

HAU – Submission form:

a) The reasons for the location of the site within its surroundings:

Himley Hall was a manor house for the Earls of Dudley and the house provided a central position on the estate which included coal mines and steel works. Following damage to Dudley castle during the Civil War it became the principal family home for the Earl of Dudley. Himley Hall was a moated manor house, which stood next to the medieval church and village. For over four centuries it served as a home to the Lords of Dudley and their knights. Occupants during this period included Dud Dudley, whose seventeenth century experiments in smelting iron ore with coal were carried out nearby. In 1645, King Charles I encamped in the grounds on his way to defeat at the Battle of Naseby during the English Civil War.

b) When and why people first created the site*

In 1740, John Ward became the 6th Lord Ward and inherited the Himley Estates. At the same time he was elected as an MP and his new high status position called for a more impressive home. The old manor house was demolished and a replacement built in the classical Palladian style. On its completion it was immediately extended and additional wings were added.

c) The ways in which the site has changed over time*

A medieval Lord of the Manor expected his people to live and work nearby, but by the eighteenth century the aristocracy preferred a wide area of parkland around their stately homes. Himley village was relocated, completed when the church was re-erected on its present site in 1764. In 1823 John William Ward became a skilful politician, and later Foreign Secretary, he was eventually created 1st Earl of Dudley. To reflect his growing status and wealth he brought in the famous London architect William Atkinson, and the Hall we see today is mainly the result of his work. Atkinson was renowned for a special cement rendering, 'Atkinson's cement', with which he covered the external walls of the Hall. The Hall has continued to be used as a residence for the Earl of Dudley and was used regularly by Edward VIII and Wallace Simpson – Edward changed the window on the West Wing to allow for friends staggering back from the Dudley Arms late at night to walk through into the Earl's library. It was used by the Red Cross in 1941 for pilots badly burnt in war to recuperate. Auctioned to the Coal board in 1947 and used by workers. In 1966 it was purchased jointly by Dudley and Wolverhampton District Councils. The park was opened as a public leisure area. In 1988 Dudley bought Wolverhampton's share, gaining outright ownership. Throughout the late 60s and 70s students used the house as accommodation, favourite bedrooms of Edward VIII and Simpson became bedrooms and common rooms for students! Now the house is used for weddings and guided tours. The estate is used for dog walking, bonfire events and wedding fayres with the great lake being used for fishing and pedal boats.

d) How the site has been used throughout its history:

Residence for the Earl of Dudley, accommodation for royalty – Edward VIII, Red Cross in 1941, Coal Board used the house for workers following the purchase of the Hall in 1947, sold to Dudley and Wolverhampton Council and used for students, now owned by Dudley Council and used for weddings and guided tours, grounds are open for the public and used daily, also very popular conference venue.

e) The diversity of activities and people associated with the site*

Used as a household for the Earl of Dudley. During the seventeenth century the Ward family inherited the title Lords of Dudley through the marriage of Humble Ward to the heiress to the Dudley estates, Frances Sutton, in 1628. Humble Ward was the son of the jeweller and goldsmith to the court of King Charles I. Following damage to Dudley Castle during the Civil War, Himley Hall became the principal family home. In 1740, John Ward became the 6th Lord Ward and inherited the Himley Estates. In 1774 John Ward died and was succeeded by his son John. He brought in Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to re-design the parkland. This included the creation of the great lake, a new carriage approach to the Hall from the Dudley Road, and the planting of scattered clumps of trees throughout the estate. John died without an heir in 1788, and so his title passed on to his brother, William Ward, who became 3rd Viscount. Some said he had a likeness for 'port and fiddling', but he was known locally as the 'Poor man's friend' as he supported several local charities. A great music lover, he installed an organ at Himley by John Avery, a skilled organ builder who had worked on the organs at Westminster Abbey and Winchester Cathedral. In 1823 John William Ward became 4th Viscount Dudley and Ward. A skilful politician, and later Foreign Secretary, he was eventually created 1st Earl of Dudley. To reflect his growing status and wealth he brought in the famous London architect William Atkinson, and the Hall we see today is mainly the result of his work. Viscount Ednam, who succeeded his father as Earl of Dudley in 1932. In 1919 the Viscount married the wealthy heiress Lady Rosemary Leveson-Gower and Himley Hall once again became the ancestral home. Viscount Ednam was a close friend of the royal family, in particular the Prince of Wales.

Himley became a regular weekend retreat for royal visitors. During this period the Hall was brought up to contemporary standards, with the addition of a terrace around the Hall, a tennis court and a nine-hole golf course. Modern amenities were introduced to the Hall including plumbing, central heating, a cinema and a swimming pool. It was now an up-to-date, luxurious home, so fashionable in fact that in 1934 the Duke and Duchess of Kent spent the first two weeks of their honeymoon at Himley. The newspapers of the day covered the event fully. Further amenities were added for the royal visit, with the Earl adapting the cinema to take 'talkies', along with extensive redecorating which included a Chinese room, with lacquered furniture and hand-painted Chinese wallpaper, which cost £400. The Royals also made use of the indoor swimming pool, which was equipped with a water chute and cocktail bar! During the Second World War the Earl removed most of the family belongings from the South wing, which was handed over to be used as a Red Cross hospital. After the war the estate was sold to the National Coal Board for £45,000 for use as a regional headquarters. It was during this conversion of the Hall that a fire broke out in, and gutted, the South wing. This part of the house was rebuilt but, unfortunately, not according to its former appearance. Planning permission to turn the ward house into luxury flats.

f) The reasons for changes to the site and to the way it was used*

Changes in ownership of the property is the main reason for changes to the way it was used. Please see points above.

g) Significant times in the site's past: peak activity, major developments, turning points*

Peak activity was during the 1920s-1940s with regular royal visits, Churchill also visited in 1928. This was when the Hall became more glamorous with elaborate decoration, tennis court, swimming pool and cinema.

Turning points include being taken over by the coal board 1947 and then by Dudley and Wolverhampton council in 1966 leading to changes in function of the hall. During conversion of the Hall for the coal board that a fire broke out in, and gutted, the South wing. This part of the house was rebuilt but, unfortunately, not according to its former appearance.

Modern Day: run as a wedding venue, conference hall and the estate is open to the local community for events and family days out.

h) The significance of specific features in the physical remains at the site*

Specific Features:

Gardens by Capability Brown shows a desire to provide for the owners of the house e.g. through the orchard as well as looking opulent to show the wealth of the owners.

The Great Lake, Swimming pool and cocktail bar – to show opulence.

Double sided clock for servants, servants quarters showing bedrooms and where linen was kept – reinforces the difference between the earls and their workers.

Ice Houses – practicality, store ice taken off the Great Lake.

During 1960s when owned by council steel rods put in to hold up front of building. 247 windows taken out numbered and resorted. Ward house used to be stable block - duchess kept buggy and donkey to ride around estate. Lead pipe work replaced with plastic coated pipes with coat of arms on added recently. Coal under house never allowed to be mined. Billiard room - Wooden panelling has a lock in showing it came from somewhere else. Fireplace plastered up - only recently rediscovered. Coal board covered up original stair case after fire to lower cost, two spindles from the original staircase now on show to the public. Room where we started originally dining room - no fire place as chairman of national coal board removed fireplaces and moved into own home. Memory Garden in grounds used for the burial of the Earl's dogs reinforces significance of pets to the Earl of Dudley.

i) The importance of the whole site either locally or nationally, as appropriate*

It was important locally for the Earl of Dudley as primary residence and nationally due to royal visits particularly from Edward VIII and Wallace Simpson. Also national significance in 1941 when used by the Red Cross. Local significance to the council during the late 1960's for accommodation for students and now locally as a wedding venue, conference center and for dog-walkers and family picnics.

j) The typicality of the site based on a comparison with other similar sites*

Similarities between Whitley Court and Himley Hall:

Whitley court is a similar property to Himley Hall. Its use was similar in the late 19th and early 20th century: It was once of the great country houses of England, reaching its peak in the Victorian period when it was the setting for extravagant parties and royal entertainments. The 1st Baron Foley (1673–1733) enlarged the house significantly, adding wings on either side – similar to Himley Hall. In the mid-18th century the lake known as Front Pool was created to the north of the house by damming the brook that feeds it, similar to the Great Lake created at Himley Hall. Georgian interiors also used at Himley Hall. Dudley's fortune also funded the creation of an ornate formal garden at Whitley designed in the 1850s by William Andrews Nesfield, the leading garden designer of his day, gardens clearly very important at both Himley and Whitley Court.

Differences:

More opulent than Himley Hall: In the 1850s Witley Court reached its peak of grandeur when Ward, now 1st Earl of Dudley, commissioned the architect Samuel Daukes to remodel it. The transformation, largely complete by 1860, involved recasting the austere exterior in Bath stone, in the ornate Italianate style used for the creation of Osborne House on the Isle of Wight for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. A new curving wing was added at the south-west corner, leading to a vast glass-roofed conservatory. Within the house, the Georgian interiors gave way to fashionably ornate decoration, much of it in the Louis XV style. <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/witley-court-and-gardens/history/>

k) What the site reveals about everyday life, attitudes and values in particular periods of history*

1. Clearly Himley Hall shows a **desire** within the 1920s-1940s **to impress** and show the opulent lifestyle of the Earls of Dudley. The gardens, swimming pool and cinema room reinforce this. There was a desire to be admired by workers and royalty alike.
2. Significant change with war and after it shows values shifted to **meet the needs of the country** being used to take care of burnt pilots and then being auctioned to the coal board and then to the local council.
3. Following 1941 all usage of Himley has been **practical**. Coal Board and then council owned – for workers and to house students.
4. In 1992 Dudley Council began work on a phased program of restoration through financial support from the European Regional Development Fund. Eight rooms within the historic core of the Hall were restored to their former glory. Himley Hall & Park then returned to its rightful place as a major venue for the Borough of Dudley and its potential as a multi-use centre is emerging. In 2008 the refurbishment of the ground floor of the North Wing of the Hall was completed and the rooms which once housed the Earl of Dudley's swimming pool and cinema have been transformed into an elegant Art-Deco style banqueting suite and lounge bar.

l) How the physical remains may prompt questions about the past and how historians frame these as valid historical enquiries*

Who built it? Who changed it? Who used it? What is it? What changes has it seen? What was it used for? When was it built? When was it changed? When was it used? Why was it built? Why was it changed? Why was it used? How was it built? How was it changed? How was it used? How much did it cost/change to build? Where was it built? Where was it changed? Where did the people come from who used it?

m) How the physical remains can inform artistic reconstructions and other interpretations of the site*

Himley Hall's exterior and grounds can allow artistic reconstructions to be created – they are all in good condition and the grounds are fully functioning with the great lake. This would allow artists to reconstruct what the hall looks like within the grounds.

n) The challenges and benefits of studying the historic environment*

Benefits:

- Due to the high quality of remains you can get a real sense of what it was like.
- Local students learn about their local area and its importance

- Creates pride of the significance of the area for local people
- Ability to see real history due to the physical remains

Challenges:

- Different interpretations of the same site
- Significance of the area may be exaggerated
- Lack of written sources