

PROPOSALS FOR  
**WHINNEY CLOSE FARM**  
COCKLEY HILL LANE, KIRKHEATON,  
YORKSHIRE  
SPECIALIST DESIGN REVIEW COMMENT



*Figure 1: Proposed principal elevation. Shaw & Jagger Architects Ltd., 2024.*

Jeremy Musson, MPhil, FSA

December 2024

JEREMY MUSSON

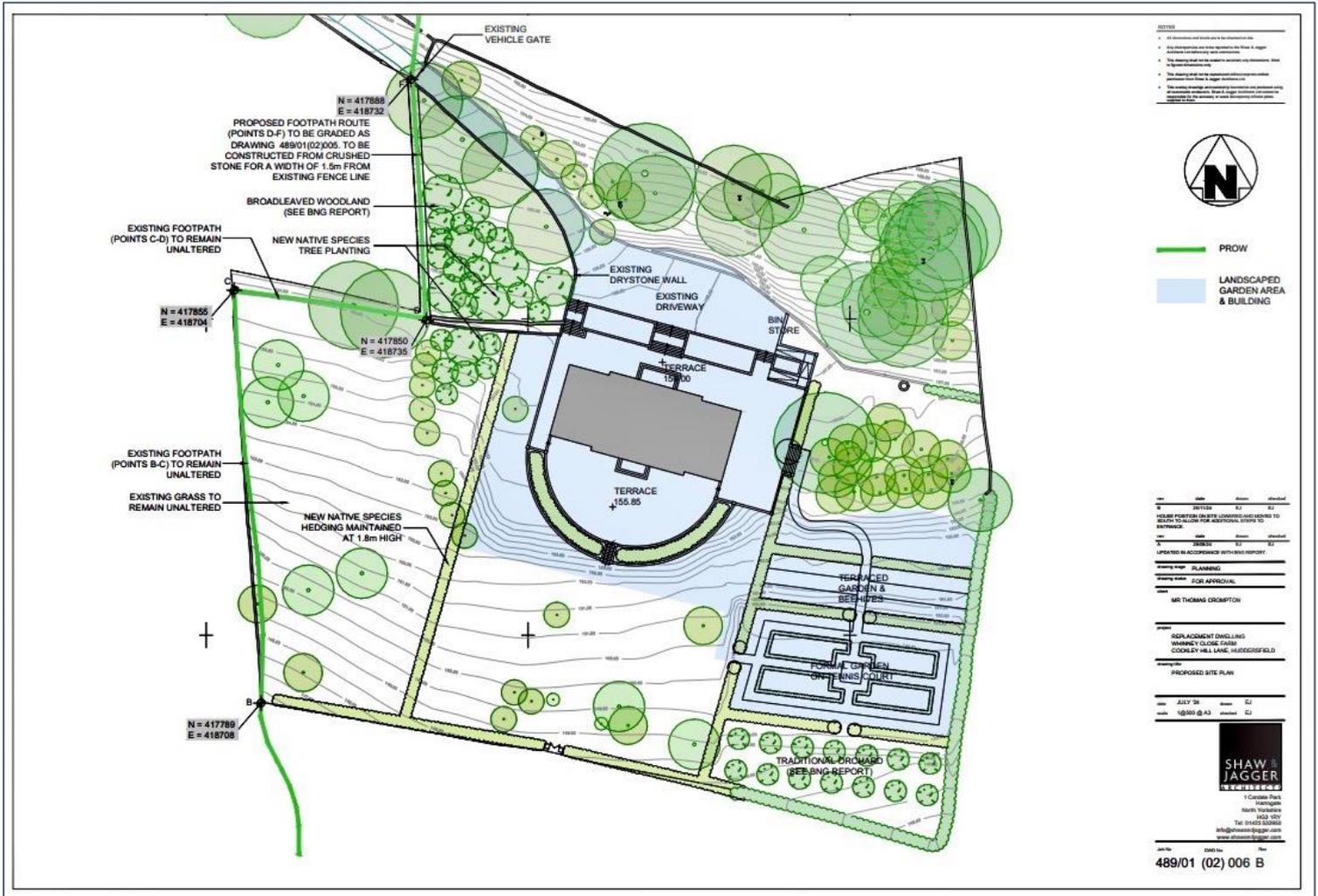


Figure 2: Proposed site plan. Shaw & Jagger Architects Ltd., July 2024.

## THE REPORT AUTHOR

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Jeremy Musson is an architectural historian, author and a design and historic buildings consultant, with a special expertise in the English country house and English domestic architecture generally. He studied at UCL and the Warburg Institute, London and worked as a National Trust assistant curator in East Anglia, 1992-1995. Architectural Editor of *Country Life* in 1997-2008, since 2008, he has worked on major advisory projects including on Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire. He is author of many books on country houses including *The English Manor House* (1999), *How to Read a Country House* (2005) and *The Country House Ideal* (2015) and he is a trustee of the Historic Houses Foundation. He has been giving expert opinion on proposals under para 84e and its predecessors for several years.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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1. The proposal under consideration is for a replacement dwelling at Whinney Close Farm, for a new Classical house replacing a much modified and degraded farmhouse of no merit. The new house will be on a similar footprint, slightly overlapping the site of the previous house, but moved slightly further down the slope to reduce the overall visual and spatial impact.
2. This report reviews the overall design quality of the proposal and whether it demonstrates that it meets NPPF policy of very special circumstances through it being *'outstanding or innovative design which promotes high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.'*
3. The new family house is to be built for the owner of the property which includes substantial grounds surrounding the dwelling. The house is to be designed in a sympathetic Modern Classical style. The chosen style reflects recognised - indeed admired - Yorkshire precedents, drawn principally from the eighteenth century. Some formal gardens close to the house to be retained within a proposed walled area, along with the setting out of productive kitchen gardens. The proposed house will benefit from the natural shelter of the hillside and the backdrop of mature trees.
4. To deliver this opinion, I have been provided with a full range of paperwork and designs by the architects, Shaw and Jagger Architects Ltd. I also visited the site with a member of the office on November 18, 2024, and explored the local area, looking at the local vernacular and the finer ashlar architecture of the area, including examples in the famous village of Heath near Wakefield. I have also discussed the plans directly with the applicant.
5. Overall, considering the particular site, the quality of the designs, the excellent design rationale given in the design statement, and track record of the architect, Francis Shaw, I consider this to be an outstanding design; and I write in support of the current proposals, recognising that the proposal is an *'outstanding design . . . which helps raise the standard of design more generally in an area, which also fits in with the overall form and layout of its surroundings'*, and thus meets the policy considerations set out in the NPPF.

## 2. MY LOCUS TO COMMENT AS DESIGN REVIEWER

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1. I am an architectural historian, author and a design and historic buildings consultant. I studied at UCL and the Warburg Institute, London, and in my early career was a curator of buildings for the National Trust in East Anglia. Architectural Editor of *Country Life* in 1997-2008, I have worked, since 2008, on major heritage advisory projects including for Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, Castle Coole in Northern Ireland, Ickworth Park in Suffolk.
2. I am also author of many books on country houses including *The English Manor House* (1999), *How to Read a Country House* (2005) and *The Country House Ideal* (2015) and am a trustee of the Historic Houses Foundation, and teach on a number of University courses. I have for several years been giving expert opinion on numerous proposals under para 84e, and its predecessors, I am very experienced in reading plans and assessing design quality and have worked as an adviser or peer reviewer with several award winning architects across the country, including on projects within World Heritage sites, and major Grade I contexts. In the preparation of this report, I have been supported by Helen Bradbury, Heritage and Design Consultant.

### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. My role is to assess the overall design quality of the proposal.
2. The existing house is a degraded farmhouse, of no significance, and the case is well made for its replacement. The farm was historically an outlying part of the Denby Grange estate, which was broken up in the late 1940s, and associated with Denby Grange Hall which was demolished in 1950.
3. The new proposal, to be built on a similar footprint to the existing farmhouse, on an overlapping site, is for a five bay, two-storey house, with a central three-bay pediment on the north and south elevations; its interior is of a simple and harmonious plan.
4. The new house will, like the existing farmhouse, be well sited against a backdrop of trees. It will also require a high degree of craft skill to deliver. The new proposal sees the building moved slightly further down the slope to reduce the overall visual and spatial impact.
5. In my opinion, the proposals demonstrate the high standards required for a new build in the green belt, and indeed represent a considerable enhancement overall. The new design is, in effect, presented as a master class in the compact Palladian-inspired 'villa' architecture that defined English architecture at a period for which it is most admired. The overall preservation and enhancement of the setting and new landscape works, means that the new house would stand in a rural setting with a strong Reptonian flavour.
6. The design ambition reflects the requirements of the NPPF, namely whether the proposal demonstrates that it is an *'outstanding or innovative design which promotes high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.'*
7. Furthermore the proposal is of the high quality expectation set out in NPPF Para 131: *'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.'* The proposal is an exemplary piece of Modern Classical design.
8. Also, NPPF Para 135, states that: *'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change, (such as increased densities).'*
9. NPPF Para 139 b) also identifies *'outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area'*.
10. NPPF Paras 152 and 153 relate to the green belt and make clear how development should only be allowed in 'very special circumstances'. Para 139 is clear that outstanding design is to be given significant weight and I believe this has been achieved by these proposals. The outstanding quality of the design therefore meets the *'very special circumstances'* set out as a requirement in Para 153 of the NPPF to allow development to be allowed as an exception to green belt policy.
11. This proposal, prepared by an experienced architect who works from an office in Harrogate, is, in short, an elegantly designed house in the Modern Classical spirit, rooted in eighteenth-century precedent but also designed for modern life and technology, and set in an enhanced landscape and garden context.
12. A new Modern Classical building such as this, faced in fine locally quarried ashlar would be a positive addition to the local architectural tradition, and provide a benchmark for modern building in traditional styles, and I commend it to the local authority for consent.
13. Overall, the proposed house would, in my opinion, in every way, be an enhancement to the local, and rural scene, helping to give an appropriate visual focus to the wider rural landscape.

#### 4. THE EXISTING HOUSE AND SITE

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Figure 3: View across the valley from the site.



Figure 4: View of the existing site from across the valley.



Figure 5: The entrance front of the existing house.



Figure 6: The garden front of the existing house.

## 5. THE PROPOSALS

- As noted, the proposal is for a new two-storey, five-bay house, faced in fine locally quarried stone, and occupying a similar footprint on an overlapping site of the existing farmhouse, which is to be replaced entirely. The new house will be entered from the north, and the south faces the landscape view, looking over towards Gawthorpe; there is a simple Classical porch on both the main elevation, the house is only three bays deep. A single-storey orangery/conservatory is proposed for the west side of the building.



Figure 7: Proposed elevations of the new house. Shaw & Jagger Architects Ltd., July 2024.

- The example of John Carr-designed 1770s Middleton Lodge was chosen by the designer to inform the design of this new house, as it was a later eighteenth-century house which has the principal rooms on the ground floor, not raised on a piano nobile, and therefore provided a suitable model for a new two-storey house. It is noted that the proposal adheres to the local authority's rule of not exceeding the existing ridgeline, however it seems to me that the design would benefit from a slightly more generous proportion for the very best architectural effect.
- The plan has a central hall running north-south, and has a series of well-proportioned rooms, including a large drawing room, a compact study and dining room, and, at the east end of the house, a family kitchen which leads out to the single storey orangery, designed to appear like the kind of addition which a designer such as Repton might have made in the early nineteenth century to a mid-to-late eighteenth century house of these proportions, to improve the sense of the connection to the garden and wider landscape.
- The design ambition of the house is to be reflected in the interior treatment with specially designed

plasterwork and joinery of a high standard. The interior fit out will include plasterwork, marble chimneypieces and a fine timber staircase, and the client wishes to use the best traditional crafts skills, as already demonstrated by his extensive investment in the repair of dry stone walling. The applicant also has a collection of French furniture with which he plans to furnish the house, indeed the desire to house this collection properly has been part of the inspiration for this house.

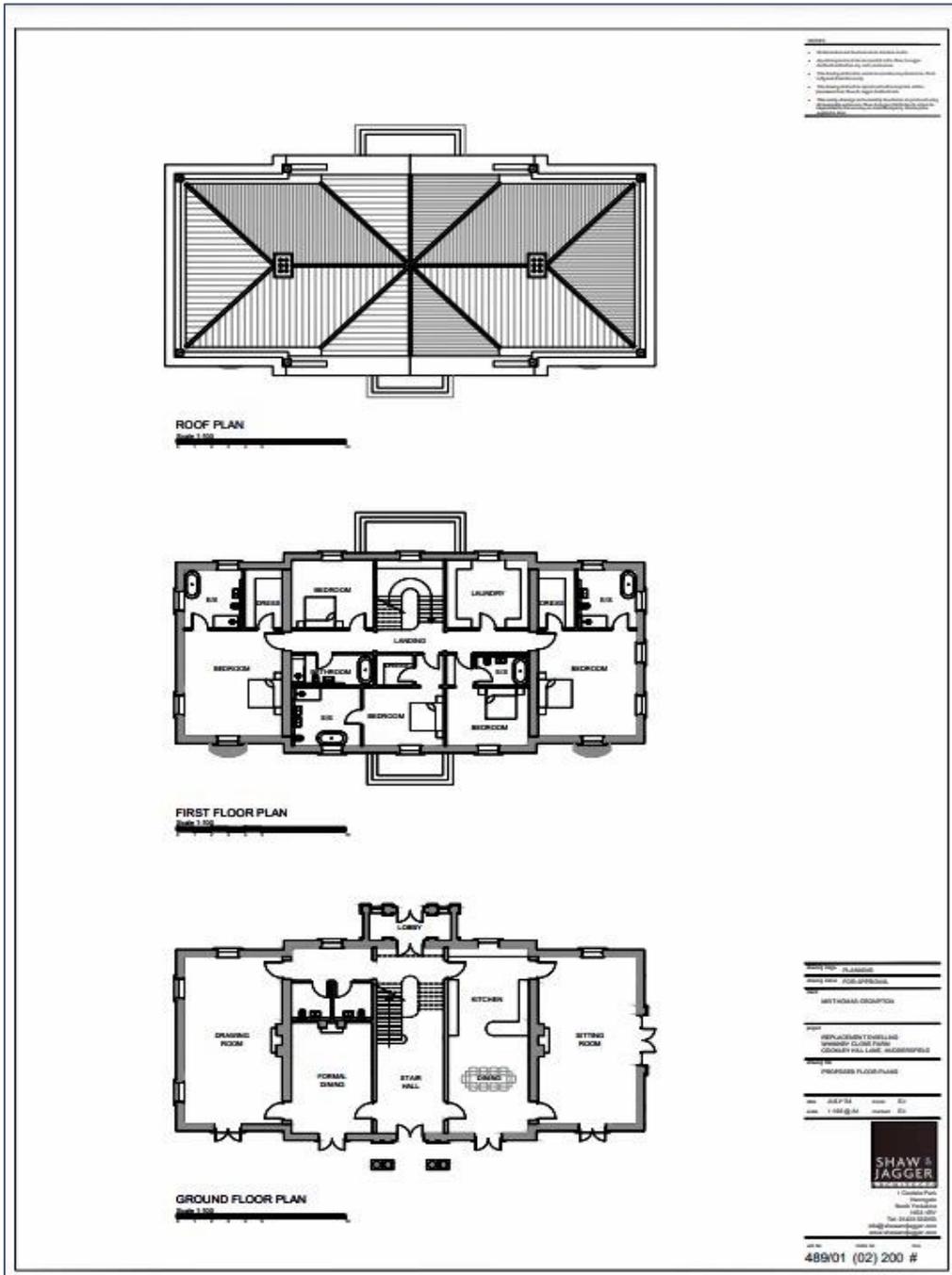


Figure 8: Proposed floor layouts. Shaw & Jagger Architects Ltd., July 2024.

- The area around the house will be carefully landscaped, terraced and planted up, with an extensive productive vegetable garden. The site benefits from sitting on a slope and has the further benefit of a belt of mature trees.
- Although the position is very much a commanding one, the proposed house would be well set within the line of the hill and the trees above it and be composed in the Reptonian manner among the trees and

fields; the long views I looked at on my visit from beside the Lascelles Hall Cricket ground confirmed this.

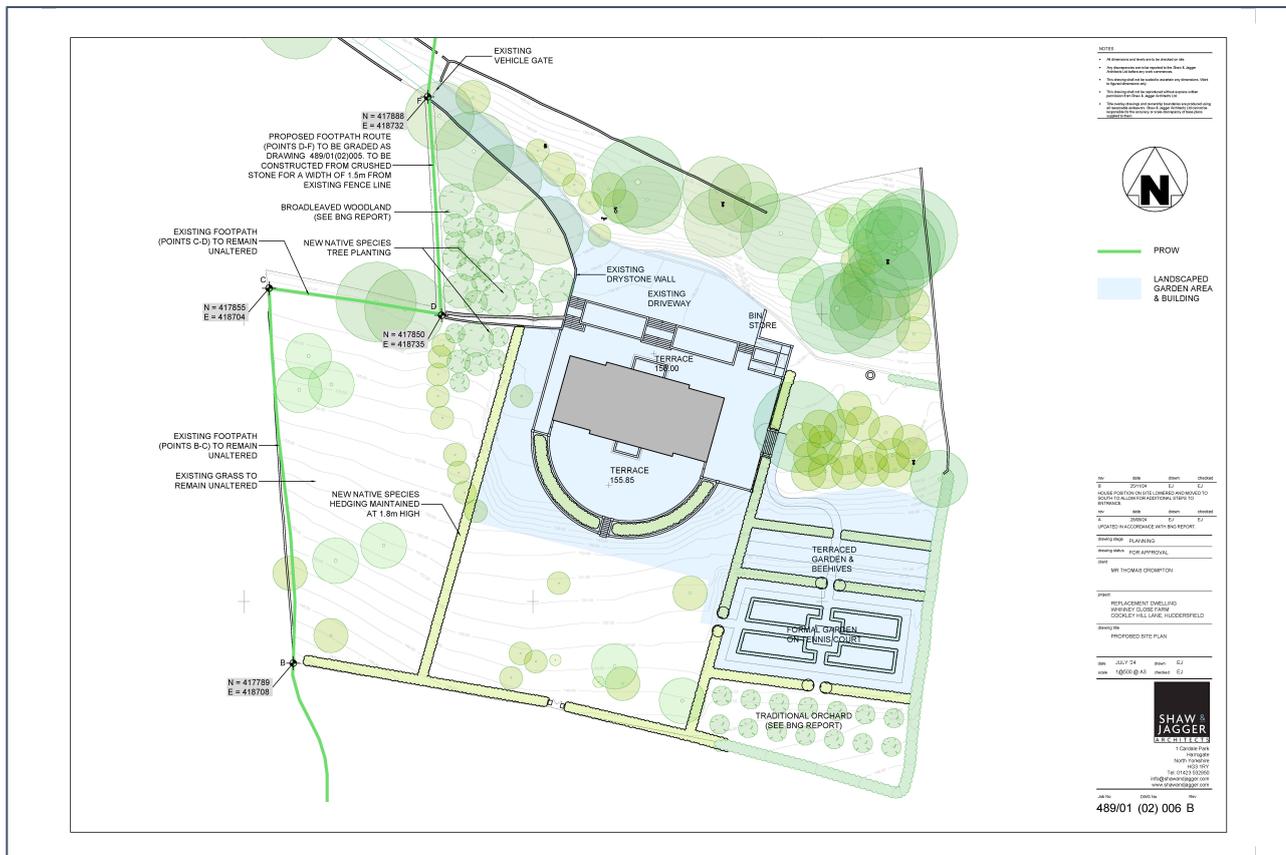


Figure 9: Proposed site layout. Shaw & Jagger Architects Ltd., July 2024.

7. The design ambition reflects directly the stated requirements of NPPF, namely that the proposal demonstrate that it meets NPPF policy requirements by being ‘outstanding or innovative design which promotes high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.’
8. Furthermore, the proposal reaches the high quality expectation set out in NPPF Para 131: ‘The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.’ In my view, the proposal is an exemplary piece of Classical design.
9. Also, NPPF Para 135, states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; the proposal meets this policy directly, being visually attractive, elegant and sophisticated. NPPF Paragraph 139 b) also identifies ‘outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area’.
10. With regard to NPPF Paras 153 and 154 (d) relating to the green belt and the high benchmark of outstanding and exemplary design; I believe this has been achieved by these proposals, and meets the ‘very special circumstances’ set out as required in paragraph 153 of the NPPF. Achieving this high bar of design as accepted by many councils gives a clear precedent.
11. I note that Shaw and Jagger have recently been granted permission within the green belt, near St Albans (Lamerwood, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire) 5/2022/2969 approved 30/8/23. This replacement dwelling was approved in similar circumstances to the current scheme, the design reviewer noting that, ‘The proposals demonstrate very clearly an understanding of the site, demonstrate a reasoned and delightful response to the brief and will in my opinion, be a building that will be of an exceptional quality

*and significantly enhance its immediate surroundings. In my view the proposals demonstrate an exemplary design quality that meets the needs of very special circumstances of green belt policy to mitigate any harm it may cause.'*

12. Following this, St Albans Council stated in their officer report supporting application 5/2022/2969: *'Given the above and noting that 'openness' can be both visual as well as spatial; whilst the dwelling would be materially larger than the existing, given the use of the existing gradient and repositioning within this the proposed development, including the associated hard landscaping would not have a greater impact on openness than the existing situation and therefore, despite the conflict with the Councils SPG, this proposal is in accordance with the NPPF.'*
13. This approved application is clearly a precedent where a proposed building, which is taller than the existing has been moved slightly down a slope to reduce the visual and spatial impact, and this has been accepted as meeting the 'very special circumstance' within green belt.
14. On the issue of the choice of style, it should be acknowledged here that the Classical tradition has a special place in the history of Yorkshire architecture, and a distinctive continuity in the county through the work of Lutyens (Gledstone Hall), 1920s, Vincent Harris in Leeds (Civic Hall 1930s), Francis Johnson at Settrington Hall (1960s) and Quinlan Terry (Newfield near Ripon, 1970s/80s). Yorkshire as a county has a proud and rich history of Classical continuity.
15. Furthermore, the house, drawing on the inspiration of mid-eighteenth-century Palladianism, reflects the architectural character of a number of lost country houses, Denby Grange Hall, Chevett Hall, and Whitley Beaumont Hall, all of which were demolished in the 1950s, depriving Yorkshire of a rich vein of architectural heritage, which can in some senses, be re-embodied in this new house.
16. Overall, the design of the new house is of a quality that will raise the standard for new design in the district, which is the clear goal and intention of the advice in NPPF, and is to be commended to the local authority for consent.

## 6. LOCAL, DEMOLISHED HOUSES OF THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

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*Figure 10: Chevet Hall, Wakefield, demolished 1955.*



*Figure 11: Denby Grange Hall, Kirkheaton, demolished 1950.*



*Figure 12: Whitley Beaumont Hall, Kirkheaton, demolished in the 1950s.*

## 7. LOCAL, EXISTING HOUSES OF THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

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*Figure 13: Lascelles Hall, a mid-eighteenth-century, Classical house directly across the valley.*



*Figure 14: Heath Hall, Heath: a mid-eighteenth-century house remodelled in the mid-nineteenth century.*



*Figure 15: The Dower House, Heath, mid eighteenth century.*

## 8. DESIGNER

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1. The designer of the Whinney Close Farm proposal is Francis Shaw, RIBA, managing director of Shaw and Jagger. After training in architecture at Bristol and Edinburgh Universities, Mr Shaw has worked on several award-winning large commercial and retail mixed use schemes, across the UK and in the Middle East.
2. He formed Shaw and Jagger in 2011, with Ed Jagger RIBA, and they work together across a range of styles and types of projects, and has earned a good reputation as a versatile and practical designer.
3. Mr Shaw has also been responsible for the renovation of a number of ruined historic buildings, notably Hellifield Peel Castle, which was featured on Channel 4's *Grand Designs*. He has also restored the eighteenth-century accommodation of the ruinous Mingary Castle, the works there completed in 2016.
4. Mr Shaw has also designed an Arts and Crafts-inspired country house in Lancashire, Croston Hall, on an estate where the historic house had been demolished in the 1960s, leaving an extensive stable yard, The new house, completed in 2018, was constructed partly within the historic walled garden.
5. Thus, Mr Shaw, and his colleagues, form a highly experienced design team, with an acute sense of historical tradition, and an established track record of delivering buildings of scale and character.

## 9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

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1. The existing house on this site is a degraded farmhouse, of no special significance, and the case is well made for its replacement. The proposed new house follows largely the footprint and ridgeline of the existing house – although it could be argued a slightly higher ridgeline would make for an even more sophisticated and better proportioned design.
2. The proposed new house takes inspiration from, among other things, the lost classical tradition country houses of the area, such as Denby Grange Hall, and nearby Whitely Beaumont Hall, and references the work of John Carr of York in Heath, and most particularly Middleton Lodge.
3. The preservation and enhancement of the setting and landscape works mean that the new house would stand in a rural setting with a strong Reptonian flavour and can be regarded an enhancement of this rural area close to Kirkheaton, Gawthorpe, and Wakefield.
4. The two-storey 5-bay design in the Modern Classical spirit is carefully judged and considered and reflects the interior floor plan. The design has been referenced in the tradition of Yorkshire's great architect John Carr. It is a sophisticated and elegant design, which also will require a high degree of craft skill to deliver.
5. Although the position is a commanding one, the proposed house would clearly be well set within the line of the hill and the trees above it and to one side and compose in the Reptonian manner among the trees and fields; the long views I looked at on my visit from beside the Lascelles Hall Cricket ground, and elsewhere, confirmed this.
6. The design ambition of the external envelope of the house will be reflected in its interior treatment with specially designed plasterwork and joinery of a high standard about the interior fit out, with plasterwork, marble chimneypieces and a fine timber staircase.
7. I am conscious of how the proposed house fits into the classical tradition in Yorkshire within the distinctive Classical continuity represented by the work of Lutyens at Gledstone Hall, in the 1920s, Vincent Harris at Leeds Civic Hall 1930s), Francis Johnson at Settrington Hall (1960s) and Quinlan Terry (Newfield near

Ripon, 1970s/80s). Yorkshire as a county should be proud of this rich story of Classical continuity.

8. Overall, the proposed house would, in my opinion, meets the outstanding criteria of the NPPF outlined above, and would be an enhancement to the rural scene in this area, helping to give an appropriate visual focus, to the wider rural landscape, and setting a benchmark for the highest quality of traditional domestic design in the region.

JGD Musson/November 25, 2024

JEREMY MUSSON