

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared following a request by the Kirklees Local Plan Inspector for the views of Historic England about the potential impact which the development of two sites at Lepton (Sites H2684a and H2730a) might have upon the significance of the Grade I Listed Woodsome Hall.
- 1.2 In terms of the representations made about these sites, there are two principal issues. Firstly, the impact which their development might have upon a historic landscape attributed to Capability Brown and, secondly, the impact which their development might have upon the setting of the Grade I Listed Woodsome Hall. Historic England visited Woodsome Hall on 29 June 2018.

2 The amount of weight that can be given to the ‘Capability’ Brown connection

- 2.1 Neither the List description for Woodsome Hall on the National List for England nor Pevsner’s *“The Buildings of England: Yorkshire West Riding: Sheffield and the South”* (2017) make specific mention to the purported connection between the landscape associated with the building and Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown. However, the ‘Selected Sources’ of the national List entry does include a reference to a document entitled *“A list of landscapes that have been attributed to Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown”* by J. Phibbs.
- 2.2 This Report evaluates the probability of every landscape in England that has ever been attributed to Brown actually being designed by him. It makes it clear from the outset that, in a large number of cases, it is often difficult to attribute a particular landscape to Brown with any degree of certainty. For this reason, it assigns a percentage point to different classes of evidence, so allowing attribution to be judged as more or less probable. Thus, a landscape where there are direct references to Brown having been involved in its design (such as, for example, Canon Hall in Barnsley) would score 100%. The percentage score decreases as the attribution becomes less and less certain.
- 2.3 The landscape at Woodsome Hall scores just 10%. The Assessment points out that there is no evidence to support the statement that Brown laid out the terrace, as has been claimed, and notes that this link with Brown was, actually, made some five decades after his death.

- 2.4 As the document points out, *“it is not the case that every landscape on this list should be regarded as a worthwhile attribution. As things stand, most C18 landscapes in the country will garner an attribution probability of 10 – 20% ... and any landscape should be discounted until its probability rating exceeds 30%”* .
- 2.5 On that basis and without further evidence to support it, therefore, it is considered that little weight should be given to the argument that ‘Capability’ Brown was responsible for the design of the landscape associated with Woodsome Hall. Although the link between the grounds of Woodsome Hall and Brown are, at best, somewhat spurious, nevertheless the grounds do form part of the setting of a Grade I Listed Building and, as such, contribute to some extent to its significance.

3 Impact of the proposed allocations on Woodsome Hall

- 3.1 Woodsome Hall is a very fine example of a hall house built between the early C16 and mid C17. In plan, the building is H-shaped, which is typical of many of the gentry houses built in West Yorkshire around this period. The timber-framed, open hall is the most characteristic room of the medieval house and the one at Woodsome is one of the largest in the county.
- 3.2 Although for many properties from this period it was generally the building itself which was designed to impress visitors rather than views out towards the surrounding landscape, the siting of Woodsome Hall on such a commanding position overlooking the valley of Feney Beck and its easterly orientation would indicate that views from the Hall were considered to be important. Indeed, the importance of the view eastwards from Woodsome Hall is reinforced by the fact that the vast majority of similar gentry houses of this period had their principal elevations facing in a southerly or south-westerly direction.
- 3.3 The grounds of Woodsome Hall have undergone considerable alteration and remodelling as part of its current use as a golf course. Whether the tree belts which frame the view eastwards from the Hall and its terrace were planted deliberately to focus the viewer, the enlargement of these woodland areas during the C20 has had the effect of directing the eye of the viewer very much upon the hillside opposite.
- 3.4 Whilst the immediate setting of the Hall may have changed considerably in the C20, what is particularly notable when comparing the 1893 OS First Edition map of this area with the corresponding one today, is how little wider landscape outside the grounds of Woodsome Hall has changed. Despite the growth of Fenay Bridge,

southwards, the prospect from the Hall and its terrace is still, essentially, that of an agricultural landscape, the pattern of fields and woodlands little changed in over a century. Whilst the field structure is an Enclosure landscape, relic medieval remnants are still evident.

- 3.5 The rising hillside with its patchwork of fields and woodland is extremely prominent in views from not just the terrace of Woodsome Hall but also the all rooms on its eastern elevation. This rural setting, therefore, makes a very important contribution to one's experience of The Hall and to the significance of this Grade I Listed Building.
- 3.6 Occupying, as it does, the higher land, the development of virtually all of Site H2730a, would be particularly noticeable in views from the Hall, the only area unlikely to be seen from the terrace or easternmost rooms being the field to the south of the Grade II Listed Crow Trees on Rowley Lane (about which Historic England has already submitted comments). It is likely that less of Site H2684a will be visible from Woodsome Hall, much of the westernmost field (adjacent to Site H2730a) and the southern end of the easternmost field (alongside Penistone Road) being largely screened by existing woodland blocks from the Hall. However, the eastern half of that part of the site adjoining Penistone Road would be visible from the Hall (especially from its first floor rooms). Indeed, there is a particularly fine view across Site H2684a towards Woodsome Hall from the car park of the office buildings on Woodsome Park.
- 3.7 The development of both these sites as is currently proposed will impact upon views from Woodsome Hall harming an important element which contributes to the significance of this Grade I Listed Building. The development of Site H2730a, because of its position higher up the hillside, would completely destroy the rural prospect from the terrace and from the principal rooms on its eastern side. The loss of, what is at present, an attractive agricultural landscape and its replacement by a very large housing estate would cause considerable harm to the setting of Woodsome Hall. Indeed, the urbanisation that it would cause would change the perception of Woodsome Hall being an impressive gentry house lying within, and commanding views across, the open countryside to a building which is sited on the edge of a large built-up area. Because Site H2684a is more screened from the Hall, some residential development could be accommodated on parts of that site without intruding on views from the Listed Building. However, the higher part of the area alongside Penistone Road would be visible from the Hall and, thus harm the Hall's rural setting.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 Given the contribution which both of these sites make to the setting of Woodsome Hall, had Historic England appreciated at the time of the Publication Draft the impact which their development might have upon the significance of this high-Grade Listed Building, we would have sought the production of a Heritage Impact Assessment to evaluate the potential impact of these allocations upon Woodsome Hall. Indeed, there is almost certain that Historic England would have objected to both these allocations, as currently proposed, because of the harm they would be likely to cause to Woodsome Hall.
- 4.2 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF sets out a requirement for Local Plans to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance. When considering the impact of a proposed development upon the significance of a designated heritage asset, Paragraph 132 of the NPPF makes it clear that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and explains that significance can be harmed by development within its setting.
- 4.3 The development of these sites would result in the loss of an area of countryside which makes an important contribution to a Grade I Listed Building. In terms of NPPF Paragraph 134, this is likely to constitute less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset (albeit in the case of Site H2730a towards the higher end of the spectrum). Whilst the degree of harm may be less than substantial, nevertheless, it would still be causing harm to a designated heritage asset considered by the Government to be of the highest significance and to which the greatest weight should be given to its conservation. As such, therefore, the development of neither of these sites, at present, would deliver sustainable development in terms of protecting and enhancing the historic environment, it would conflict with one of the Government's Core Planning Principles (that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance), nor would it be likely to provide the positive strategy for the conservation of the historic environment that is required for Local Plans.
- 4.4 Had Historic England made representations regarding Woodsome Hall, we would have proposed that:-
- (a) Site H2730a should be deleted
 - (b) Site H2684a should have an additional Site Specific Consideration added along the following lines:-

“A Heritage Impact Assessment including, as appropriate, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility, shall be produced to evaluate the impact which the development of this area might have upon views from the Grade I Listed Woodsome Hall.

No development should take place on those areas of the site visible from the terrace or principal rooms of Woodsome Hall”