

2.5 SUMMARY HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The site consists of the Marble Hill Stable Block with its surrounding area and the rear courtyard delineated by a brick boundary wall with South End House to north-west.

Marble Hill is situated on the north bank of the River Thames (National Grid Reference: NGR TQ 17353 73651), c. 1km upstream from Richmond Bridge and on the opposite bank to Ham House. Richmond town is c. 2km to the north-east, and Twickenham c. 1km to the south-west. The park is separated by iron railings from Warren Path, an asphalted footpath which runs alongside the river to Richmond. Richmond Road and the backs of houses in Cambridge Park provide the boundary to the north and east, Montpelier Row and Orleans Road the boundary to the west.

Stable Block

Stable Block forms part of Marble Hill estate which was created for Henrietta Howard in the 1720's and focuses on Marble Hill House, a compact, quintessential Neo-Palladian villa situated in the centre of the park. Stable Block forms an important landscape element in the park with views across from the east, the great lawn and Marble Hill House focusing on this historic building.

It was constructed in c.1827 by Lieutenant-General Jonathan Peel who owned Marble Hill at the time. The building consists of a two-storey linear block running N-S, with a hipped pitched roof with front pediment and small central clocktower, and two single storey rear wings, again with hipped roofs. It is made of loadbearing brick, with sash windows, doors and clocktower in painted timber, with slated roofs. The east (principle) façade is distinguished by a symmetrical composition, with the clocktower above and a central carriage arch giving access to the yard at the rear as originally conceived. The other facades are less visible and less formal, partly as they have been extensively altered over the years, with one remaining pair of large timber coach house doors to the north wing.

Originally the building included 6 stalls for carriage and working horses and 3 loose boxes where more valuable horses, perhaps mares with their foals, were kept. Archival plans show that the building was converted into two tenement houses c.1905 and further altered to accommodate the WCs and existing café c1964. The stalls partitions are still intact and located in main range on the ground floor together with the office and tack room, while the rear wings acquired service function – in the south one of the loose boxes was converted into a wash house and the north wing, originally a cart shed, was later converted to a garage.

The upper level provided residential accommodation including bedrooms, scullery and coal storage.

While externally the building is relatively unchanged, internally the layout has been considerably altered in the 1960s. These alterations are mostly confined to the ground floor, with the stalls partitions and several dividing walls removed and the north range converted into toilet facilities. Some of the original features such as chimney pieces, panelling in the small office, have been retained. The position of the horse stalls in the south range is marked by the surviving partition posts.

The building houses the café, toilets, plus flats for staff on the first floor. The raised beds in front of the block were thought to have been added with rubble from the Second World War. To the rear of the Stable Block is a walled yard. This is currently used for car parking and is poorly presented although historic stone setts are present beneath the modern surfacing.

Associated with the stable block is a disused GLC changing block located to the north and hidden in the shrubbery of the Sweet Walk. It is made of timber, well detailed, and in fair condition. It does not have a negative impact on the setting of the Stable block and as such, it is anticipated that the block will be retained. To the north-east of the stables, at the corner of the shrubberies is a small shed clad in waney-edge boards, containing a ticket machine for the tennis courts. This is in poor condition and is visually inappropriate.

To north-west of the Stable Block, seen over the boundary wall, there stand South End House and Montpelier House. These are large, 18th-century mansions forming a block which is part of Montpelier Row. They are elaborately finished with red brick bands and dressings, brick cornices and panelled parapets. Brick wall in front of Montpelier House has 4 piers with stone vases, iron railing and overthrow. The iron gate is modern.

South End House & Gazebo

South End House is larger (3-storey) than the rest of the buildings in Montpelier Row and stands at the end of the street with the gates to its grounds facing down the road. To its left is a one-storey "Gothick" stucco addition, now painted pale green, with a semi-hexagonal bay with tall pointed windows. At the back of the main block, one-window wings project to the depth of one blank window.

The Gazebo in the south-east corner of South End House garden is a two storey brick building with a parapet and chimney stack. The block is 4.15m square, and approximately 6.5m high. It originated as a single storey structure in mid-18th century and was extended and altered in later 18th and 19th centuries.



Diagram of Listed Buildings



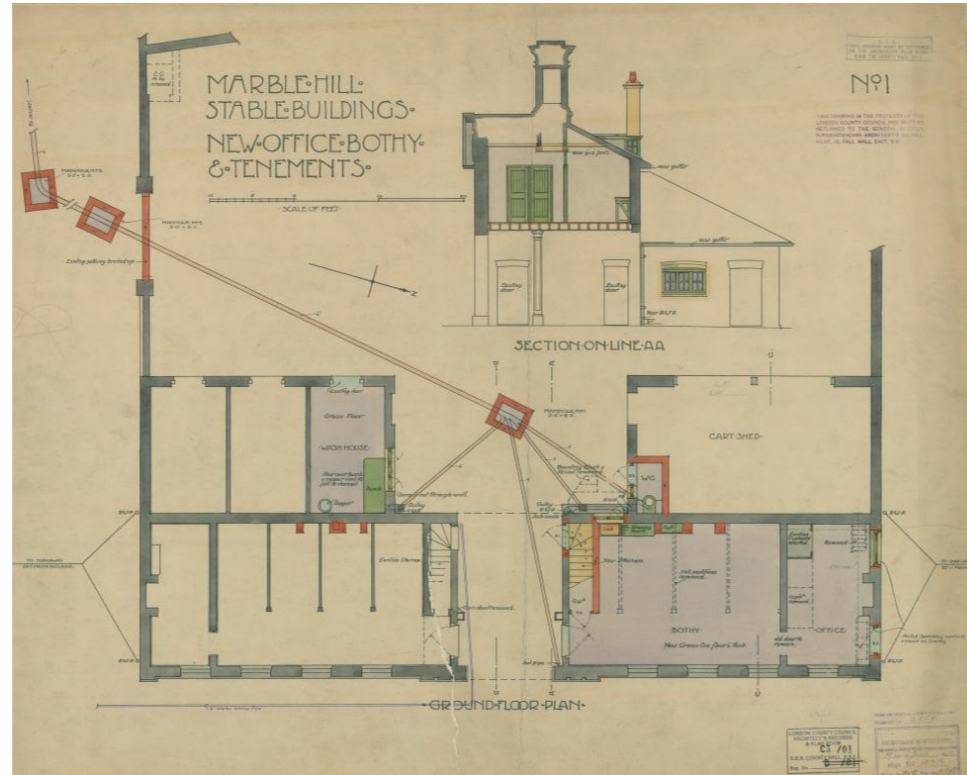
Extract from Rocque c1754 map showing the site shortly after the buildings' completion. Approximate site centre and existing stable block marked in red.



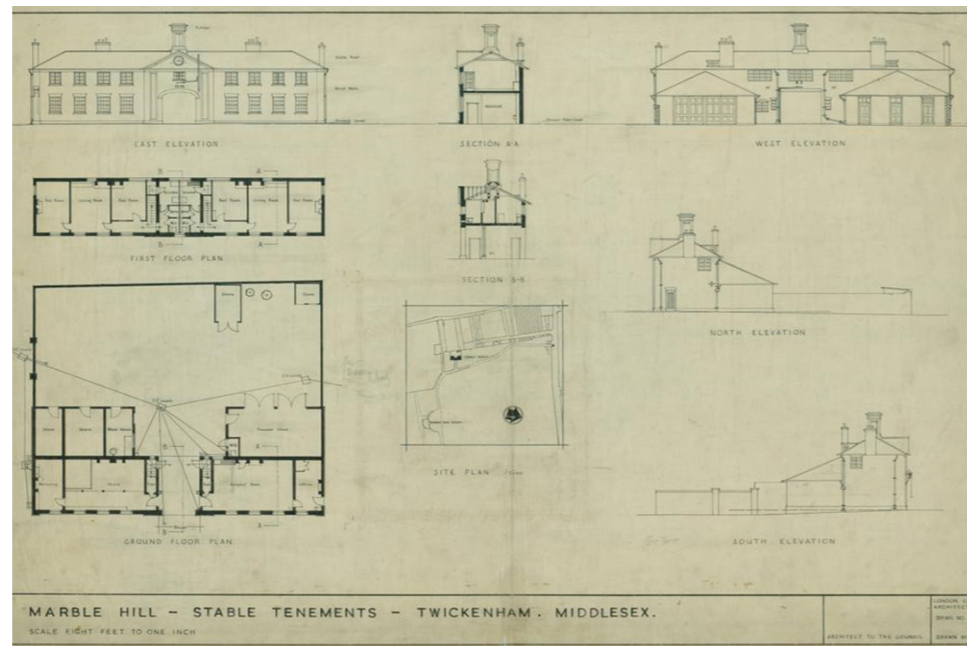
Extract from the OS 1867 six-inch map, with the stable block outlined in red.



Extract from B.R. Davies' 1847 map. Marble Hill House and landscaped gardens are shown, in addition to the development of South End House to the west.



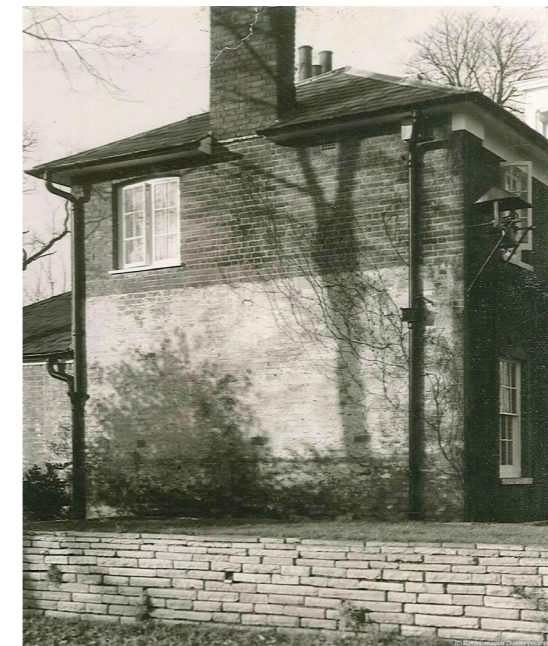
Original Architect's Drawings of Stable Block - 1905



Stable Block Survey Drawings - 1964



Historic photograph of Stable Block east elevation



Historic photograph of Stable Block south elevation

3.0 THE BRIEF

3.1 OVERALL PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Marble Hill runs at substantial and unsustainable annual loss to English Heritage, and as Government grant funding has been steadily cut, the operation of Marble Hill has become more and more constrained. At present, public access to the House is only available once a week on a guided tour with minimal interpretation. The facilities and maintenance of the landscape, sports and recreational facilities in the Park are similarly constrained.

The objective of the overall project is to transform the experience of visitors to the site, increasing understanding of the House and Park's heritage value and providing enhanced recreational facilities that appeal to a broad range of people. In doing so, the intention is to generate more revenue from visitors to secure a financially sustainable future for the Park and its buildings. Please refer to the Landscape Design and Access Statement for further detail on the wider project proposal.

There is insufficient capital funding available within English Heritage to invest in better facilities. English Heritage has therefore established the Marble Hill Revived project to make a funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Parks for People scheme.

The potential public benefits of the project have been recognized by the HLF's award of a Round 2 pass, and it is now in its Development Stage.

3.2 STABLE BLOCK CAFÉ - PRINCIPLE AIMS AND ASPIRATIONS

3.2.1 Revenue generation within the Park

Typically a heritage attraction such as Marble Hill House would generate revenue by visitor admission fees, and by providing a café and a shop for visitors. However, the operational basis of both House and Park is that they will remain free-entry, to attract the broadest audience and maximize public benefit. The commercial viability of the café and shop are therefore of fundamental importance for the future of the site.

3.2.2 Enhancing Visitor Experiences

Feedback and operational experience from previous English Heritage visitor centres has informed the brief. A key distinction is that this facility will be outside an attractions 'pay line' and is thus different from most English Heritage facilities. There is no possibility of designing the visitor flow to the House to go through the café. So the café will continue to function as the park café rather than an 'historic house' tea room.

The visitor experience must be compelling, with food, ambience and setting that attract the widest range of visitors and complement the interpretation of the House and Park.

The brief recognizes that this objective needs to be balanced with the impact on the front façade, given its completeness and role within the overall park landscape, and works to the existing building will be considerate to the impact to the neighbours to Montpelier Row. It is also helpful that the café is co-located with the park WCs, as this avoids duplication.

The building will continue to provide residential accommodation for rangers on the first floor and toilet facilities for the Park. The brief does not include any works to the residential accommodation.

Catering operations will be run directly by English Heritage, to maximize control of the operation and to ensure that their objectives for community use, visitor experience and commercial return are met.

3.2.3 Performance and Environmental Measures

The brief seeks to minimise both water and energy used by the facilities, and use sustainable urban drainage techniques to mitigate rain water run-off.

However, the nature of operational demands on the building, overall budgetary constraints and the heritage significance of the building and its surroundings, have limited the sustainable approaches that are reasonably applicable.

3.2.4 Character

In discussing the brief a number of precedents were discussed and/or visited by van Heyningen and Haward and English Heritage. These have informed the discussions about the appearance and character of the new facilities.

The application site's location within a listed Park and within the curtilage of other listed buildings, and the listed status of the existing building, creates clear emphasis on the quality of the external expression of the building.

Whilst Marble Hill Park is very much part of the Thames Arcadia, with the House and its designed landscape (which will be restored as part of the wider Marble Hill Revived project) amongst the best surviving of the arcadian Villas, its park facilities are now strongly community based.

The aspiration is for the character of the new café to have the accessibility and informality of a local park café, rather than the formal qualities of the House and its formal landscape setting.

In particular, the café must present an attractive and welcoming environment which can welcome a wide variety of users throughout the year from both park and house for example muddy dog walkers, families with small children, elderly people, or school groups.

The conclusions drawn from the precedent examples were that the café experience should:

- Provide a relaxed and informal environment welcoming to all
- Have a simple and easily understood sequence of spaces with obvious access and wayfinding
- Create places for external seating which can be vibrant and busy in the summer
- Treat the furniture and color palette within the space as an integral part of the design
- Create a welcoming place that will invite people from across the lawn
- Provide a place for all park users to enjoy



Chiswick House cafe, external seating area in the gardens



Woodberry Wetlands cafe, external seating viewing the wetlands



Woodberry Wetlands cafe, internal seating



Food display at Ottolenghi restaurant- high quality and attractive food.



English Heritage Beach Cafe, Cornwall



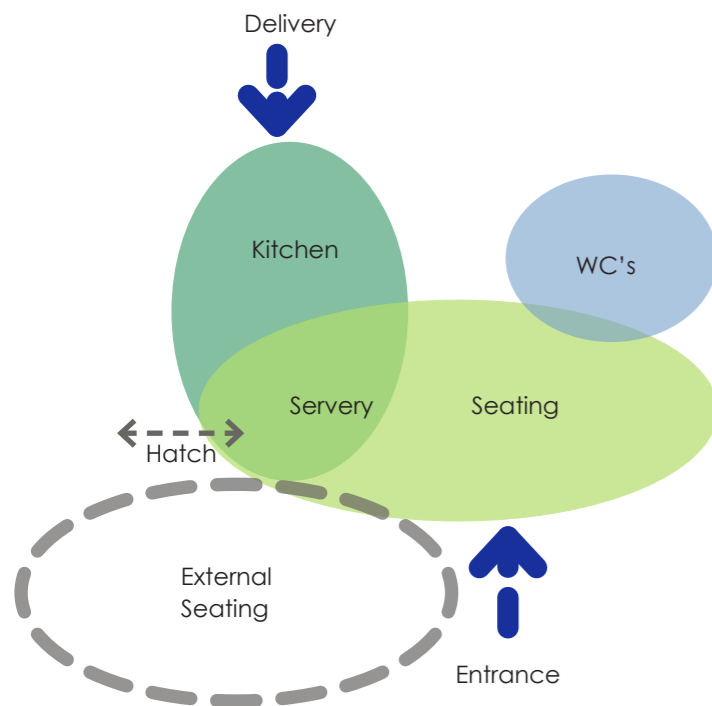
Eltham Palace cafe - Cooper8 interior design for English Heritage

3.3 FACILITIES REQUIRED

3.3.1 Area Schedule

Accommodation described in this brief should be read in conjunction with the Schedule of Areas below:

Room	Area (m2)
Kitchen	37
Servery and Cafe Seating	51
Cafe Overflow Seating	33
WC's	18
Office	15
Staff WC's and changing	5
Plant	15
External Store	63
TOTAL	237



Adjacency Diagram of required facilities

3.3.2 Catering Brief

Café Seating and Servery

The main café capacity required is 60 covers inside and at least 80 covers outside. The main café seating area will include counter and 30 covers with an additional overflow seating area of approximately 30 internal covers during peak days. External seating allows the capacity to be simply increased at peak months, when the weather is good.

The required internal space per cover is to be based on about 1.5m²/person. The seating areas need to be easily supervised and served.

It is anticipated that external seating and the consequential increase in covers in the summer will be a major contributor to viability, so the attractiveness and variety of external seating areas is important.

The café is to operate an 'assisted service' where a range of cold/ambient food and drinks are on display along the counter. It is intended that the café will have an alcohol license. The customer will help themselves to the displays whilst selecting snacks and/or main meals from the menu boards, then will pay and collect drinks, with food brought to them at their table.

This requires a front counter to accommodate a display of cakes, ambient foods, chilled drinks, sandwiches, front facing with the ability to replenish stock from the kitchen. The back counter must accommodate a barista coffee machine, boiler and sunken soup terrine along with under counter fridges.

The dog-free area to the south of the Stable Block is used by those with small children, and this area will be enhanced by the landscape works. It is desirable that this is overlooked by the café and its seating, to allow parents to obtain/consume refreshments whilst their children play.

Many of the regular park users are dog-walkers, and so the café arrangements need to suit those with dogs as well as those who find dogs intimidating or unpleasant.

The form, materials and finishes need to provide a welcoming space, using good quality materials and forms which are in sympathy with the historic fabric of the Stable Block and surrounding area. The look and feel of the space will be key to its success. Many of the users of the café will have been walking in the park and may well be wet and/or have muddy shoes, so internally the finishes need to be robust, look good, provide a sense of place and be easy to clean when used by any park users.

Kitchen, storage and Service Yard

The kitchen size is based on the number of covers and the food offer proposed. An additional requirement of the café is that it provides suitable facilities and space to allow it to be used for the apprenticeship and training offer proposed. The catering offer and service will be tailored to the syllabus ensuring staff development and community involvement. The brief is based on a catering kitchen which can provide high quality fresh and seasonal hot and cold food, made on the premises.

There needs to be adequate storage space and a suitable cold store. If suitable, the existing timber building to the north of the Stable Block can be used for dry goods storage.

Where possible the kitchen should use electric equipment only i.e. induction hobs, not gas, as this is safer (so less complex safety equipment), needs lower extraction volumes and creates a better working environment for staff. The feasibility of an entirely electrical kitchen depends on the confirmation of electricity supply capacity by the utility company.

Welfare, delivery and refuse arrangements need to be appropriate for this level of catering.

The service yard needs to accommodate Staff parking. Deliveries by a van as well as refuse collection vehicles will access the site using the existing park path along the western edge of the park, with timed deliveries. Refuse is collected from a bin store adjacent to the access road. Delivery will be trolleyed from the road into the kitchen via the carriage arch.

The visual and acoustic impact of delivery and refuse will be minimized with effective location screening, and conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians mitigated as much as possible.

Kiosk Servery

In addition to the main café servery, the brief asks for a small 'kiosk' hatch, serving directly to outside, allowing customers to buy take-away ice-cream and hot drinks without entering the café proper. This will enable the café to provide a better offer in the summer months when there will be the greatest number of visitors to the park.

3.3.3 Toilets

The current arrangement provides male, female and accessible WC facilities within the Stable Block. There are five female WCs, two male WCs and four urinals, two staff WCs and one unisex wheelchair accessible WC.

The proposed provision is to eliminate the current male and female separation. This is achieved by providing 2 individual cubicles each with its own washing basin and toilets and also an unisex wheelchair accessible WC. A Staff Change and WCs is also located nearby to improve services connections and better water and energy management.

These will serve the users of the café and park. Additional public toilets will be available in the refurbished Sports Block, located in the East side of the park, outside sports match times.