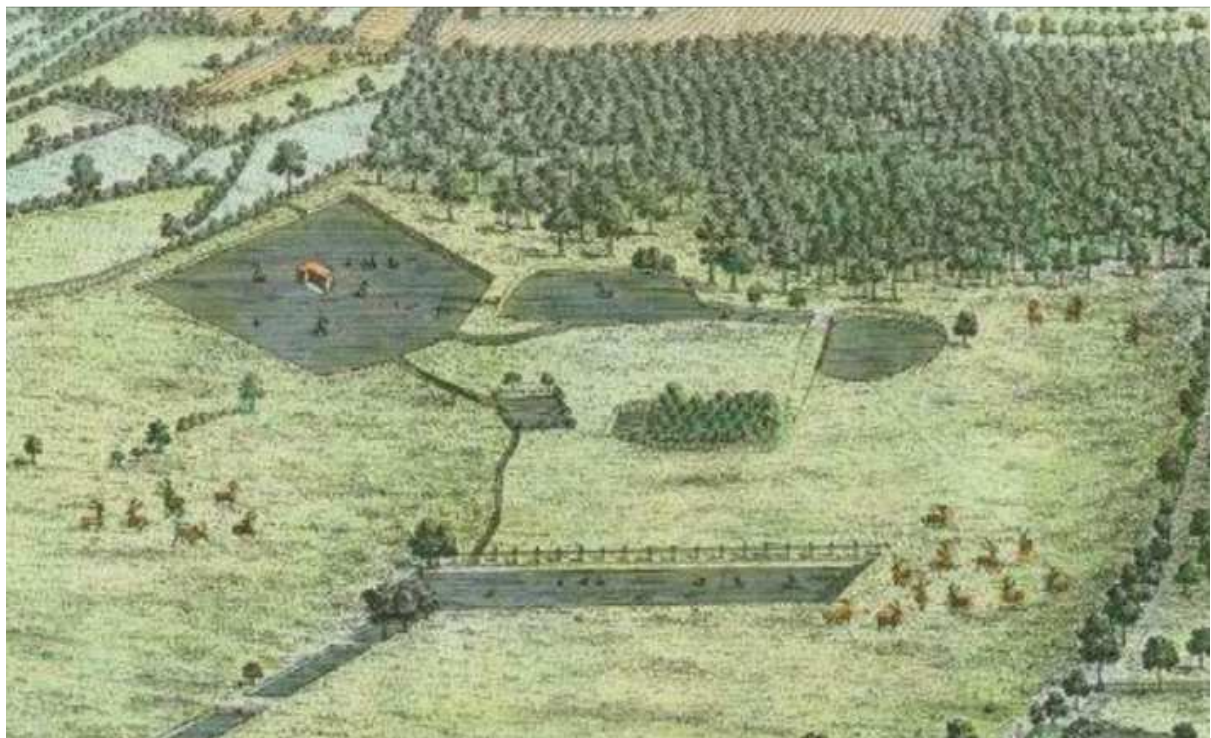
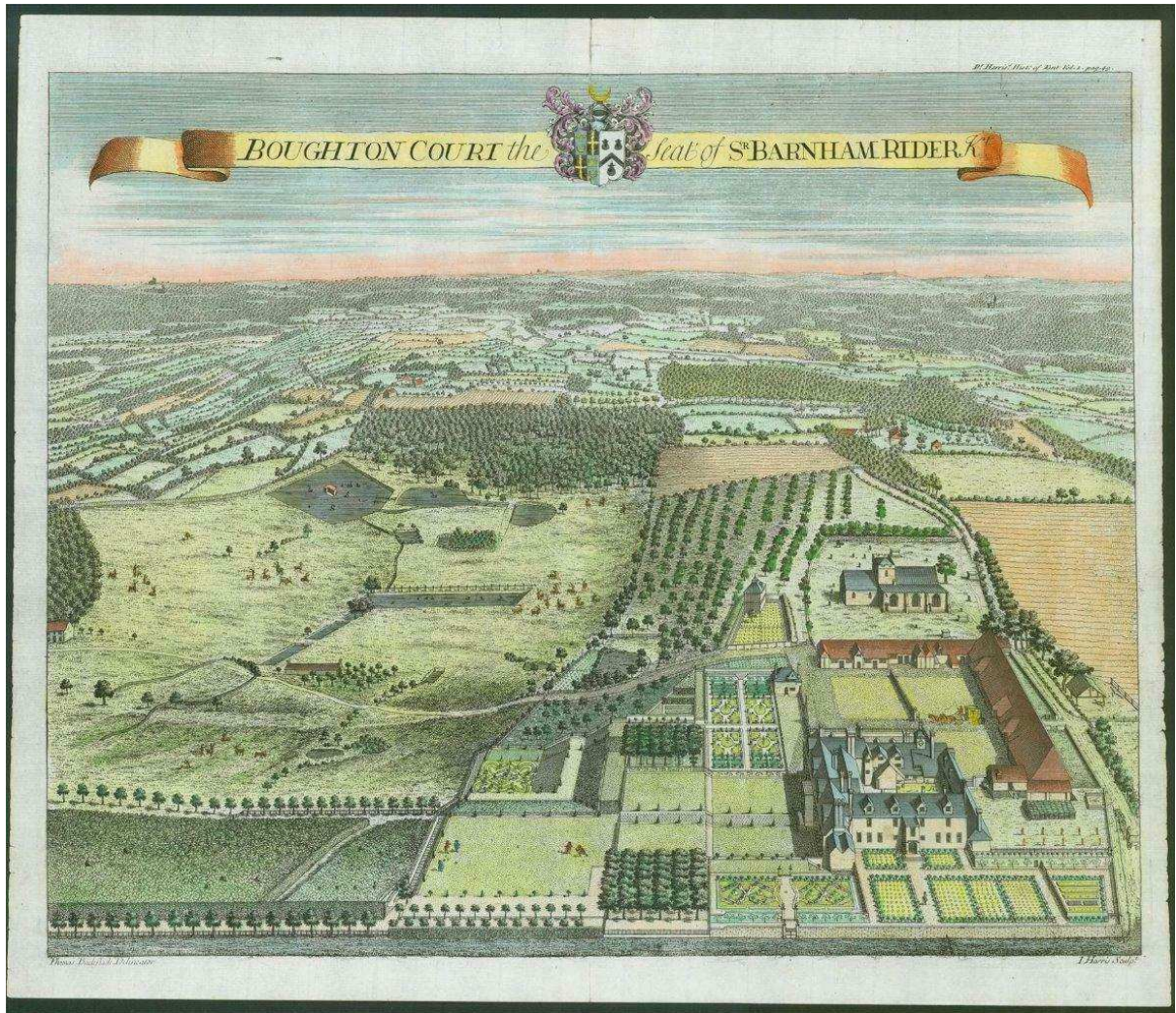


Greenwich Park in the 17<sup>th</sup> C

Parallels for Westenhanger are found in contemporary Kentish country houses owned by other owners of comparable wealth and status. One of these deserves particular comment. It is Boughton Court (Boughton Malherbe) which is depicted in Kip's engraving of 1719 (prepared for Harris's History of Kent) – see below.

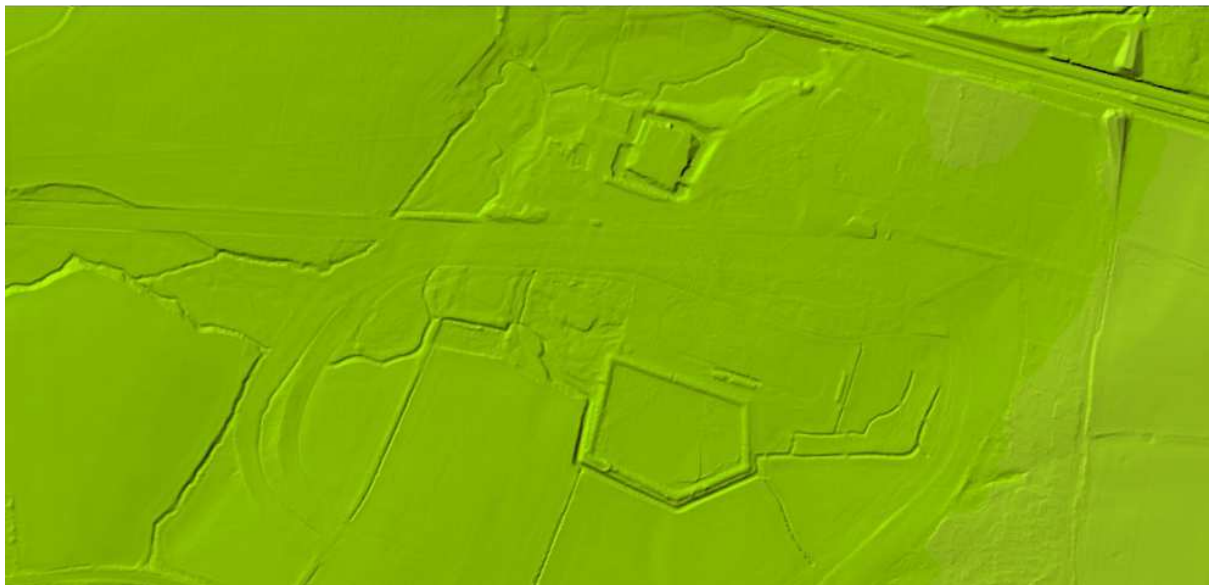
This site was also a medieval manor and in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> C the present house was constructed as an extension to this. It too was surrounded by both a deer park and ornamental grounds. Common features with what is known about the Westenhanger landscape include the courtyard plan of the house, the adjacent service court containing a major barn and other buildings, walled gardens adjoining the house and tree-lined avenues of approach. More remarkable still is the very close similarity in the water features – see enlarged section of engraving below.







The same sequence of water bodies that we see at Westenhanger is present in the depiction of Boughton Court and this cannot be a coincidence – see GoogleEarth image of the 1960s and LIDAR image below..



In this a very regular rectangular feature connects to a much smaller sub-rectangular feature which in turn connects to a larger less regular (but straight sided) feature. If you imagine these full of water then the sequence in the engraving is repeated. Even though the present day reservoir is of recent construction, its shape and location is the result of the much older history of the Westenhanger parkland which is now demonstrated to have man-made water features, most probably combining both aesthetic and functional purposes but looking very like a water garden. Ponds as drinking water for stock (including deer), might also be for raising fish and waterfowl and combined with landscapes intended for pleasure.

Much less has been written about Tudor and Stuart period deer parks than for their medieval predecessors or landscaped park successors. In the 16<sup>th</sup> C the deer park was less often set apart from a main residence as a specific place that you went to hunt and was instead more integrated around houses to combine ornamental effect with functional purpose. Parks were economic resources, with managed woodland, grazing, fishponds and warrens. *Tudor & Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire* by Anne Rowe (ISBN 9781912260119) is a useful point of reference for hunting and landscaped parks of the same period as Westenhanger

### **Conclusion**

In order to enhance and preserve the nationally important heritage at Westenhanger, including sufficient of the deer park that once formed its landscape setting, the master plan must consider all the issues raised here and deliver a more considered and detailed level of design. Only then might Historic England be confident that major harm can be avoided or minimised such that our support for the project might then be possible. We have consistently raised the issues discussed above as pre-application advice and we remain committed to working with all parties to deliver a constructive solution appropriate to the very high importance of the designated heritage assets and to the development opportunity now before us.

██████████

Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments - Historic England

May 2019