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Caer Rhun Hall, LL32 8HX

Heritage Design and Access Statement
For Caer Rhun Hall

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1.0 Summary of Heritage Impact Assessment

1.1 Introduction and Methodology

This assessment has been prepared in support of planning and listed building consent for the installation of a biomass boiler, including alterations to ancillary workshop buildings (planning use class B2).

The investigation has comprised desktop historical research, using both archival and secondary material and consulting the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER), and a site inspection. An illustrated history of the site and building, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation has established the significance of the site, which is set out in Section 4 and summarised below.

1.2 The Buildings, their Legal Status and Policy Context

Caer Rhun Hall is a Grade II-listed building located in a Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden in the county of Conwy. It is in the setting of the following designated heritage assets:

- St. Mary's Church, Caerhun (Grade I)
- Canovium Scheduled Ancient Monument

Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas or within the setting of a listed building or conservation area requires local authorities to assess the implications of proposals on built heritage.

The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I. The relevant legal and policy backgrounds is as follows.

1.2.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Historic Environment Wales Act 2016

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Historic Environment Wales Act 2016 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16 and 66 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

1.2.2 The Local Plan

The Conwy Local Development Plan 2007-2022 (adopted 2013) has policies that deal with development affecting the historic environment, and these require that all proposals should preserve and enhance the quality of heritage assets (including their setting), appreciate their social and economic contribution and provide them with a sustainable use.

1.3 Summary Assessment of Significance

Caer Rhun Hall and its surrounding landscaped gardens are significant as a substantial country estate in rural North Wales, located partially within the site of a strategically important Roman river crossing and former fort. Whilst the documentary history of the site dates to the 16th century, the archaeological record highlights that the estate itself has been inhabited since the reign of Agricola in around AD 79. The modern estate, which is substantially reduced in size from the huge swathes of park and farmland once in its ownership, is significant for exhibiting the layered history of its development and evolving trends in country house and landscape design; though the formal 1890s terraced gardens to the south of the house and the Hall itself date to the late Victorian period, the building sits within an earlier 19th century landscape and on the site of a substantially earlier hall of probable medieval origins.

As such, Caer Rhun Hall, its park and gardens represent the continuation, but insecure succession, of the Davies and Griffith family at Caerhun from the 16th century, as well as underlining the family's wealth, taste and fashionability up until their sale of the

property in the 1930s. In short, the value of the Estate is greater than the sum of its constituent parts, which in themselves vary in significance for their variable date, survival and aesthetic quality. What is intrinsically special to the site is how the Estate reflects centuries (indeed millennia if the Roman fort of Canovium were still included within the site boundary) of habitation and an evolving landscape with buildings from the 13th century to the 21st.

1.4 Summary of Proposals and Justification

The proposed works involve minor alterations to the roof of an ancillary building to the west of the Grade II listed hall, in a discreet location within the curtilage of the building. Despite this, the impact on the hall's setting is expected to be negligible.

The changes to the roof are not visible from the general vicinity of the most significant areas of the site or from the hotel itself.

Overall, the proposal seeks to balance the necessary installation of the biomass boiler with sensitivity to the historical context of the site.

1.5 Conclusion

Caer Rhun Hall, a Grade II-listed Victorian neo-Elizabethan building, is located within a Grade II-registered Park and Garden. Its continued use as a hotel, supported by significant investment from the current owners, ensures its long-term preservation. The installation of the biomass boiler is fundamental for securing the resilience of the primary heat source.

The building housing the biomass boiler is part of the low-quality ancillary structures found to the east of the main hall building, the visibility of the changes are negligible, preserving the significance of the hall and the gardens.

2.0 Historical Background

2.1 The Development of Caerhun

The first date of human settlement in the Conwy Valley dates from the pre-Roman period. However, little is known about this period within the history of the area, with the first clear archaeological evidence dating to the Roman period.

From at least the 70s AD the Roman fort of Canovium was occupied. Typical of Roman defensive settlements, it was roughly the shape of playing card and occupied an important and strategic position within the valley, located close to a key crossing point over the River Conwy and within the high point of the valley. Excavations from the start of the 19th century onwards have continued across the site and uncovered evidence of both a Roman villa and extensive settlement within and surrounding the walls of the settlement.[1]

The status of the settlement during the end of Roman rule and the medieval period is unclear, but by the 13th century the site was repurposed for the siting of a church. The church of St. Mary was probably first constructed during the 13th century, partially reusing stone from the Roman fort within its walls. However, most of the church dates to the 16th century and was probably constructed by monks from a local monastery.

The parish of Caerhun, which includes several smaller villages, has retained a population for much of the period since the Roman occupation. However, it has remained a small agricultural community for much of its history, with a steady population of between 1000 and 2000 residents.

2.2 The Development of Caer Rhun Hall and parkland

2.2.1 Early History of the Site (to 17th century)

Little is known of the medieval history of the site, but it is likely that a house existed on the rough site of the current Caer Rhun Hall since this period, served by St. Mary's Church. Noted as a key military crossing since the Roman period, with good visibility over the Conwy valley and the River Conwy itself, this site may originally have been lightly fortified or moated. However, the form that the building may have taken is unclear, with only fragmentary survival of documents.

The earliest documentary history relating to the Davies family dates to 1446, but it is likely that they came to own the extensive Caer Rhun estates during the early 16th century. Continuing to acquire lands through lucrative marriage alliances with other major landowning families in the area, they are likely to have reconstructed whatever house previously existed on the site during the 17th century. Whilst it is unclear what form this building took, including what materials it was constructed from and the style that it took, it is likely that the late Elizabethan influences on Caer Rhun Hall were influenced by the style of the earlier house.[2]

It is probable that by this period an extensive landholding was associated with a central hall; the landscaping of the building associated with the house at this date is entirely unknown and no historic sources have been found to uncover.

Indeed, the Griffith family were wealthy enough to also be subscribers to John Evans' map of North Wales, which crudely depicts the hall as a small house located close to a substantial church; whilst the image is purely representational it does highlight that the building was not only intact by this period but was described by the name of Caerhun Hall. Sexton's earlier maps had shown the settlement of Caerhun, but with no detail on whether a house was there at this date **[Plates 2.1 and 2.2]**.

1 Cadw, Heritage Records search, https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru/search-cadw-records

2 National Library of Wales, Caerhun Estate Records 1446-1934, NRA Code:GB 0210 CAERHUN

2.1 *Saxton's Map of Denbigh, Flintshire and Carnarvan (NLW)*

2.2 *Evan's Map of Wales, surveyed c1770s, published 1795 (NLW)*

2.2.2 18th and 19th century history

The original hall is likely to have endured as an extensive 17th century house set within extensive parkland and a wider rural estate. However, there is a possibility that alterations to the building took place during the 18th and early 19th century, as the fashion for classicising earlier homes grew amongst the landed gentry. The form of Plas Caerhun is unknown during this period, with maps retaining a highlight representational form, disclosing limited information on their form and appearance. However, 18th century maps do highlight that by this period the acknowledged name for the building was Caerhun Hall, with the Plas Caerhun name having been shed.

It is probable that the parkland was laid out at either the end of the 18th or start of the 19th century. Whilst substantially larger during this period, with much of the land sold-off in later years it was evidently designed in a naturalistic style in line with the fashions of the late 18th and early 19th century. Substantial copses of trees, a ha-ha and other elements retained the agricultural wider setting of the house and estate, whilst creating a private garden and park for the house.

By the end of the 19th century the family could claim ownership of estates in Anglesey, Downing in Flintshire and Llechwedd Garth in Montgomeryshire. However, the line of inheritance was somewhat insecure, and women frequently inherited the wealth of the estate, resulting in regular changes to the family name. The inheritance of the estate by Grace Davies in 1721, resulted in the estate being inherited by her son Hugh Jones. Though Hugh assumed the surname Davies upon the inheritance of the estates, he bequeathed it to his sister, who married a Ralph Griffith; her heir assumed the surname Davies Griffith, but upon his daughter inheriting the family name associated with the estate became Hemming- that of her husband. Catherine and Richard Hemming had four children. However, the estate was passed to their youngest daughter Beatrice Sophia.

The death of Catherine Hemming, described in local newspapers at the time, highlights the wealth of the family at this time. Her death came during the taking of the waters at Bath- a fashionable Georgian and Victorian custom associated with the improvement of the wealthy's health. She was described as owning extensive property within North Wales including Plas Pabo and Caerhun. However, her husband was also the owner of extensive property within Worcestershire, including Bentley Manor and she was described as residing at the fashionable address of 15 Grosvenor Place, London.[3]

Maps dating to the time of Catherine Hemming's death highlight the footprint of the earlier Caerhun Hall, as well as the appearance of the landscape in which it was set. They suggest that not only was the hall aligned with an Eastern entrance, it was comprised of a number of various wings and ranges. The appearance of these is not clear, but they were possibly added at various dates. An additional walled garden is shown to the south of the building, with a curvilinear block to the north of the house probably representing the stables. The Home Farm is not depicted, suggesting that this was constructed as part of the works dating to the reconstruction of the Hall. An icehouse is also shown within the wider parkland, alongside snaking footpaths towards St. Mary's Church and the former Roman fort of Canovium **[Plate 2.3]**.

2.3 *OS map, surveyed 1887, published 1889 (NLS)*

3 Anon., [article unnamed, pg. 5], Morning Post, 17th April 1893.

2.2.3 Construction of the current Hall and Gardens (1890s)

Following the death of the last member of the Hemming family in Bath in 1893, the site was inherited by Beatrice Sophia Hemming, then married to Major Colonel Gough. Some accounts suggest that the earlier building burnt down, however little other evidence exists for this claim and it's existence on the 1889 OS map suggests that it is more probable that the earlier Hall was merely demolished in order for the Major-General to reconstruct a new, more fashionable home **[Plate 2.4]**.

In 1895 Major-General Hugh Sutlej Gough (1848–1920), a prominent military figure and administrator, known for his roles in India and Jersey, started construction of a new Hall on the site. The Hall's architectural style reflects Elizabethan influences, with design elements closely paralleling the work of Chester architects Douglas and Fordham and drawing inspiration from the nearby Plas Mawr in Conwy. Plans within Conwy Archives highlight that the building was designed by the prominent local architects Grayson and Ould. Based in Liverpool, Ould gained early experience working with John Douglas in Chester and the firm became closely associated with the revivalist architectural style practiced and pioneered by the Chester-based architect.[4]

The house features a T-shaped plan with a main two-and-a-half-storey section and a two-storey subsidiary service range. Constructed of snecked limestone with red sandstone detailing, it boasts asymmetrical facades, leaded mullioned and transomed windows, clustered chimneys, and prominent stepped gables with ball finials. Service areas include an octagonal tower housing a cantilevered stone stair and a high-ceilinged kitchen with glazed ceramic tiles. Throughout, materials and features such as re-used beams and panelling integrate elements of earlier structures, enhancing the building's historic character.

The gardens were evidently re-landscaped during these works, with maps dating to the early 20th century highlighting that a substantial walled garden has been constructed to the west of the house; Glasshouses and ancillary buildings were located in this area, suggesting that it may have been an area that serviced the house rather than a landscaped garden. A substantial terraced garden, designed in an Italianate style was constructed to the front of house, in the fashionable style influenced by the garden design of Nesfield. The original garden arrangement was swept away by these works, though the boundary wall and ha-ha likely date to the earlier landscaping works. The designer of the landscape is unknown.

2.4 *OS map, surveyed 1912, published 1913 (NLS)*

4 Conwy Archives Catalogue, CMP75/12.

2.2.4 Sale of house and 20th century history

Following the death of the final heir of the Gough family the Hall itself was sold. Much of the land that formed part of the wider estate, was apparently sold off separately from the Hall and gardens during this period, and it is probable that the estate itself was separated from the house during this period.[5] However, much of the original contents and furnishings of the house were apparently retained, with catalogues of the sale highlighting that the pictures of the Major kept within the home. The house was sold again in the 1950s, and it is possible that further land was detached from the house at this date **[Plates 2.5 and 2.6]**.

In the later 20th century, the house was used as a residential accountancy and business college by its owners. During this period a substantial number of outbuildings were constructed to the west of the house, mostly in line with the area formerly used for ancillary buildings; the existing stables were converted with the addition of new roofing and windows, a number of small huts and lodges were constructed within the walled garden and to the south-west of the site. The house was later sold and converted to a hotel in 2017, being sold to the current owners in 2022.[6]

2.5 *OS map, surveyed 1948, published 1953 (NLS)*

2.6 *OS map, surveyed 1963, published 1964 (NLS)*

5 National Library of Wales, Caerhun Estate Records 1446-1934, NRA Code:GB 0210 CAERHUN.

6 Cadw, Heritage Records search, https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru/search-cadw-records.

2.3 Architect Biography

Grayson and Ould
Established in 1886 and based out of Liverpool, Grayson and Ould were a practice of national repute. Prior to their formation, Grayson trained with Jonathan Gilliband Sale and then studied on the continent for a year. The following year, 1856, he opened an independent practice and was made a fellow of the Royal Institute for British Architects.[7]

Edward Ould trained with the architect John Douglas, who was key to the revival of the vernacular style. This had a significant influence on Ould's his designs and can be seen in Uffington House and the Queen's School, both in Chester. Ould was so passionate about the half timbering style that he was the joint author of a book published in 1904, detailing its specifics. The best-known work of the partnership is the South Wing of Trinity Hall College, Cambridge and the Dining Hall at Selwyn College, Cambridge.[8]

Buildings:

- Hamilton Square Station, Birkenhead (Grade II)
- Trinity Hall (South Wing), Cambridge University (Grade I)
- Selwyn College (Dining Hall) in Cambridge University (Grade II)

7 Brodie, Antonia (2001), pp. 770-771 and Hemming pp. 205-6, 228.

8 Ibid.

2.4 Relevant Planning History

Conwy Borough Council lists the following relevant applications on its online planning portal.

0/51423; 2024; Refused
Retrospective application for the installation of two propane gas tanks, and surrounding stone wall and wooden gated access.

0/44887; 2018 Refused
Siting of 9no. timber lodges as ancillary guest accommodation for Caer Rhun Hall.

0/44366; 2017; Approved
First floor extension to annex and conversion, extension and amalgamation of conference room and squash court to form a spa facility (ancillary to the hotel)(Listed Building Consent)

0/44107; 2017; Approved
Change of Use from Accountancy School Country House Hotel and Conference Centre to Hotel

0/39705; 2013; Withdrawn
Demolition of existing squash court and replacement by an indoor games pavilion

0/26408; 2002; Approved
Construction of Fire Screen

2.5 Sources and Bibliography

Archival Sources
National Library for Wales Catalogue, https://www.library.wales/catalogues-searching
Conwy Archives Catalogue, https://calmview.conwy.gov.uk/calmview/

Historic Maps and Images
Britain from Above, https://britainfromabove.org.uk/en
Landmark, Promap, https://www2.promap.co.uk/
National Library of Scotland, Maps, https://maps.nls.uk/
National Library of Wales, Maps.

Secondary Sources
Articles, Histories and Reference Guides
Brodie, Antonia (2001), *Directory of British Architects 1834-1914: A-K*
Hemming, R. and Pevsner, N. (2009). *Gwynedd*
Hubbard, Edward (1991), *The Work of John Douglas*

Heritage Management Documents and Resources

Cadw, Heritage Records search, https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru/search-cadw-records
Conwy Borough Council, Planning Applications, https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Resident/Planning-Building-Control-and-Conservation/Planning-Applications/Planning-Explorer.aspx

Websites and Online Resources
British Newspaper Archive, https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/search
GENUKI, 'Providence Congregational', https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/LAN/Middleton/Providence
Manchester Victorian Architects, https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/

3.0 Site Survey Descriptions

3.1 The Setting of the Building and Landscape

To the edge of the site boundary in the south-east, and visible from the ha-ha within the gardens, as well as the field that falls within the site, is the former Roman fort of Canovium (Scheduled Ancient Monument) and Grade I listed St. Mary's Church. This forms a key view from within the site, looking over towards the Conwy valley. The Hall sits at the high point of the valley and is thus a highly visible site within the wider environment, much of which historically formed the boundary of the Hall's gardens and parkland. However, the extensive mature vegetation that immediately surrounds the hall itself ensures that the building itself is minimally visible **[Plates 3.1-3.4]**. The mountainous surrounding environment of the valley forms a key element of the building's setting and is highly visible from within the interior of the Hall and its gardens and parkland **[Plate 3.5]**.

The associated Home Farm is located to the west of the house, separated from it by the road. Formerly associated with the house, the building is now outside of the ownership of the estate and has had much of its earlier walled garden infilled with caravans and temporary structures. Some of the Hall's setting has been degraded because of the sale of the estate's historic various properties and landholdings from the end of the 19th century through to the 1930s and 1950s.

The Hall and its gardens are accessed via a drive from the north, passing a lodge and substantial stone gate piers. The curvilinear driveway moved south to the north-facing entrance front of the Hall, bypassing the walled ancillary accommodation to the west to enter the rectilinear driveway. Landscaping surrounds the access driveway, with substantial copses of mature vegetation existing here **[Plate 3.6]**.

The gardens comprise a mix of the early 19th century naturalistic landscape and the more formalised terraced garden of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A substantial hedged garden, designed in the style of W.A. Nesfield is located directly to the front of the house's south elevation, containing a pergola and deck for chairs. A substantial lawn is located in front of this, with the more naturalistic planting and landscaping surrounding the lawn, snaking around the boundary of the garden. The gardens are separated from the small field that remains within the ownership of the hall by a ha-ha and boundary wall. A gazebo is located on the lawn **[Plates 3.7-3.11]**.

Several 20th century outbuildings exist to the west of the hall, primarily located within the former ancillary areas of the building's curtilage **[Plates 3.12-3.13]**.

3.1 *South-eastern gardens looking towards scheduled monument and St. Mary's church*

3.2 *View into Caer Rhun Hall gardens from church gate*

3.3 *View over valley from St. Mary's Church*

3.4 *St. Mary's Church, Caerhun*

3.6 *South front entrance driveway and view of wider setting*

3.5 *View of wider mountainous setting from within terracing*

3.7 *Formal terraced gardens*

3.8 *Formal terraced garden pergola looking west*

3.9 *Lodges and naturalistic landscaping to west of Hall*

3.10 *Lines of trees towards boundary looking south*

3.11 *Ha-ha on edge of gardens*

3.12 *20th century outbuildings within walled enclosure to west of Hall*

3.13 *Walled enclosure to west of Hall*

3.2 The Building

The Hall is a large T-shaped country house, constructed of snecked limestone with red sandstone dressings, featuring pale slate roofs. The main building consists of a two-and-a-half storey section, with an adjoining two-storey L-shaped service range. The architecture is marked by asymmetrical facades, paired or clustered chimneys, stepped and kneelered gables, and elaborate detailing including ball finials, stringcourses, and crenellated parapets **[Plates 3.14 and 3.15]**.

The entrance front (north) includes a 5-and-a-half bay main block with a 3-bay subsidiary range, incorporating a large octagonal stair tower with chamfered single-light windows and an octagonal roof with a lead ball finial. Other notable features include a gabled bay with an oriel window, a storied porch with a sculpted family crest, and a first-floor bowed oriel window with a convex stone domed roof.

The subsidiary range connects with a cross-wing, featuring mullioned windows and a single-storey lean-to porch with a crenellated parapet. The garden front (south) displays an irregular window arrangement, a projecting chimney, and prominent canted bays with stepped gables. Decorative features, such as angled turrets, multi-cusped windows, and wrought-iron weathervanes, enhance the overall design. The service court to the west includes a veranda and various mullioned windows, contributing to the hall's stately appearance **[Plate 3.16]**.

The shed housing the biomass boiler is located to the west of the Hall **[Plates 3.17, 3.18 and 3.19]**.

3.14 *South front of Hall*

3.15 *Entrance front to Hall*

3.16 *West elevation and service area*

3.17 *Previous workshop building proposed as area for biomass boiler*

3.18 *Easy elevation of previous workshop building, now changed to house the biomass boiler*

3.19 *Previous workshop building, now changed to house the biomass boiler*

3.4 The Building Internally

The interior of Caer Rhun Hall features a striking entrance hall with a floor of sandstone and polished black slate slabs. The walls are adorned with three-quarter height small-field panelling, re-used from the 17th century at Plas Caerhun. A twin-arched opening on the left leads to a stairwell, supported by Tuscan columns and round arches. The narrow oak well stair boasts Jacobean-style geometric finials, strapwork decoration on the newel posts, and barley-twist balusters, with dado panelling completing the elegant design. To the right, a segmental opening with panelled doors leads to a panelled hall, where a Plas Mawr-style fireplace sits within a large Tudor-arched niche, featuring fluted pilasters and a moulded mantelpiece. The beamed ceiling has ovolo-moulded main beams with stopped chamfered detailing, and the far service end displays a carved foliate board above doors, inscribed with a late 19th-century motto: "Fear God and Honour the King."

The drawing and dining rooms are accessed from the hall, with the dining room featuring a panelled fireplace niche and a Jacobean-style fireplace. A cantilevered stone circular service stair within an octagonal tower has a swept oak rail and ball-finial at the bottom. The kitchen has a high ceiling, with contemporary glazed ceramic dado tiles and range alcoves, while re-used 16th/17th-century chamfered beams are visible in rooms off the kitchen.

3.5 Outline Condition Assessment

The building is in generally fair condition having undergone light refurbishment since changing ownership, addressing issues of water ingress and internal redecoration. The service areas to the rear courtyard of the building are rather more neglected, and some window sashes have been replaced with galvanised steel flues likely relating to the building's earlier conversion into a commercial hotel.

4.0 Assessment of Significance

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an assessment of significance of Caer Rhun Hall (Grade II) and its surrounding Registered Historic Park and Garden (Registered at Grade II), so that the proposals for change to the site are fully informed as to its significance and so that the effect of the proposals on that significance can be evaluated.

4.2 Assessment of Significance

4.2.1 Summary of Development

The current Caer Rhun Hall and Registered Park and Garden is an amalgam of man-made landscapes created through more than 1000 years of formalisation, construction and evolution. Whilst the current late 19th century Hall and formalised gardens contrast with the informality and naturalism of the gardens on the rest of the site they highlight the earlier house' presence and influence on the landscape. This house probably dated in the majority from the 17th century. However, the new Hall was constructed in 1895 following a fire at the earlier building. The hall and its outbuildings, walled garden and landscape features remained relatively intact, as they were at the time of their construction until the late 20th century, when a number of ancillary structures were erected on the site.

Whilst the gardener's cottage, lodge and other 20th century outbuildings remain within the estate, much of the wider parkland setting has been lost as part of the estate's sale in the early 20th century. The Home Farm located parallel to the estate along the road no longer sits within the estate's ownership and the parkland in which the Scheduled Monument of Canovium, and Grade I listed church sit are also no longer within the ownership of the Caer Rhun Estate.

4.2.2 Architectural and Aesthetic Value

Caer Rhun Hall is of high architectural and aesthetic value as an imposing example of a modest country house built in the Elizabethan-revivalist style popular at the end of the 19th century. Typical of the work of Grayson and Ould, it clearly highlights the influence of John Douglas in Ould's work and draws on references within the surrounding area- most notably Plas Mawr. Constructed in roughly dressed grey limestone with red sandstone dressings to the window surroundings, chimneys and quoins, the building's lively façade features crow-stepped gables, substantial late tudor-influenced chimney stacks and transom and mullioned windows that underline the quality of the building's design and construction. The influence of the practice's work at Selwyn College, Cambridge is particularly apparent.

The gardens and parkland landscape in which it sits add to the sense of grandeur of the building, with the 1890s terracing and walled gardens surrounding the building underlining the relatively extensive redevelopment that was undertaken on the site by Major-General Hugh Sutlej Gough. Highly fashionable during the period, the gardens, stables and walled garden represents a comprehensive redesign of the earlier scheme that was in place around the house. Though some of this has been lost with the sale of the Home Farm located on the other side of the B5106, the landscape and house as a collective and complimentary scheme highlight the monumentality, historically influenced design ideas and expense associated with late Victorian country house design.

However, other formal landscape elements, such as the ha-ha that encloses the garden and much of the deciduous planting visible throughout the gardens and parkland, date to earlier phases of the Hall's existence. These landscape elements collectively are of high aesthetic value, with the naturalistic earlier scheme of the house blending with the dramatic wider setting in which the parkland and house sit. Surrounded by mountains, the enclosed valley's cosy domestic character is enhanced.

4.2.3 Historic Value

Illustrative Value

The site is illustrative of the country house living that characterised the life of aristocratic and gentry families within Britain from the medieval period onwards. However, being an almost entirely late 19th century rebuild it specifically underlines the late 19th century movement to both reject classical ideals that has influenced country house design through the 18th century and to improve and rebuild existing country houses and their associated gardens to fit with 'restored' ideals of historic vernacular architecture. The construction of a new terraced and walled garden as part of these works illustrates both the wealth of the family who owned the estate, but also the close interrelationship between land and the country house, with the formal gardens also representing a revival of historic ideas surrounding garden design.

The retention of some of the naturalistic parkland character within the landscape- probably associated with an 18th or early 19th century remodelling of the parkland and gardens surrounding the house- illustrates the relatively continual occupation of both the house and parkland by the Griffith family since at least the 16th century and the endurance of the country house ideal that dominated aristocratic styles of living well into the 20th century.

Much of the original parkland associated with the Hall, and prior to that with Plas Caerhun, no longer forms part of the estate and thus to some extent the illustrative value of the site has been eroded. The Home Farm, located directly over the road from the Hall, has been sold and the historic relationship between the sites severed. Much of the rest of the park, probably having been sold off during the early decades of the 20th century and the Agricultural Depression, is now farmed and as such has a minimally legible relationship with the Hall and remaining gardens.

Associative Value

The house and surrounding landscape is of associative value for its connection to the Davies, Hemming and Gough families, who owned the building between the 16th and mid-20th century. Of particular value is the association with Hugh Sutlej Gough, the prominent British Army officer who served in the British colonial administration in India, Afghanistan, Egypt and Botswana. Finishing his career as Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, the Major-General's apparently substantial expenditure on the former Plas Caerhun Hall resulted in the creation of both the 1880s Hall itself and also prompted the construction of the terraced garden.

Further to this, the building's connection with the architectural firm Grayson and Ould, a prominent firm working in the surrounding region, confers associative historic value on the structure. Based in Liverpool, but working throughout the Wirral and North Wales, the firm was one of the most highly regarded within the surrounding area, including Chirk Council Offices (Grade II), The Bank of Liverpool, Wrexham (Grade II) and The Old Rectory, Halkyn (Grade II). Further to their work in Wales, the firm was of national reputation and also designed major new buildings at Selwyn and Trinity Hall Colleges, University of Cambridge through the 1890s.

As such, the site is of high historic value.

4.2.3 Evidential Value

Forming the site of the former Plas Caerhun house and located towards the edge of both the former Roman fort of Canovium and of the 13th century Grade I listed Church of St. Mary, the site of both the house and the surrounding gardens and parkland are of high evidential value. With the scheduled monument associated with the fort visible from within the parkland itself, it is possible that both part of the earlier medieval house on the site and possible material associated with the Roman fort may survive within the parkland and site of the house.

This special interest of the site is manifest in its setting, planform, landscape and built value which has the following hierarchy of significance.

Of **high significance** are:

- The built fabric of Caer Rhun Hall and associated outbuildings dating to the same period of construction, including the lodge and gardener's cottage
- Retained garden terracing and landscaping elements relating to the early and late 19th century schemes of works to the gardens and parkland, including the ha-ha, retained copses of deciduous trees and the remains of drystone boundary walling to the gardens
- Views of the church and Scheduled Ancient monument from within the gardens

Of **moderate significance** are:

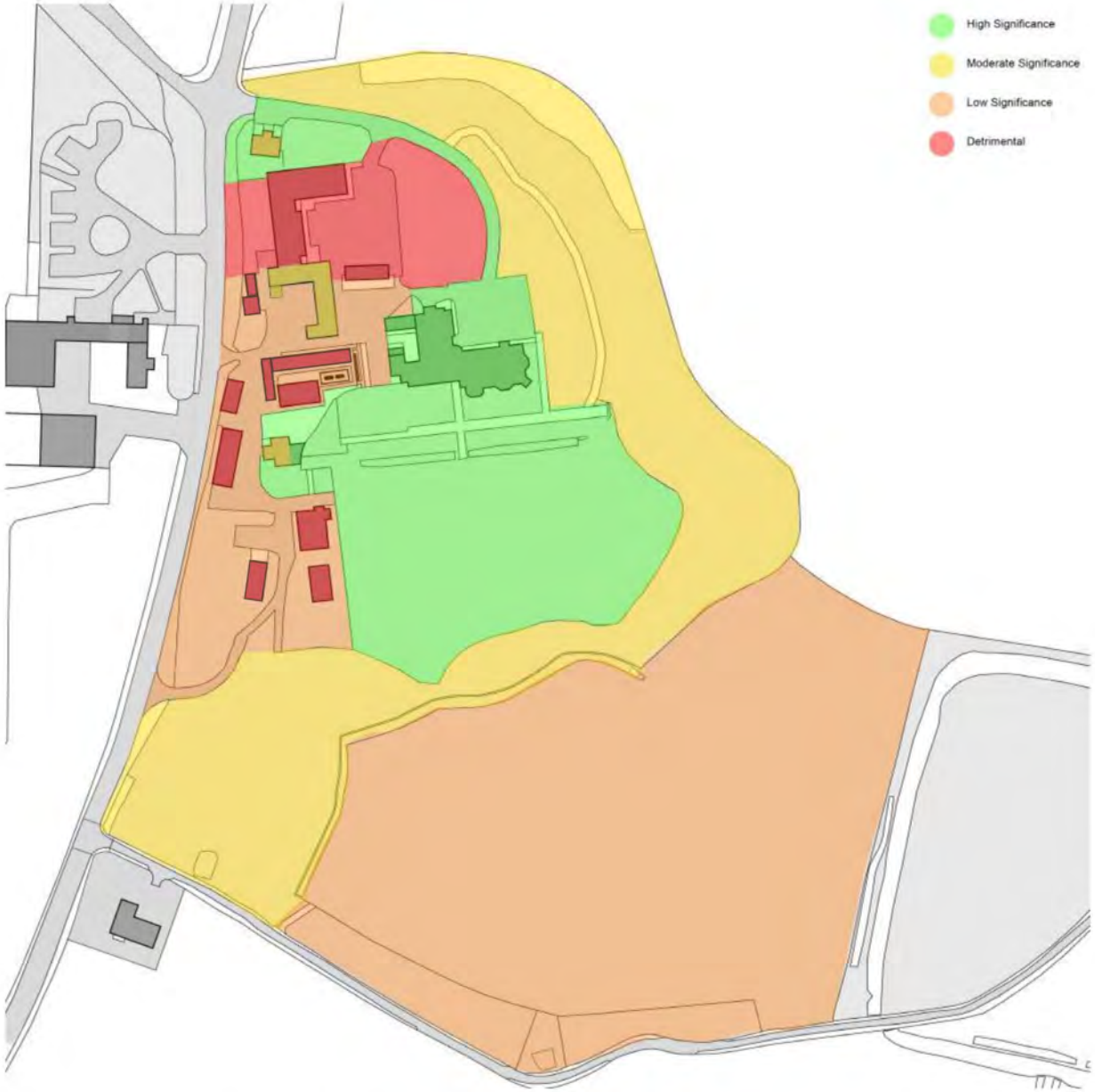
- The historic fabric of altered structures within the gardens, including the former stable block and greenhouse within the gardens.

Of **neutral significance**, neither contributing to or detracting from the significance of the whole are:

- Built elements of earlier buildings that relate to the 20th century, including corrugated metal roofing to earlier glass houses within the walled garden to the west of the house

Factors which detract from the building's significance are:

- Modern gas tanks within the immediate surroundings of the building
- Deteriorating 20th century fabric to the former stables, specifically including the roof and windows
- 20th century buildings located within the north and west of the site.


High Significance
Moderate Significance
Low Significance
Detrimental

4.4 Summary of Significance

Caer Rhun Hall and its surrounding landscaped gardens are significant as a substantial country estate in rural North Wales, located partially within the site of a strategically important Roman river crossing and former fort. Whilst the documentary history of the site dates to the 16th century, the archaeological record highlights that the estate itself has been inhabited since the reign of Agricola in around AD 79. The modern estate, which is substantially reduced in size from the huge swathes of park and farmland once in its ownership, is significant for exhibiting the layered history of its development and evolving trends in country house and landscape design; though the formal 1890s terraced gardens to the south of the house and the Hall itself date to the late Victorian period, the building sits within an earlier 19th century landscape and on the site of a substantially earlier hall of probable medieval origins.

The Hall, its park and gardens represent the continuation, but insecure succession, of the Davies and Griffith family at Caerhun from the 16th century, as well as underlining the family's wealth, taste and fashionability up until their sale of the property in the 1930s. In short, the value of the Estate is greater than the sum of its constituent parts, which in themselves vary in significance for their variable date, survival and aesthetic quality. What is intrinsically special to the site is how the Estate reflects centuries (indeed millennia if the Roman fort of Canovium were still included within the site boundary) of habitation and an evolving landscape with buildings from the 13th century to the 21st.

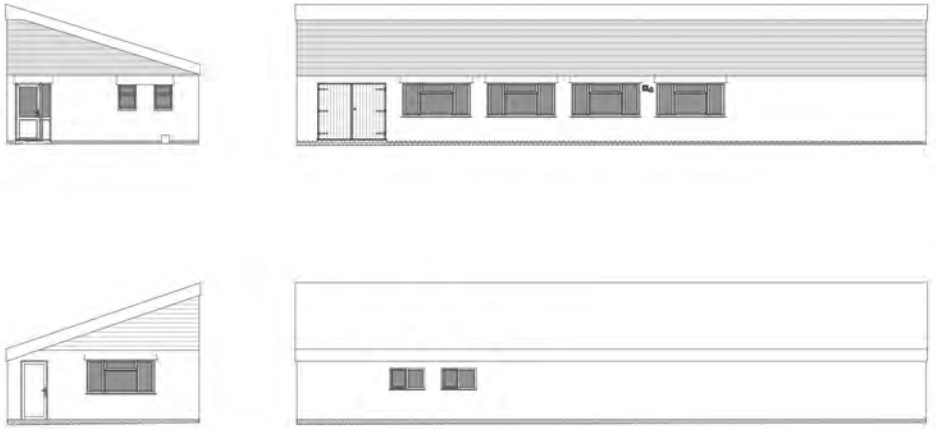
5.0 Commentary on the Proposals

The proposals consist of:

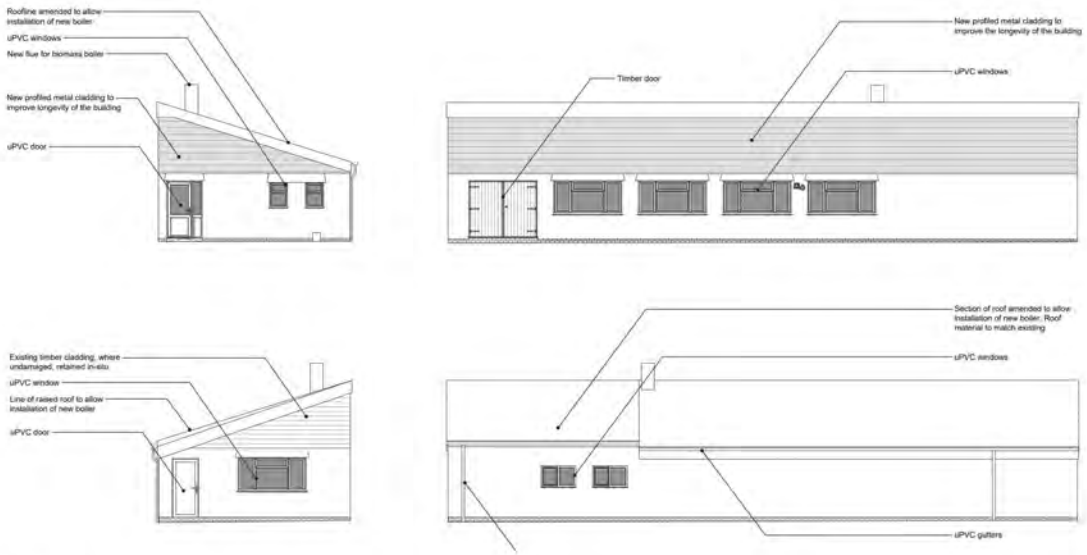
- Removal of area of roof and subsequent reinstatement at a revised pitch to accommodate biomass boiler
- Introduction of corrugated steel cladding to upper portion of elevation to improve the longevity of the building
- Installation of flue for biomass boiler

5.1 *Options Appraisal Site Plan*

Location of previous workshop building to house proposed works



5.2 *Existing Shed Elevations*



5.3 *Proposed Shed Elevations*

5.1 Description of the Proposals and their Impact on the Listed Building and Registered Historic Park and Garden

Proposed Work	Objective	Significance of Affected Fabric	Assessing Beneficial Impact	Assessing Adverse Impact	Proposed Mitigation
Adjusting the pitch of one section of roof to accommodate biomass boiler	To supply the hotel with renewable heating	The previous workshop structure falls within the curtilage of the Grade II listed building and Grade II registered gardens.	Ensures the hotel has a reliable, renewable source of heating	As the location is not visible from the most significant areas of the gardens, and they are positioned away from the elevations of the hall, there is negligible adverse impact on the setting of the listed building and registered garden.	None

5.2 Justification of the Proposals

Though the location is within the curtilage of the listed building, there is negligible impact on the setting of the building. The location of the unlisted ancillary former workshop means that the most significant parts of the listed building and registered garden are not affected.

5.3 Design and Access Statement

5.31 Access Statement

Caer Rhun Hall is set within a large acreage of parkland and gardens. The site of this proposal is to the west of the Hall which is characterised by a series of single storey ancillary buildings with a small new area of lawn. The proposal is for the installation of a biomass boiler, including alterations to an ancillary building which was previously used as a workshop.

5.32 Key Design Elements Considered

As part of any design, it is important to consider aspects including:

- Approaches and entrances that provide for shared use
- Accessible parking and drop-off near entrances and key destination points
- Levels and how gradients will be accommodated
- Route widths, surfaces, distance
- Horizontal and vertical circulation enabling shared journeys, not separating people
- Emergency egress accessible to all users.

In terms of how people use the development, it is further important to consider:

- Access to services
- Lighting (consider people with partial sight)
- Acoustic design (consider people with hearing loss)
- Access to toilets, cafes and other services
- Heights of counters, controls (eg sockets, window latches)
- Seating and shelter
- Accessible signage, information and communication

5.33 Conclusions - Access Considersations For This Application

The proposal is to install a biomass boiler within one of the previous workshop building at Caer Rhun Hall. The proposals do not create any new access points, routes through, to or around the site. Furthermore, there is no element of this development which constitutes the creation of any of the above elements which would typically require consideration in terms of accessibility, such as lighting, switches, acoustics, toilets and other services, seating or signage. In conclusion, although it is important to consider access in any development, the limited nature of this proposal means that there is no scope for enhanced access considerations.

5.4 Conclusion

The Grade II-listed Caer Rhun Hall is a notable example of Victorian neo-Elizabethan architecture, set within a Grade II-registered Park and Garden site steeped in history. Through its continued use as a hotel and with the significant investment by the current owners, the building's survival is assured. Of paramount importance is the ability for the building's servicing and heating systems to be operational and economical. The principle of the alterations to the previous workshop building required to house the biomass boiler is justified with respect to this continuing use.

Appendix I - Statutory List Description

Caer Rhun Hall
Grade II listed building
List Reference Number: 17010
Date first listed: 21/02/1996
Listing NGR: 277395 370541

History

The original Plas Caerhun was a largely C17 house with probable Medieval origins, and was the seat of the Davis and subsequently Davis-Griffith families. The present house was built in 1895 for Major-General Hugh Sutlej Gough (1848-1920), Commander-in-Chief in India during the first and second Sikh wars and conqueror of the Punjab, as well as Governor-General of Jersey. Designed in Elizabethan style, the house bears close similarity with the work of Douglas and Fordham, architects of Chester; the influence of Plas Mawr, Conway is apparent in both theme and detail.

Exterior

Large T-shaped house consisting of a two-and-a-half storey main section with an adjoining L-shaped service/ subsidiary range of 2 storeys. Of snecked limestone with red sandstone dressings and pale slate roofs. Asymmetrical facades with leaded mullioned and transomed plain and arched windows and paired or clustered chimneys, mostly off-set and with moulded cornices and capping. Stepped and kneelered gables throughout with ball finials carried on diagonal off-set shafts connecting with plain moulded stringcourses.

The N (entrance) front has a 5-and-a-half bay main block with a 3-bay subsidiary range at right-angles to the R. Extruded at the corner is a large octagonal stair tower with banded decoration, single-light windows with chamfered reveals and an octagonal roof with lead ball finial. Wide gabled bay to L of main block with first-floor canted oriel window of twin and flanking single lights; crenellated parapet to flat roof. Above this, in the gable apex, a plain stone shield-plaque. A dentilated stringcourse divides the ground and first floors and is returned around the E side. To the R (bay 2), an advanced, storied and gabled porch, the upper floor corbelled out slightly at the sides, though flush with the ground floor at the front. Arched entrance with returned label and surmounting, pedimented niche containing the sculpted crest of the Gough family in relief; boarded double doors. Above, a first-floor bowed oriel with 4-light mullioned and transomed convex window and stone domed ogee roof. To the right of the porch a 4-light mullioned window with arched heads and returned label, flanked by similar 3-light windows. 3 cross-windows to the first floor and above, three stepped-gabled dormers with 2-light mullions.

The connecting subsidiary range has two 3-light mullioned and transomed windows with arched heads to the R of the stair tower; above, three 3-light windows contained within gabled dormers as before, though corbelled out slightly. Stepped-gabled projecting cross-wing to R with single-storey canted bay window to ground floor; 3 light mullioned and transomed central window with flanking single lights. Above, a further mullioned and transomed window with pediment. Extruded in the corner between the subsidiary range and the cross-wing, a single-storey lean-to porch with crenellated parapet; ogee-headed entrance with moulded jambs. Stepped lateral chimney and adjoining single-storey porch to N return of cross-wing. The S (garden) front has the lower, subsidiary range set back to the L of the main block. The former has a projecting end chimney to its L gable. Irregular window arrangement with three 3-light and one 2-light mullioned windows to the ground floor, with a further 4-light mullioned and transomed window to far R beyond; plain stringcourse between storeys, stepped-up to R section. Arched entrance at angle with advanced main block, with moulded jambs and elliptical window above. 2 paired cross windows to the first floor, that to the R with surmounting stepped gable. Similar gable to R containing paired 2-light mullioned windows; smaller gable beyond, to far R containing a single 2-light window. The main block has two storied, canted bays with surmounting stepped gables, that to the L slightly larger. This has a 5-light, arched-headed, mullioned and transomed window with single-light returns to the ground floor; dentilated and moulded stringcourse above. Plain 5-light mullioned and transomed window to the first floor of the bay with a plain 4-light mullioned window to the third (gabled) storey. That to the R has a 3-light mullioned window with 2-light returns to ground and first floors; arched heads to lights. 2-light mullioned window to the gable, above a plain stone plaque (never ornamented). In between the bays the first floor is corbelled out; further mullioned and transomed windows to first floor and arched single light windows to ground floor, gabled dormer to attic with modern window.

Angled turret with tall pyramidal roof to SE corner; lead ball finial with wrought iron weathervane, feathered eaves. Storied flat-roofed bay to centre of E side with crenellated parapet. Wide-arched, multi-cusped heads to 2-light double-transomed windows; decorative lead glazing. Part enclosed service court to W with plain veranda to S side of NW cross range, carried on simple cast iron columns. 2-, 3- and 6-light mullioned and mullioned and transomed windows as before; half-hipped roof to single-storey projection to SW cross-wing.

Interior

Counter-changed floor to entrance hall, of sandstone and polished black slate slabs. Three-quarter height small-field panelling, re-used C17 material from Plas Caerhun. Twin-arched opening to L leading to stairwell; Tuscan columns supporting round arches. Narrow oak well stair with Jacobean-style geometric finials and strapwork decoration to newel posts; barley-twist balusters and dado panelling. Segmental opening with panelled doors to panelled hall at R. Plas Mawr type fireplace within large Tudor-arched niche which projects slightly; this has simple fluted pilaster decoration to its overmantle and a moulded mantelpiece. Beamed ceiling with ovolo moulding to main beams and stopped chamfered detail; re-used C17 panelling as before with, at the far (service) end, a carved foliate board above doors with late C19 inscription 'fear God and honour the King'. Drawing room and dining room off hall, the former with painted dado panelling. The dining room has a panelled fireplace niche and a Jacobean style fireplace with baluster-columns supporting a mantelpiece and geometric overmantel.

Cantilevered stone circular service stair contained within octagonal tower; swept oak rail and ball-finial to bottom newel. Re-used C16/C17 chamfered ceiling beams to room off kitchen. Kitchen with high ceiling and contemporary glazed ceramic dado tiles and range alcoves.

Reasons for Listing

An imposing and well-designed late Victorian country house in the manner of Douglas and Fordham, architects of Chester and with good surviving interior detail.

Caer Rhun Hall
Grade II Registered Historic Park & Garden
List Reference Number: PGW(Gd)12(CON)
Date first listed: 01/02/2022
Listing NGR: 277617 370554

Caer Rhûn Hall is situated above the west bank of the River Conwy. It is registered for the historical interest of its well-preserved terraced garden layout of the 1890s set in extensive older parkland, in an attractive riverside location. It has historical association with the military figure, Major-General G.H.Gough of India. Additionally there is important group value with the Grade II Listed Hall (LB 17010), the Grade I Listed medieval church of St Mary with its Grade II Listed lychgate (LBs 3167 & 17009), and the Scheduled Roman military landscape of Canovium (SAM CN001), all of which lie within the historic park.

The park is bounded on the east by the river, on the west by the B5106 Conwy to Betws y Coed road, on the south by the river and a tributary, and on the north by belts of woodland. The park dates from at least the early nineteenth century. Although it pre-dates the present house its layout was largely unchanged when the house was rebuilt and the garden redesigned in 1892. Many of the trees shown on early maps have gone but it retains its parkland appearance, sloping gently towards the river, dotted with old oaks. Some areas of deciduous woodland remain with the addition of some mixed plantations. An ice-house is located in the northern part of the park, on the edge of a plantation north-east of the house, under a man-made mound. It is approached via a right-angled passage 6 m long which had at least two doors. The chamber is conical and domed.

Prior to 1892 most of the garden area, apart from a lawn south of the house, was a walled kitchen garden of irregular shape containing glasshouses and fruit trees. This was replaced by a new lay-out and a new kitchen garden. Traces of the old walls, and some early plantings, survive.

The drive approaches in a curve from the north-west, from an iron-gated entrance and lodge on the road, with two further gateways from the road into the garden, passing through lawn with ornamental trees and shrubs, and into a courtyard in front of the house.

The garden terraces are to the south of the house, aligned on the garden front, and are wide and shallow. The top terrace runs along the front of the house, a broad gravel path with wide grass strips on either side. Beyond the west end of the terrace is a box parterre of two squares of different box patterns, replacing areas of shrubbery. Steps down access the second terrace below, which is lawned. Former paths are still visible as grassy ridges. The box parterre may be a later addition by General Gough, or possibly is attributable to a later owner.

A small formal pool and pergola at the west end of the terraces also seem likely to be the work of General Gough; a yew arbour at the opposite end may be slightly later, but provides a focal point from the pool, so was probably part of the same plan. The walk down the west side of the terraces has been laid out to focus on a pre-existing cedar. Below the lower terrace is a large lawn with a few trees and shrubs and terminating at a ha-ha on the south.

In the south-west corner of the garden, beyond the site of the orchard, is a small area which was shown as a rectangular plantation on the map of 1889. By 1913 it had been enlarged and given a curved outline, and had a path around within the boundary and one across the middle. More plantings had also been made, as conifers are indicated on this map, unlike the earlier one. There is also a small pool and rockwork at the southern end of this garden area.

The 'new' kitchen garden lies on the west side of the B5106, north of the home farm buildings, one range of which forms the south wall of the garden. It is rectangular, long axis north by south, with rounded north corners and an 'apse' in the north wall. The walls, of brick up to 3m high, have largely survived. There were four arched doorways three of which remain. The interior has been completely cleared and is now used as a caravan park. Two internal features remain: a circular pool and fountain just south of centre, and in the apse another, smaller circular feature, possibly a filled-in pool.

Setting - Caer Rhûn is located in a rural area surrounded by farmland in a riverside location providing a setting for the house.

Significant views - Caer Rhûn Hall is located at the highest point of the park from which there are views south across the gardens to the countryside beyond.

Donald Insall Associates