

## WOODFOLD NEW VILLA

### Addendum to Character Definition Study

#### QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERTISE

I am Ian Dieffenthaller, a registered architect and member of the Royal Institute of British Architects since 1988. I am a conservation architect and a landscape designer and RIBA accredited as a Specialist Conservation Architect. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Landscape Architecture and have been awarded a PhD for work which explores hybridity in West Indian poetry in Britain. I worked for sixteen years as a conservation architect with the well-respected London practice of Carden & Godfrey, first as an assistant and finally as an associate. For the last 20 years I have worked on large heritage restoration and conservation projects. My approach to design has always been through good conservation practice, guided by principles of hybridity – bridging between old and new, my instinct being to protect and enhance things of historic and architectural value; to work out realistic, viable and holistic solutions that sustain old values and create complementary ones that will endure. Working almost exclusively within the context of important Listed Buildings, I have sought to repair buildings and their settings in two ways: firstly, by conservation of original fabric and landscape; and secondly in the careful and considered design and placement of any new additions. My work is in understanding historic places, in order to help others recognise and respect our cultural heritage; and to identify viable development which will reinvigorate heritage significance that will secure the tangible manifestation of this heritage well into the future. Significance of heritage assets also has an intangible aspect which includes history. History itself is a process of evolution and is not static; preventing change in the historic environment denies the creation of further history. Such change need not harm cultural significance; on the contrary it can repair, reveal and often add further positive characteristics to what is already good. The study of history often reveals noteworthy past losses in significance (including in the ‘setting’ of a heritage asset as part of a whole historic place) which can be reclaimed as part of any viable reuse. This aspect of restoration and enhancement now forms a large part of the work I do.

This Note is an addendum to the original Character Definition Study and is provided in response to Reason for Refusal 3 from the local planning authority in light of the assertion that “The proposal would result in harm to the setting of the adjacent Grade II Listed Historic Park and due to its siting, scale and design would be contrary to Key Statement EN5 and Policy DME4 of the Ribble Valley Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 as well as the National Planning Policy Framework.”

The Note should be read alongside (amongst other things) the original Character Definition Study, the accompanying Appendix on the history of Shorrock Green, and the Shaw & Jagger Gazetteer of country houses in the Blackburn area.

## 1. Planning Policy referenced in Reason for Refusal

All relevant policy has been addressed previously by the Appellant in respect of what is proposed, but turning specifically to those policies referenced in the Reason for Refusal:

KEY STATEMENT EN5 of the Local Plan concerns HERITAGE ASSETS and states “there will be a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of the significance of heritage assets and their settings. The Historic Environment ... will be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance for their heritage value; their important contribution to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place; and to wider social, cultural and environmental benefits. This will be achieved through... [inter alia] ... Considering any development proposals which may impact on a heritage asset or their setting through seeking benefits that conserve and enhance their significance and avoids any substantial harm to the heritage asset... [and] requiring all development proposals to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness/sense of place.”

Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 para 5.6 in explanation of EN5 says “The historic environment should continue to inform and inspire new development of high quality.”

DME4, clause 3 says “Registered historic parks and gardens of special historic interest and other gardens of significant heritage interest proposals which cause harm to or loss of significance to registered parks, gardens or landscapes of special historic interest or other gardens of significant local heritage interest, including their setting, will not be supported.”

## 2. The concept of heritage significance

The articles of the ICOMOS Burra Charter define heritage (or, cultural) significance of a place as the sum of its qualities or ‘values.’ These articles give rise to a values-based approach to conservation that are used worldwide and incorporated into UK practice. A core principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to “conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.” The term *significance*, as used in the NPPF, is understood to mean “the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting,” (setting refers to the surroundings in which the asset is experienced).

ICOMOS’s five values in respect to determining heritage significance are aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual. The NPPF uses “archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic”, the first of which is captured under “scientific”; the second and third

under “aesthetic”; and the last is equivalent. Social and spiritual or communal values are not identified in the NPPF or primary legislation so are often neglected in heritage assessments but they are of relevance in this case.

<b>Table 1: HERITAGE VALUE TYPOLOGIES</b>			
<b>This Document</b>	<b>Burra Charter</b>	<b>NPPF</b>	<b>Historic England Conservation Principles (2008)</b>
<b>artistic and architectural</b>	<b>aesthetic</b>	<b>artistic</b>	<b>aesthetic</b>
<b>historic</b>	<b>historic</b>	<b>historic</b>	<b>historical</b>
<b>archaeological</b>	<b>scientific</b>	<b>archaeological</b>	<b>evidential</b>
<b>social</b>	<b>social</b>		<b>communal</b>

### **Architectural and Artistic Value**

These refer to the sensory and perceptual experience of a place; the aesthetics. Aesthetics is concerned with the appreciation of beauty, but the term is used in the context of this Note in the way that ICOMOS and Historic England suggest, which is to include formal aesthetic ideals and thus architectural ideas. The questions posed by ICOMOS<sup>1</sup> to assess aesthetic value include:

- Does the place have special compositional or uncommonly attractive qualities involving combinations of colour, textures, spaces, massing, detail, movement, unity, sounds, scents?
- Is the place distinctive within the setting or a prominent visual landmark?
- Does the place have qualities which are inspirational, or which evoke strong feelings or special meanings?
- Is the place symbolic for its aesthetic qualities: for example, does it inspire artistic or cultural response, is it represented in art, photography, literature, folk art, folk lore, mythology or other imagery or cultural arts?
- Does the place display particular aesthetic characteristics of an identified style or fashion?
- Does the place show a high degree of creative or technical achievement?

Historic England in their 2019 consultation on *Conservation Principles* note that architectural and artistic interests derive from a contemporary appreciation of the asset’s aesthetics. Architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction,

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1 Practice Note Ver 1: November 2013 Understanding and assessing cultural significance.

craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is derived from the use of human imagination and skill to convey meaning through all forms of creative expression. This might include the use, representation or influence of historic places or buildings in artworks (contributing to their significance through their association with art), as well as the meaning, skill and emotional impact of works of art within our environment that are either part of heritage assets or assets in their own right. There is often an overlap between architectural and artistic interest. However, when making decisions about conservation it can be useful to draw a distinction between design created through detailed instructions (such as architectural drawings) and the direct creation of a work of art by a designer who is also in significant part the craftsman (such as a sculptor).

### **Historic and Social Value**

Historic value often underlies other values. A place may have historic value because it has influenced, or has been influenced by, an historic event, phase, movement or activity, person or group of people. It may be the site of an important event. For any place the significance will be greater where the evidence of the association or event survives at that location, or where the setting is substantially intact, rather than where it has been changed or evidence does not survive. However, some events or associations may be so important that the place retains significance regardless of such change or absence of evidence.

Historic England in their 2019 consultation on *Conservation Principles* (originally issued in 2008) say “A heritage asset is most commonly valued for its historic interest – because of the way in which it can illustrate the story of past events, people and aspects of life (illustrative value, or interest). When these stories become enmeshed with the identity of a community, in addition to the asset’s historic interest it can be said to hold communal value.” [social value]

### **Archaeological Value**

This refers to the information content of a place and its ability to reveal more about an aspect of the past through examination or investigation of the place, including the use of archaeological techniques. The NPPF glossary states “there will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.”

### **Relative Value and Levels of Significance**

James Semple Kerr’s *The Conservation Plan* imagines significance as a continuum i.e. there is a scale of significance. In order to be able to describe where on this scale an element is deemed to lie, and to compare the relative significance of elements, notional points on the scale are

usually grouped together and a hierarchy of levels of significance set out. Kerr always advocated keeping this hierarchy simple.

Assessing the level of significance of an element is not a precise calculation – a building may be significant in a number of ways and each of these may be at a different level (e.g. it may demonstrate an aspect of a site’s history very well, whilst being of low architectural interest, and at the same time very harmful to the setting of another building, resulting in it being assessed as being of little significance overall). Hence deciding on an overall level of significance involves weighing up all the variables and reaching a subjective conclusion. For this reason, consulting over the appropriateness of levels of significance of particular buildings and their elements can be extremely useful to ensure consensus.

Listing and significance: Thinking specifically about listing, to understand a building’s significance *relative* to others, the following correlation can be considered:

<b>Table 2</b>	
<b>listing grade</b>	<b>significance</b>
grade I	very high
grade II*	high
grade II	medium
grade II GV	medium / low
grade GV II	low
undesigned asset	low

At Woodfold, the hall, park and former east hothouse (orangery) are listed at Grade II. All three lodges, the icehouse and the Arley Bridge south and east of the hall are also listed at Grade II.

The levels of significance used in Burra are as follows:

- Exceptional significance
- Considerable significance
- Some significance
- Neutral significance (i.e. neither positive nor negative)
- Intrusive (i.e. has a negative impact on visual amenity, character or views).

For the purposes of this report, the threshold for inclusion on the national list or schedule is ‘**Some**’ or above. Elements with ‘some’ significance include those on the Local Authority’s ‘local list.’ It is important to note that these levels of significance do not correspond exactly to particular grades of listing and the assessment may point to the inappropriateness of a listing grade already assigned. A site will not necessarily have elements covering the entire hierarchy. The resulting ‘statement of significance’ for a site

and its parts should comprise an indication of the way or ways in which it is significant, and of how significant it is (i.e. its level of significance). For practical reasons, at complex sites, an explanation of the nature of significance is sometimes not included for the last two levels. An assessment of significance may need to be revised in the light of new information.

<b>Table 3: Hierarchical Definition of Significance</b>	
<b>Exceptional:</b>	<b>important at national to international level, reflected in the designations of World Heritage Site, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade I and some II* Listed Buildings and registered gardens, plus equivalent sites including those of ecological/nature conservation value;</b>
<b>Considerable:</b>	<b>important at regional level or sometimes higher, including Grade II and some Grade II* listed Buildings and registered gardens;</b>
<b>Some:</b>	<b>of local to regional significance, often for group value; including lesser Grade II listed buildings and registered gardens</b>
<b>Little:</b>	<b>of limited heritage or other value;</b>
<b>Negative or intrusive:</b>	<b>those features which detract from the value of a site;</b>
<b>Neutral:</b>	<b>neither positive nor negative</b>

### **Sensitivity**

Conservation practice worldwide recognises that not all parts of a heritage asset contribute the same amount to the overall significance of a heritage asset. Thus, in order to be able to assess change, it is useful to analyse the buildings for their sensitivity to accept change and to use that analysis to inform the proposals for conservation. Planning Practice Guidance says, “Analysis of relevant information can generate a clear understanding of the affected asset, the heritage interests represented in it, and their *relative importance*.” [Para: 008 Reference ID: 18a- 008-20190723. Rev: 23/07/19

While ‘listing’ applies to all of a building, inside and out, and to all fittings attached to the

building, the implementation of the controls arising from listing should be applied proportionately to the sensitivity of the area or fabric under consideration. The level of sensitivity to change is based on the vulnerability of the component to loss of heritage values through change. Changes to historic fabric should be directed to less sensitive areas of a building or site and change to more sensitive areas should be a justified and well-designed exception. In preparing a heritage assessment, typically, plans will be marked up to show the following classifications:

- High sensitivity - major threat to a specific heritage value or overall significance  
= substantial loss of that value
- Moderate sensitivity - moderate threat to a specific heritage value or overall significance = a lessening of the ability to understand or read that value
- Low sensitivity – no appreciable threat to a specific value or overall significance
- Detrimental – conceals or mars significance; removal would be a heritage enhancement.

### **Setting**

The NPPF notes that significance derives not only from the physical presence of a heritage asset, but also from its setting, which is determined by the surroundings in which it is experienced.

Historic England's *Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3* (2nd Edn 2017), or *GPA 3* for short, states that setting is not a heritage asset, nor does it have significance; it can only contribute towards the significance of a heritage asset. Thus, an assessor must consider the physical surroundings of an asset, its topography, relationship with other heritage assets, formal design, openness, enclosure and boundaries, history and degree of change over time. Reference is made to 'immediate', 'wider' and 'extended' settings.

Setting is most commonly conceived in terms of how an asset is experienced, thus a settings assessment must look at views from, through, and to the asset, including the way the asset is appreciated, intentional inter-visibility with other historic and natural features, associative relationships, dynamism and activity, associations and finally, patterns of use.

### **Measuring Change**

British Standard 7913 *Guide to the conservation of historic buildings* suggests that the magnitude of any changes should be assessed in relation to their heritage significance [i.e. their value to society]. The magnitude of impact of any proposals for change can range from a neutral impact where significance is low or negligible and there is no change, to very large where

the heritage values are very high and the impact is major. This table may be adapted to measure impact in a heritage impact assessment.

VALUE	Very High	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Large	Large/Very Large	Very Large
	High	Neutral	Slight	Slight/ Moderate	Moderate/ Large	Large/Very Large
	Medium	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/ Large
	Low	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Moderate
	Negligible	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Neutral/ Slight	Slight
	No change	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT						

Table 4: Magnitude of impact against value (BS 7913:2013 figure 2)

Where an historic building is listed at grade II for just its group value, the effect of minor alterations would not have the level of impact as the same intervention to a grade I listed building, such as removing its panelling from its principal rooms, say, or its colonnade. The setting is a key consideration in this report as group value is important.

### 3. Significance of Hall, Park and associated buildings

To speak about the heritage assets at Woodfold, one must first say something about their heritage values and think about why they are significant and for which specific values. The list descriptions are old and say nothing about the reasons for listing, nor do they take into account the massive degree of alteration and extension to the Hall, Park and other heritage buildings. There follows a brief description of relevant heritage assets and a short analysis of their significance with reference to the values set out in the NPPF and Historic England’s *Conservation Principles*.

Henry Sudell, an immensely wealthy Blackburn cotton merchant bought land each side of Arley Brook in 1796 and proceeded to build a spectacular mansion and surrounding park and pleasure grounds, populated by the usual suite of outbuildings and taking in a number of well-established buildings, including Stanley House which was the manor house of Mellor. The design of the house and lodges is attributed to James Wyatt but Charles McNiven tendered the job in the local newspapers and presumably worked as executant architect. Some sources attribute the house to McNiven and we have identified that he was well-placed to be the landscape architect as this was his family’s primary business.

The house was located on a natural platform near the top of the south facing slope of the Arley Brook valley and fronted a huge northern shelter belt of trees and pleasure grounds, in Humphry Repton style. The park comprised wood pasture up to Arley Brook which included a trio of lakes created by re-engineering Arley Brook. It was surrounded by a 9’ stone wall and lodges were constructed to the south. The east lodges and subsequent main



drive are post- 1825 and relate to when the new turnpike was constructed. A further set of lodges lie halfway along the 'new' east drive, now known as Middle Lodges. The Pleasington Lodges to the south gave onto a track that crossed the Brook via a new ornamental bridge and formed Sudell's impressive processional route to the Hall.

In the valley itself plantation woodlands were created, augmenting existing semi-natural woodland. Plantation strips were also established along the perimeter of the park, to provide shelter belts and visual screening. On the opposite slope, two ingenious earth-banked 'perched' ponds made it possible to look out from the house and see a sheet of water at almost the same level. From the north facing slope, a viewer would look over these sheets of water which concealed the valley below, thus partaking in the illusion that the Hall stood just above the lake surface.

The Hall and its offices gave onto a rear stable yard and stables built into the hill. Otherwise, all building was contained in the northern grounds which were described in 1831 as 'The Land immediately behind, and to the north- west of the Mansion-house has been laid out with great taste as a flower garden and pleasure-ground, with warm and retired walks, sheltered by well- grown plantations and evergreen shrubberies'.

A northeastern 'greenhouse' (for over wintering tender evergreens) (now the 'orangery') was built at the edge of the pleasure ground and also made use of the views. An aviary lay on the western edge of the ground and at the NW edge of the ground lay a small ornamental garden, later walled on 3 sides to form a kitchen garden, with the addition of the 'hothouse' as shown on the 1844 OS map.

The Preston to Blackburn road which zigzagged west to east at the top of the slope was diverted at Raven's Wing, giving rise to Further Lane and the triangle of land north of the northern park wall.

Overall, the landscape design was simple, comprising the forecourt/ grass platt to the south of the Hall and its integral offices and stable yard, the pleasure grounds to the north with an ornamental building each side (orangery and aviary), the wood pasture of the parkland surrounding the Hall and the wooded southern approach with its ingenious waterworks on a steep slope.

## **Hall**

The Hall was first listed in 1952. Robinson (1991) reports that its roof was removed in 1949 to avoid payment of rates and the listing was in response to the local council's failure to recognise the architectural interest of both house and park. The County Planning Officer had reported that 'it was not considered of a sufficient architectural interest to take any action to preserve it'. In 1986, the list description was altered to reflect the ruined state of the building, noting the complete absence of an interior. The rear wings had also

collapsed. The shell was finally converted c.2003, thus the architectural value is limited to the portico and remnants of the flank walls. The social evidence of an historic house in the tradition of the Blackburn merchant classes is also important. The rebuilding has preserved some of the exterior, but generally detracts from significance in terms of loss of plan, volume, period detail and materials. The new buildings that have been introduced within the designed, immediate setting to the Hall – the garage court, outsized extensions to the stable court (now Woodfold Farm) and integral stable yard (the ‘Coach House’), the incongruous rebuilding of the original ‘greenhouse’ (the orangery) – all have a negative impact on the *immediate* setting of the house in light of their architecture and damage the ability to read the historic form of the Park by visually interrupting what should be the landscaped pleasure grounds of the Hall and the intentions for those grounds (as addressed in the Applicant’s materials elsewhere).

Architectural value: little to some

Historic value: some

Archaeological value: little

Social value: little to some

### **Park and its buildings**

The Park, described above, is on the Heritage at Risk Register. The entry within the Register says the redevelopment in the 1990s “has impacted significantly upon the historic character of the designed landscape in the immediate vicinity of the principal buildings. Management of the wider parkland for agriculture, principally dairy farming, is further diminishing the character of the landscape.” Vulnerability is rated ‘high’ and condition ‘declining’ as a result of multiple ownership.

Design value resides primarily in its residual Listed Buildings, specifically the portico of the house, the façade of the eastern hothouse, the bridge, icehouse and the remaining lodges. The impacts of agricultural use of the Parkland along with the various C21 redevelopment has had a further major impact on the value of the heritage asset, reducing the ability to understand its plan, adversely affecting the landscape quality and the relationship of its key buildings. Despite the commissioning of a landscape appraisal from Alan Crosby, a conservation plan is only now being drawn up a decade after the ruination of the RPG.

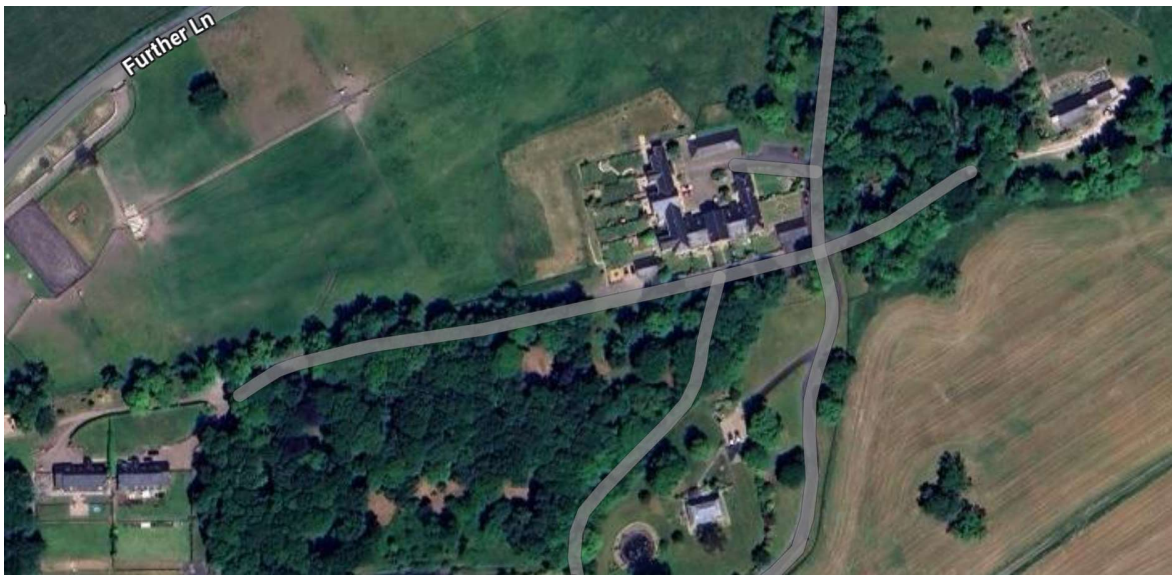
Architectural/ artistic value: little but with the potential for enhancement to ‘some’, owing to group value.

Historic value: some

Archaeological value: little

Social value: little, with little potential for enhancement owing to fragmentation of ownership

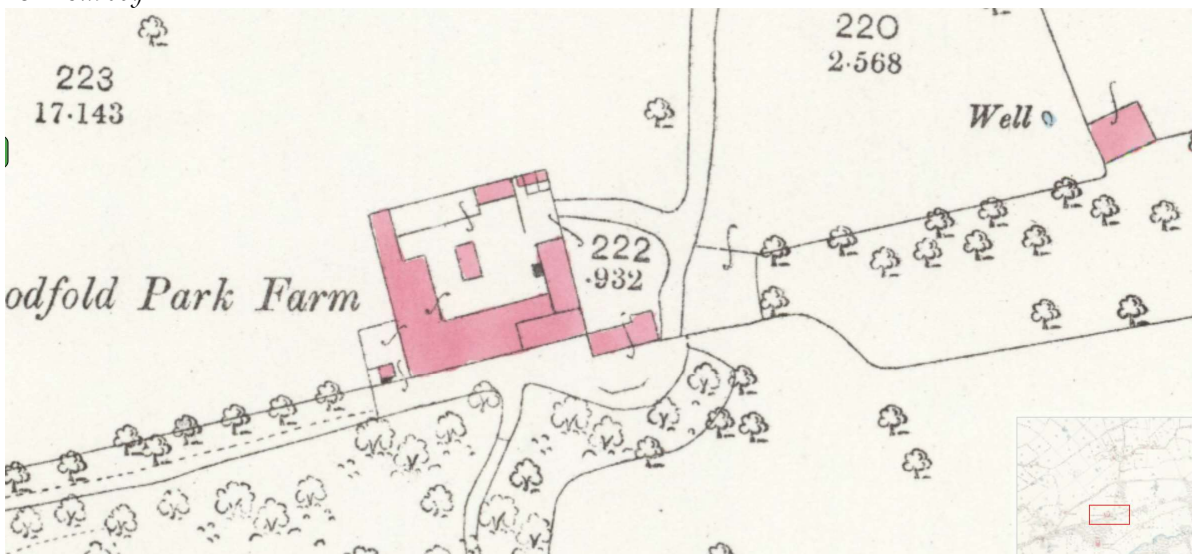
**Woodfold's lesser, undesignated buildings:**



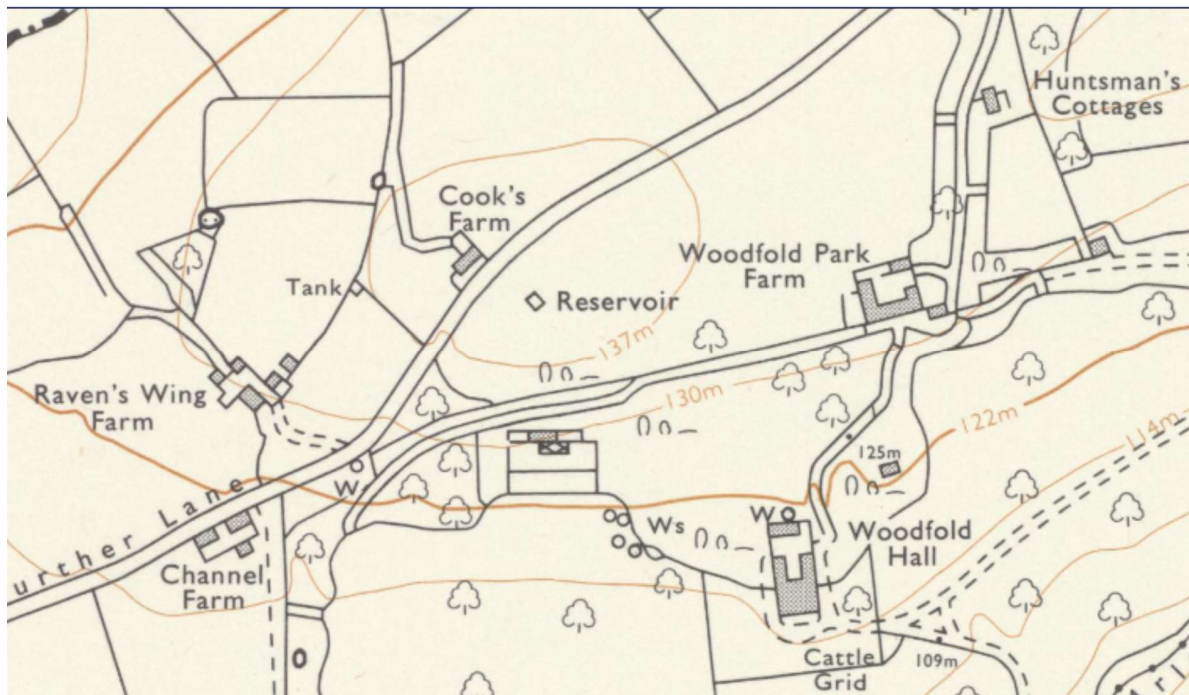
*Current layout: L to R, Kitchen Garden houses, Woodfold Park Farm and the Deer House 2023*



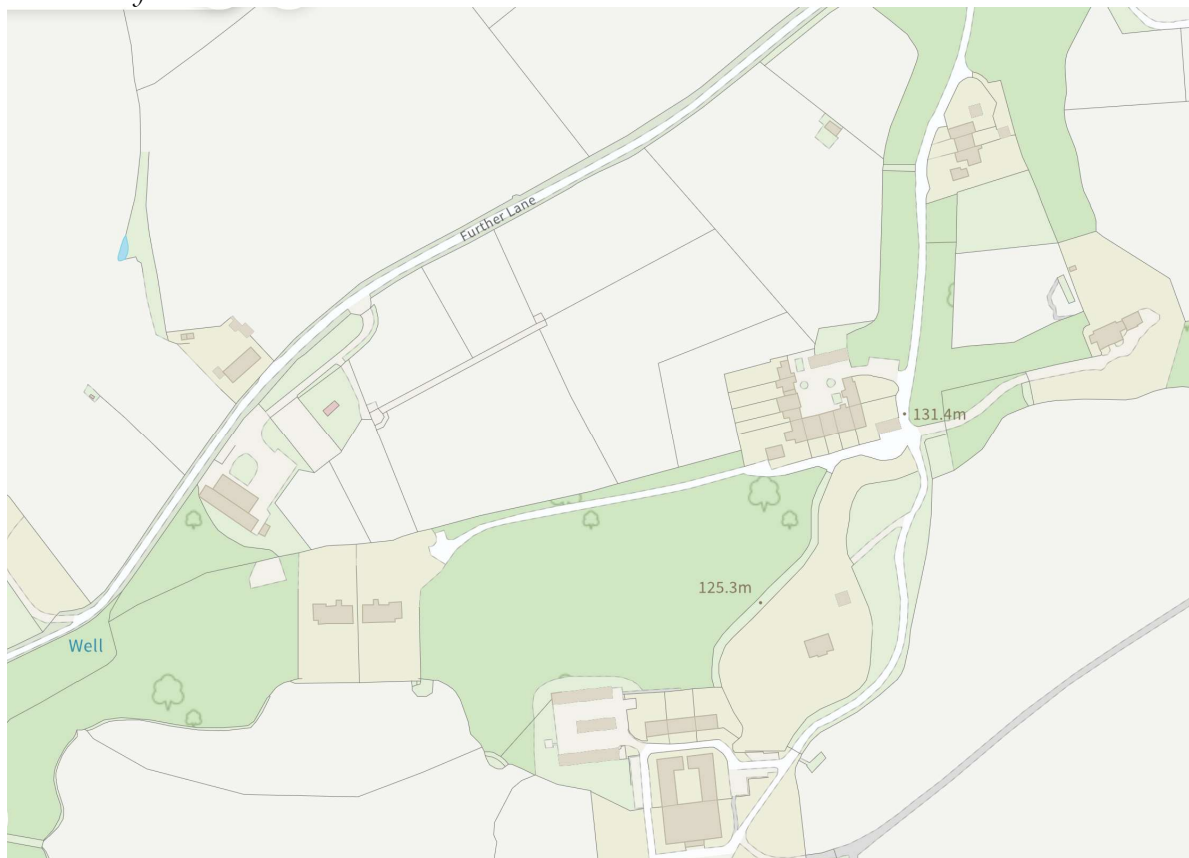
*1844 survey*



*1892 survey*



1972 survey



Current map of Hall and environs

### **Kitchen garden houses**

The kitchen garden is c. 1840 and was built by Hindle in the NW corner of the pleasure grounds where there was a small ornamental garden and viewing stage in Sudell's time. When built, the relationship with the park, the Sugar House, Shorrock Green House and

the stable court (Park Farm) demonstrated the evolution of the estate in the hands of a new owner. The erection of 2 houses inserts residential development where none would be expected, changes the scale and layout of the designed landscape and are irreversibly harmful to the heritage significance of the park and the setting of its listed buildings.

Heritage value: Intrusive. Detracts from the remnant values of the 'new' kitchen garden. Re Table 4, the impact on significance at time of building – moderate impact on high value pleasure ground – would have been moderate/ large.

### **Woodfold stables court (Park Farm)**

The stables and offices were built into the north wall of the Park, behind the ridge, behind the Hall. They were built by 1828, the exact date being unknown. Despite being on the service entrance, they formed part of a ceremonial entrance to the Hall but this was removed and reconfigured under JF Hindle's tenure post-1831. The C21 rebuilding and extensions have completely removed the legibility of the courtyard complex and cluttered the original form of the building causing huge heritage harm. The suburbanising gardens cut across the grain of how the buildings once worked with the estate. Thus, appearance and layout now detract from the RPG of which they are a part.

Historic value: Some

Artistic value: None

Architectural value: Intrusive. The new scale and layout detract from the value of Park and Hall. Re Table 4, major impact on medium value would have given moderate/large impact on significance at time of conversion.

Archaeological value: Little

Social value: Detracts.

### **Deer House**

Single storey dwelling of sandstone walls under a blue slate roof. The front elevation of the property contains a date stone inscribed with 'AD 1765, rebuilt 1798 and 2002.' It lies within the RPG but is not named in the list description. Nonetheless, it is an historic building in the Park, with a parkland setting and an historic associated estate use as implied by its name. The dwelling has been substantially altered and extended from its original square form seen on the C19 maps but retains a single-storey linear form and elements of the historic stone fabric and appearance, including the large, quoined opening to the front elevation. It nestles into a depression and is therefore discrete within the landscape, appearing as a subservient and ancillary structure within the RPG. Its bitty elevations add little to the character of the park and it is unrecognisable as a deer house.

Historic value: Little

Architectural, artistic and archaeological values: negligible



## Contribution of Setting to Significance

The immediate setting of the Hall i.e. the Park and pleasure grounds, has been degraded to such an extent that the contribution of its *immediate* setting to its significance is now 'little'. The overdevelopment of the stable court (Woodfold Park Farm) and the erection of various large buildings in the court and northern pleasure grounds detract from significance, along with the use of the Parkland for modern agricultural purposes. The basic shape of the pleasure grounds is intact, as are some parts of the southern setting. The loss of the eastern park to dairy farming detracts from significance.

The immediate setting of the Park contributes little to significance. The preponderance of horsiculture to the north in the form of the paddocks at Shorrock Green and the Woodfold stud detracts from significance.

### 4. Reason for refusal: Asserted Impact of proposal on setting of Woodfold Park and its Listed Buildings

The proposals build on and enhance the aspect of character that once would have made visitors consider Shorrock Green part of the wider setting (see GPA3) of Woodfold Park. The Hall has an *immediate setting* comprising the forecourt/ grass platt to the south and the pleasure grounds to the north. But the map evidence is clear: the visitor of the early to mid C19 through the north entrance would have seen and understood the Stable Court (Woodfold Farm), Shorrock Green House (rebuilt as Huntsman's cottages), the Avenue, Sugar House, the Green, and boundary fields along Further Lane, as part of the functioning estate, both practically and visually.

The situation has over the years has deteriorated visually so the entirety of Shorrock Green is now given over to horsiculture. Both Sugar House and Shorrock Green House have been demolished, the Avenue felled and the "farm" overdeveloped. It is now visually degraded and a green wasteland of low ecological diversity.

The Villa proposal is intended to visually lift and significantly enhance the remaining heritage assets and interest and the character and appearance of the area to something of the interest it retained up to the mid- C19 where the green was clearly part of the wider estate. Further, the intention is to lift the application site to a status which was historically appropriate to the parcel of land which was more than just agricultural, as its character was more closely allied to the imparked area to the south.

Large country houses are characteristic of this valley slope above Blackburn. The new Villa will give meaning to the Green, now that the substantial Sugar House and Shorrock Green House are no longer there. The attendant parkland and gardens will reintroduce native tree species to the Green and raise ecological diversity. It will also raise and enhance the area in design terms so that it will be visually diverse once more in terms of

reversing the green wasteland to a time when the landscape had greater variance in its rural character. This would raise and enhance the Green above 'waste' and create an historically appropriate setting for the Park even though the working connexion of the Avenue no longer exists.

The views of this area would still be different from those of the 1820s, as the application site is only a small element of a much wider landscape, but the contribution offered by the application site would be of significantly greater interest and heritage value than the current monoculture grassland and more closely aligned to the quality that was expected of a parcel of land closely associated with the Park through historic ownership and juxtaposition. The proposals are laid out – house and park – to create views for users of the property and passersby to make best use of the views across the countryside to provide a dynamic experience in the landscape. The views analysis of the site, set out in the Character Definition Study, has closely informed siting and planting. The key point in the analysis is that people move through landscapes – views are dynamic as well as static – and a description of entering the north gate and progressing to the park is identified in the Study. The intention of the proposal is to take the viewer through a series of visual incidents, hence the layout of the drive and the tree placements, to give the occasional Reptonian 'bursts', as described in the Study. Similarly, as the viewer progresses along Further Lane, the scenic vignettes will change and what is now a monoculture grassland will be enhanced in 'social' value.

Overall, the proposals offer an opportunity to repair and enhance an area that has become devoid of character through the current equestrian use and detracts from the Park and its setting owing to the character of modern horsiculture that has come to dominate traditional country landscapes in many parts of Britain. Whilst the proposals would not replicate the original appearance of the land in the 1800s, they would repair the relationship of the land with the Park, where that historic association offers an opportunity to connect the history of the site with the present day. As such, the proposals secure a material enhancement to the setting of the Park.

Apart from the Hall and Park, the third heritage asset that might be considered to be close to Shorrocks Green is the Orangery, listed at Grade II. This building has been ruined as part of its conversion into a house after it was listed in 1986. Consequently, its heritage value is limited to 'historic'. There is no physical or visual link between this building in the pleasure grounds and the proposal site thus no impact is envisaged to significance.

### **Impact of the Proposal in Terms of Scale and Competing with Woodfold Hall**

The new Villa is shorter in both height and footprint than Woodfold Hall, where the new Villa measures 23m wide (plus bays) compared to the 33.2m span of the C18 building. The length of Woodfold Hall was 65m with its integral stable court giving a footprint of 2093 m<sup>2</sup> compared to the proposed Villa's 883 m<sup>2</sup>. The volume of the Villa is, therefore,

much smaller in scale than Woodfold Hall.

The siting of the Hall is also important to any consideration of impact. There is no view between the remaining important elements of the Hall from its front and that of the new Villa, which is to be located to the rear and against the parts of the Hall that have been subject to the most amount of harm as a result of redevelopment. There was never meant to have been a direct view between the Hall and the stable court, or the walled garden area, or the aviary NW of the Hall, or the hothouse to the NE. These could all be discovered in a peregrination of the estate, which by all accounts, Mr Sudell would have relished.

The Hall was pre-eminent and will remain so. It had a network of paths that fanned out up the slope through the pleasure grounds leading eventually to the stable court in the NE or the little ornamental garden in the NW which preceded the walled kitchen garden. Both the garden and the little end pavilion of the stable court were set pieces to be seen from the Park and to glimpse part of the Park in a gradual revelation. The 1844 OS shows the reinvigorated link between Shorrock Green House and Sugar House via the Avenue and turning into the grounds of the 1830s brick walled garden and hothouse, descending then through the maze of pleasure grounds to the Hall. The visitor at the north gate would pass Shorrock Green House, shimmy around the stable court pavilion, which would reveal a momentary view, then loop generously across the slope south thus encountering the Hall from the east; or in its 1830 refit, dive into the pleasure ground, descending to the stable yard of the Hall itself. This sense of interconnectedness via gradual revelation is a feature of many old country estates and is what has been lost at Woodfold with recent redevelopment. But all journeys ended at the Hall which retained its pre-eminence in the social and visual hierarchy.

Aerial photos from before the Hall was rebuilt show how the triangle of Shorrock Green and the stable court ('Farm') are visually detached from the Hall because of the tree belt in the pleasure grounds that hems the Hall in on its north side. Modern drone footage showing a much-reduced tree cover still demonstrates this point. It also shows how low the Hall is in relation to the Raven's Wing to Stanley Hall mini-ridge on which the stable court is built.

The Hall is therefore self-contained within its walled Park and has an expansive immediate setting, which visually separates the proposals site and Shorrock Green from the principal heritage asset, despite their juxtaposition.





1844 OS



Wooded pleasure grounds before redevelopment



*Aerial photo today*

Large-scale houses are a feature of the area, as noted in the accompanying gazetteer prepared by Shaw & Jagger. The new Villa and Hall would remain visually separated by virtue of distance, screening and topography. Old and new woodland screening and the topography around a natural ridge would serve to reinforce the visual separation of the buildings. The only impact that is possible is in respect to the wider landscape setting, although the Villa will not appear within the same vista as the Hall due to the visual separation. However, any such impact is significantly positive. The proposal has been shown to be an enhancement in the way a dynamic system of viewing is reintroduced to the 'place', and through the re-establishment of the historic relationship between the land on which the Villa is to be located and the wider estate. The proposal will therefore deliver material heritage benefits to those existing heritage assets.

### **Heritage Significance of Park and Buildings & the Significance of the Proposals**

The debate around social value as one of the heritage values set out in *Conservation Principles* (2008) (abbreviated to CP) is rehearsed in Emerick (2014). The case studies located in the north of England and Scotland look at the attempt by SPAB and local heritage bodies to limit significance to archaeological and historic values only (evidential and historic in CP terms) where in fact social value is what most closely relates to the people who encounter heritage; people who understand the heritage traditions, spaces, materials, buildings and views of the historic environment. The NPPF value system subsumes social (CP communal) value into historic value.

This site is one in which an intervention can enhance this social value by removing the current use, that has no historic value, and replacing it with one that builds on local tradition (the country house) and on an old physical relationship with the adjacent heritage asset (Woodfold Park) to enhance significance.

In reference to the local plan policies cited in the refusal notice, first of all the proposals will have no impact, visual or physical, on the listed Woodfold Hall. The proposal does not directly harm the Hall or the Park or any of its listed structures. In fact, consistent with policy EN5, the proposal will enhance the setting of the Park, lifting it from its current monoculture, allowing Shorrock Green once again to exist as an adjunct to Woodfold Hall and its Park. The proposal tunes into the sense of place developed by Henry Sudell in the 1790s using design techniques that would have been familiar to his contemporaries. It reinstates the social value of the green.

Turning then to assertions made by the council in determining the application:

The planning officer inexplicably suggests there are “many errors, omissions and contradictions in the submitted documents with properties mis-described with factual errors undermining the proposition that this development enhances the Heritage Asset including the reference to Sharrock [sic] Green Hall, rerouting of Further Lane, incorrect siting of Sharrock Green, situation of the Villa outside of the parkland...”. This is a serious mischaracterisation of the detailed research that has been undertaken and reflects a concerning misunderstanding of the heritage of the site. Indeed, it is Historic England’s own research which records the discovery of the ruins of ‘Shorrock Green’ i.e. the house or hall, in 1958 and a monument number (43533) has been allocated to it. What we have termed the Avenue is plainly not the original line of Further Lane as the LGS insist (see Yates etc.) and the diversion of the Preston road to form Further Lane is widely known and discussed in Crosby (2002). The designer of the Hall and Park remains unknown, despite reference to various architects and landscape designers as having associations with the estate, and in any event has no bearing on the physical experience of the site. Therefore, the allegation of errors, omissions, contradiction or factual errors is simply not correct.

The Council has also now asserted that the Villa would compete with the Hall for prominence in the area. This is simply not the case and fails to take account of the detailed analysis which demonstrates it is not the case. Visual separation would ensure that this would not be possible, but in any case, the proposed Villa is simply not of the same scale as the Hall. Moreover, there is a long and healthy tradition (and it forms part of the character of the area) of large houses sitting cheek by jowl in the vicinity without any of the asserted competition for prominence occurring; a case in point being the erection of the huge Woodfold Hall only a stone’s throw from Stanley House, the former manor house for Mellor. It is clear from the design of the Villa that it is neither the aim nor the

result of the proposal, given the relative scale and the intention to create a Villa using the same design principles (classical) as Woodfold Hall. The Villa *would beneficially* change the visual journey of those using Further Lane and those using the north drive to Woodfold Park (which is now the only entrance; but once the service entrance) and so complement the experience of the area and the locality of the Hall. In doing so, it would in fact provide *positive* visual incidents owing to the high quality of the design as opposed to the paucity of the early C21 built ruination of Woodfold Hall grounds and Shorrock Green stable court/ Woodfold Farm.

The Villa would clearly *not* harm the key elements of significance – the Park’s remnant features, the associated listed buildings, the Hall and its forecourt/ platt, the pleasure grounds – of the existing heritage assets. Nor would it affect the way they are interconnected. The 2024 visitor to Woodfold Hall having passed the Villa and enjoyed glimpses of modern neo-classical craftsmanship would also clearly understand the magnificence of the earlier Hall and its pre-eminence in the historic environment whilst contemplating the imposing south façade with its Spalatro capitals, spacious grass platt and C18 wood pasture above wooded slope, even in its degraded condition.

## CONCLUSION

As part of the analysis of the proposals for Shorrock Green, this document considers the reason for refusal in relation to heritage grounds which is considered to be misconceived for a number of reasons. The proposal will in fact enhance the heritage assets and character of the area and there is a presumption in favour of the conservation and enhancement of the significance of adjacent heritage assets and their settings. This is a conservation principle and is embodied in the NPPF’s Chapter 16 and the Local Plan’s EN5 and DME4.

The site for the proposal is not merely a patch of isolated countryside; it has a narrative which was historically closely connected to Woodfold Hall but intended to remain discrete spatial unit owing to location and topography. Its character and evolution have been laid out in a Character Definition Study and further historical analysis that accompany this document. This Note describes the heritage assets of Woodfold Park and assesses their significance. The clear and emphatic conclusion of the analysis is that heritage values have been progressively degraded since the Hall was abandoned in 1949 and that overdevelopment and building forms which have not been of proper quality have caused irreversible harm to the buildings; however, the landscape still has scope for enhancement with a proper response. The site for the proposal has historically accommodated a larger dwelling before; such dwellings are also part of the historic DNA of this part of Lancashire above Blackburn.

The proposals represent an holistic interpretation to complement the classicism of Woodfold Hall and a landscape design in the spirit of the 1820s which would not only

respect and cause no harm to the physical heritage assets of the locality or their setting, but rather significantly enhance the place, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.

## References

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