

PROPOSAL FOR WOODFOLD VILLA LANCASHIRE

Review by Dr Kate Feluś
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In light of my experience as a historian of designed landscapes I have been invited to review the designs for the proposed dwelling within the context of the wider site – particularly in the context of the Grade II Registered parkland, Grade II Listed house, Grade II orangery and the non-designated heritage assets in the form of remaining historic built structures. I have visited the site for the proposed dwelling and viewed the areas of the designed landscape around and from the house. This site visit was made in early February when there were no leaves on the trees, allowing maximum visibility. I have not been able to walk the whole of the designed landscape, due to access issues. I have, however, reviewed a range of maps (modern and historic) and read the report on the history of the site by Alan Crosby, written in 2002 when the mansion was being converted into apartments. I have reviewed the architectural design for the villa by Shaw and Jagger Architects, the accompanying landscaping proposals by Ian Dieffenthaler, the background research by Ian Dieffenthaler and the photomontage wireframe views.¹ Furthermore I have reviewed the comments on the original application made by the Traditional Architecture Group (TAG), the respected architectural historian Jeremy Musson, the Lancashire Gardens Trust and objectors to the original application and the delegated report accompanying the refusal of permission (August 2023).

I am a garden historian, consultant and author. I have been working on designed landscapes since 1996 and have run my own consultancy since 2002. Over that period I have assessed a wide range of designed landscapes from Elizabethan water gardens to Edwardian seaside parks. The 18th and early 19th centuries are my specialism. My social history of the Landscape Style, *The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden*, was published in 2016 and has been called ‘a pioneering work and an important addition to the literature of the country house’. In 2019 I was commissioned by Historic England to carry out a contextual study of seaside villas (c1760s to c1840). This was published by Historic England in April 2023. I am currently working on a new book on gardens, commissioned by Yale University Press, which covers a time span of 300 years, from the 1720s up to the present day, thus including commentary on new design within historic landscapes.

Summary:

Woodfold Park was once a fine designed landscape, surrounding an equally impressive mansion. The identity of the landscape designer is a matter of debate and speculation, but it is fair to say that it was executed by a confident hand; one who made full use of the naturally advantageous

¹ Documents written by Ian Dieffenthaler: *Site at Shorrock Green, Mellor: A Character Definition Study* (June 2021), *Repairing the Landscape – Analysis* (December 2022), *Shorrock Green & Shorrock Green Hall – Further Historical Investigation*, January 2024) and *Appendix to Addendum to Character Definition Study* (January 2024).

topography. However, the last 70 years or so have not been kind to the site. Its aesthetic value and historic significance have been repeatedly eroded. Not only did the house become a shell after the Second World War, but every single historic ancillary structure has been compromised – in terms of historic integrity. That the estate experienced a rapid decline in the years after the Second World War is far from uncommon and therefore unsurprising. But that so many detrimental planning decisions have been made since the early 2000s is shocking. One tends to think of the 21st century as more enlightened times. This is especially relevant for historic designed landscapes, following the instigation of the *Parks and Gardens Register* in the mid 1980s – before which they had little recognition – and the subsequent *Register* upgrade programme of the mid 1990s. The designation of Woodfold Park on the *Register* in 1995 is likely to have been part of that programme.

Moreover, additional modern development has been allowed which renders the legibility of the historic estate problematic – the most obvious example being Woodfold Park Stud (built around 2006/7 and set inside the Registered Park and Garden (RPG)). In aerial photography it masquerades as a historic stable block in plan, but has been built on virgin ground and relates in no way to the original stable buildings of the historic estate. Against this background – and the condition of the immediate site for the proposed villa at present – it is my opinion that the new villa would not be detrimental to the setting or the significance of the site. Had the Woodfold Park Stud not been built, the east drive not been blocked by the building of a house right across it or houses built in the walled kitchen garden – it would be a different matter. But all these buildings do exist and their presence is extremely unlikely to ever be reversed. They have now become part of the story of Woodfold Park – for better or for worse. Given that history is not finite but a continuum, the proposed Woodfold Villa would also become part of that evolving history of the wider site – just as Woodfold Park itself developed within the territory of the much older Stanley House (now a hotel) and Shorrock Green Hall (demolished c.1860s).

In terms of the effect the proposed villa would have on the landscape visually and aesthetically, I agree with Jeremy Musson and the Traditional Architecture Group that the planned house is a piece of exceptional architecture, which has been very carefully thought through. By siting the house in the proposed location and – importantly – ensuring the new building sits in a carefully designed landscape setting, the proposal would enhance this area of landscape. It would raise the appearance of the site from scruffy horse paddocks, with unsightly sheds and modern fences, to one that works with the backdrop of the designed landscape of the Registered Park and Garden, not against it. The proposed associated tree and shrub planting would complement the historic belts – in contrast to the present situation in which the visually intrusive buildings and fences jar against the backdrop of the historic trees of the designed landscape. Furthermore, the proposal presents opportunities to restore historic features of the designed landscape, which is designated as ‘at risk’ by Historic England. These include planting features and the significant structure of the park wall, which forms the southern boundary to the proposed site. This would also demonstrate a commitment to the history and significance of the site on the part of the client and his team.

Background: My Assessment of the Condition and Significance of the Registered Park and Garden

Ian Dieffenthaler has evaluated the various significances of the site in his Appendix to the Addendum to the Character Definition Study (January 2024), so I do not repeat the exercise of categorisations here, rather, I offer my observations on significance and how it has been undermined.

Woodfold Park, as an ensemble, is undoubtedly of regional significance, as the large scale and ambitious creation of a wealthy Blackburn textile entrepreneur. It is an important document of the history of this part of the north-west and Blackburn specifically. But, as indicated by its inclusion on Historic England's *At Risk Register*, its condition is poor.

The landscape around the house still reads as parkland – just. It retains a few fine, spreading parkland oaks and belts of woodland. But the parkland lacks trees – the number here now is really the bare minimum in order for the landscape to announce itself as parkland. I estimate only around 20 to 30% remain of what was there at the start of the 20th century.² There has been no replanting. Indeed, I saw no evidence of any planting phases subsequent to the early 19th century.³ So, the tree population is essentially of a single generation, plus weed trees. One might have expected there to have been some trees planted – at least within sight of the mansion, when it was rebuilt and converted to apartments in the early 2000s. Indeed, this was a recommendation of the 2002 Crosby report. But this has not been the case. It would only take one 1987-scale storm to wipe out the remaining open parkland trees and the landscape would lose this aesthetic entirely.

Named designers inevitably confer status and significance on a site and several names have been suggested in association with the house and parkland. The house and some ancillary structures (especially lodges) may have been the work of the leading architect James Wyatt, although he is unlikely to have provided more than a set of drawings. Charles McNiven may have been the executant architect / surveyor / clerk of works and is a candidate as the designer of the landscape. We also have the Lancashire Gardens Trust's unsubstantiated attribution of the landscape to John Webb.⁴ But neither McNiven nor Webb have definite, clear cut evidence of attribution to them, which weakens the significance of the designed landscape somewhat, as a named designer has not been firmly identified. I have only seen a relatively small portion of the landscape, but this does indeed speak of a reasonably high degree of professional competence in its laying out. Judging by the topography, map evidence and observations made by Alan Crosby in his report on the history of the site in 2002, it seems that the wooded valley, its ornamented water courses and lakes are fine pieces of landscape design (not to mention engineering). However, all this potential significance

² 2nd edition OS map, 1911, 1:2500

³ A handful of trees have recently been planted along the north drive. These appear to be silver birch, an inappropriate species that would not have been here historically.

⁴ McNiven and Webb are not major, influential names, they are names though and therefore hooks to hang the landscape on. If there were firm evidence to link either name to the site, then it becomes more significant, because in understanding the site as a work of that particular minor designer, it adds to our knowledge of the oeuvre of the designer. But without that firm evidence, the design of the park has to stand on its own merits.

is tempered by the fact that, since 1949 (the date at which the hall was abandoned), all elements of the designed landscape, including all its built structures, have been on a downwards trajectory, first through dereliction and subsequently (in most cases) through unsympathetic over-development. This has eroded the integrity of Woodfold Park as a heritage asset.

Integrity is closely connected to legibility. Legibility – how we read and understand a site and its component parts – is an important aspect of significance for a heritage asset, or group of assets.⁵ The list of ways in which legibility has been eroded is extensive, including new buildings masquerading as historic buildings and hierarchies within the estate confused and out of kilter with the original order, which would have continued up to World War Two. The losses of legibility can be grouped into three rough categories.



Figure 1: The north entrance to Woodfold Park from Further Lane. The gates on the right are the start of the north drive to the house. Huntsmans Cottages can be seen inside the park. The gates on the left are for Woodfold Park Stud, a modern building within the registered parkland. Their prominence, proximity and scale relative to those leading to the house confuse the hierarchy of the historic estate and the legibility of the heritage asset(s), thus eroding its significance. (Image courtesy of Google Streetview).

Firstly, access. The only approach to the mansion today is via the north drive, which was the lowest status of the three entrances to the estate – the service drive to the service areas behind the house. In historic terms it does not make sense to arrive at the mansion via the lowliest, shortest and least designed of the approaches. When the house was first built, family and visitors would arrive on the drive from the south, via the picturesque valley. The less ornamented drive from the east is probably slightly later in date. But both of these drives approached the house at an oblique angle, heading towards the south-east corner, which would show the house off in a more flattering manner.

Secondly, new build. The creation of Woodfold Park Stud – which, it should be noted, is inside the boundary of the Registered Park and Garden – has severely compromised the legibility of the designed landscape and indeed the historic estate. On first glance at aerial mapping it reads as the historic stable block for the estate. Moreover, its gateway on Further Lane has been joined to the

⁵ Legibility is closely connected to Historic England's 'evidential' heritage value.

wing walls of the gates to the north drive (to the service areas and now the mansion), further confusing the hierarchy of the historic estate (figure 1). The development of Middle Lodge also erodes the legibility of the historic estate – the way it worked and its hierarchy of entrance drives. It also erodes the historic integrity of both the approach drive and also the lodges themselves. Middle Lodge was originally a pair of gate lodges flanking the route into the estate from the east –



Figure 2: Looking eastwards across the park to the house straddling the east drive and incorporating the historic Middle Lodges. The line of the former drive is clear across the parkland. Note how few freestanding trees survive.

each lodge sitting either side of the drive (figure 2). At some point, in relatively recent times (post-2000), they have been joined up to create a single dwelling that actually sits astride this entrance route, effectively severing it forever. Other new build within the RPG includes the detached building to the rear of the service wing of the house, now called 'The Coach House' (figures 3 and 4). This is a super-scale, monster version of the previous building in this location and expands to beyond the width of the main house, disrupting the compact historic form of

the mansion and its immediate service structures – which was originally part of the stripped-back aesthetic (figure 5). Next to it are three large, modern garage blocks, built on what was once pleasure ground, an area of shrubberies on the south facing slope, through which ran an intricate network of walks. The garages are immediately adjacent to the ruins of the aviary (figures 5 and 6). This was an original feature of the Sudell period and has just been abandoned, its walls visible through weed growth. The footprint of the garages with their associated tarmac is almost the same as that of the house. To the immediate west of the garages a pair of houses have been built in the former walled kitchen garden (figures 7 and 8). They are inappropriate to their setting in a historically important part of the gardens in both scale and material – and make no coherent reference to the history of this area of the estate. The coach house, the garages and kitchen garden houses all seem to date to the early 2000s. It should also be noted that, while not actually new build, the alterations to the orangery in order to turn it into a dwelling, particularly in respect to its roofline, have been heavy-handed and unsympathetic to its original design and appearance, compromising its architecture, proportions and scale (figure 9).



Figure 3: The old stables at the immediate rear of the house, in their ruined state in 1993. It is clear here how this building completed the service yards at the rear of the house, maintaining the compact form of the block of buildings.



Figure 4 (right): The modern building on the site of the historic stables seen above. Known as the 'Coach House', it has been built on a totally different scale and of different materials and its footprint stretches out wider than the width of the house.



Figure 5: Woodfold Hall seen from the south-west, with large areas of tarmac where grass should sweep up to the front steps. Note also the 'Coach House' protruding beyond the original, compact footprint of development behind the house (blue arrow). To its left are the modern garage blocks, sitting what was once part of the in the pleasure grounds. The abandoned aviary is in the trees to the left of the cars seen here (red arrow).



Figure 6: The remains of the aviary, which formed a counterpoint to the orangery on the other side of the house, now abandoned to the undergrowth.

Figure 7 (right): The walled kitchen garden with its pair of modern houses, seen from just south-west of the mansion. Here it is clear how much taller than the walls the houses are. They may have been designed to look like functional bothies and backsides, but their scale makes that a nonsense – and ensures they are prominent in the landscape.



Figure 8: Looking west along the drive to the walled kitchen garden with its pair of modern houses. The original wall can be seen through the trees on the left. The houses stand far higher than the walls and do not match the brick.



Figure 9: A closer view of the orangery with its incongruous modern roofline.

Thirdly, deterioration of features, including built structures, planting and landscaping. The abandoned, ruined aviary has just been mentioned (figure 6, above). The park wall, an important feature in the definition of the extent of the designed landscape and recognition of it from the outside, is in poor condition along its whole length. I have already pointed out that there is no evidence of later phrases of planting, subsequent to the early 19th century. Having a single generation tree

population in a designed landscape eventually becomes a huge risk. As it is here. Once such trees come to the end of their lives, the landscape as design becomes impossible to read and therefore meaningless as design. It is also possible to put under this heading of 'deterioration' the treatment of the landscape immediately around the house (figure 5, above). The mansion itself now sits in a swathe of tarmac, covered in cars, where it once had grass up to the entrance steps – a very important part of the original design. This original stripped-back, almost minimalist aesthetic was – unusually – never over-written with design by later generations in the 19th or early 20th centuries (figure 10). The modern fences of various styles, tarmac, cars, faux Victorian lamp posts and rest of the visual clutter are yet another erosion of the heritage asset.

Given all these factors, the harm to the design, confusion to legibility and erosion of integrity is all but irreversible. It would take exceptional circumstances, against all odds, to reverse all these examples of destruction and erosion. Thus it is hard to imagine the place ever regaining its historic integrity and aesthetic value.



Figure 10: Woodfold Park, Lancashire, the Seat of John Fowden Hindle Esq, C J Greenwood 1846. Note the compact form of the house, flanked by vegetation and the grass of the parkland sweeping up to the steps, uninterrupted by fences.

Response to the Lancashire Gardens Trust letter:

The Officer's Report appears to give weight to the response of the Lancashire Gardens Trust to the proposed villa. On first glance, their points seem reasonable. However, further review of the documentation and the site itself reveals how some of their points are open to debate. Following the headings in their letter, I set out my observations below.

–'Woodfold Park At Risk'

There is clearly a need to address the 'at risk' status of the whole site, but the Lancashire GT appear to suggest this application might be used as a vehicle to persuade the local authority to address the wider issues of vulnerability and deterioration across the RPG. The wider condition of the heritage assets – many of which are, in practice, intractable – is not the responsibility of the client. It seems entirely unreasonable to suggest that the LPA decline to consider this application (or the appeal) until a Conservation Management Plan for the whole RPG site is carried out – especially given that the application site is outside the RPG boundary.

However, in the immediate vicinity of the proposed villa, there are issues of deterioration that could be relevant. As a commitment to the site – its history and significance – there are elements of the design and structure that the client is willing to offer to restore. The section of park wall (c250m of c6.5km) that forms the southern boundary of the plot is the obvious feature. Less obvious is the sleeve of planting along the northern drive. As with all the areas of the designed landscape that I was able to see on my visit, this suffers from single generation trees, interspersed with weed trees. Likewise the thinner strip of planting along the north side of the route to the walled kitchen garden, just inside the park wall. Both elements of replanting would be subject to agreement with the landowner, but with willingness on the part of the client. This proposal therefore has the ability to address some of the 'continuing negative trajectory' of the RPG by focusing on the boundary between the two sites.

–'Assumptions in the character study'

The main issue the Lancashire Gardens Trust has with the Character Study is the existence of Shorrock Green Hall. I have reviewed the sources and it is clear that the existence of this relatively high status dwelling, which predated Woodfold Park by some centuries, is well-documented – in historic references, map evidence and archaeological evidence.⁶ Moreover, there is good evidence for the avenue-like approach to the house from the west. Not only is it clearly shown on the 1844 OS map (figure 11), but it is also clear on the 1831 sale catalogue plan – and the distribution of trees plotted on the OS map of 1892 suggest that a few trees along the alignment survived as late

⁶ The site of Shorrock Green Hall is documented as Historic England Monument No. 43533. See also Neil Summersgill, *The History of Mellor in Lancashire*, (The Mellor Community Project Group, 1999), p. 111: 'The site of the old house at Shorrock Green lies within an area of wooded ground on the east side of the drive leading to Woodfold Park Farm. Huntsman's Cottages, a terrace of three 19th cent dwellings standing about 30 metres to the west of the site, were possibly built using stone from the old house.'

as that date.⁷ Furthermore, the causeway is very visible on the ground and can clearly be seen on LiDAR data (figure 12). The LiDAR data shows clearly that it is a route of a different character from the other former roads and trackways that criss-cross the landscape of Woodfold Park and its environs. That the now-lost Shorrock Green Hall had a tree-lined approach is credible, especially given that neighbouring Stanley House also had one, running to the house from the south; so there are local precedents for tree-lined approaches to houses of this sort of status.



Figure 11: A detail from the OS map of 1844, which clearly shows both Shorrock Green Hall, with its carriage sweep on the west side and the avenue leading to it.

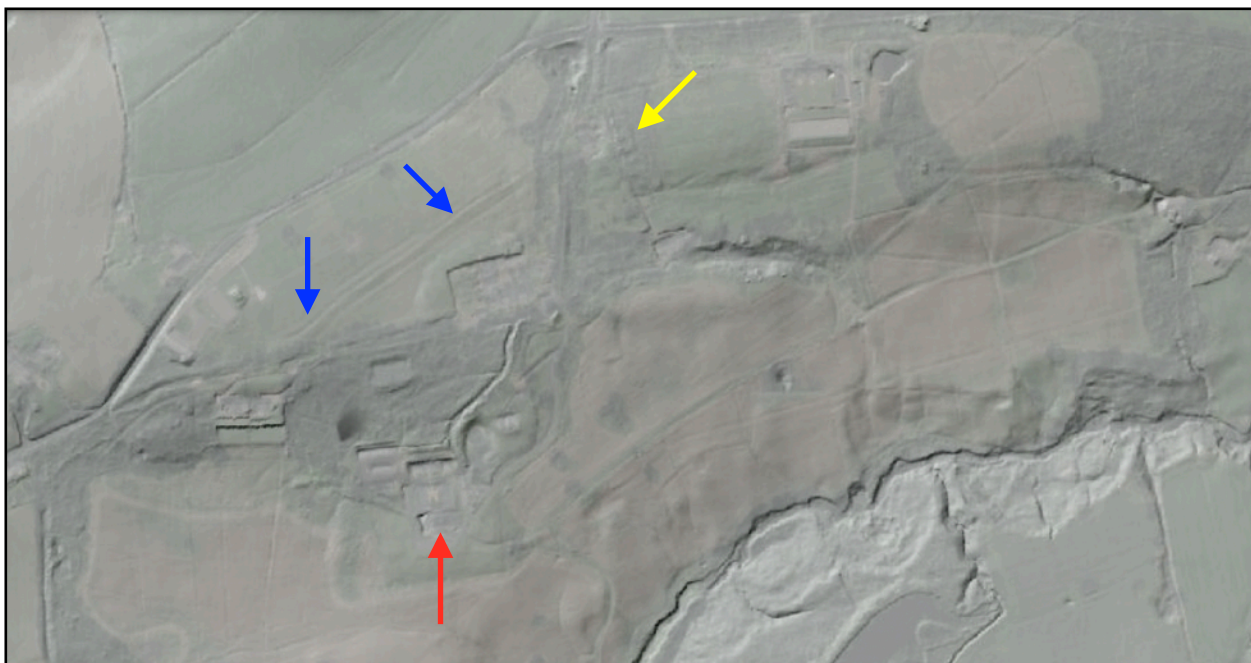


Figure 12: LiDAR imagery overlaid on top of aerial mapping. The line of the former route to Shorrock Green Hall is clear (blue arrows). The mansion is marked with a blue arrow for orientation. The yellow arrow indicates the site of the lost Shorrock Green Hall. The route clearly terminates at the site.

⁷ 1st edition OS map, 1892 (1:2500)

– ‘Impact on Significance of Woodfold Park’

I do not agree with the Lancashire GT that there will be harm to the setting of Woodfold Park under the current proposal. There is harm to the setting here at present in the low standard of presentation of the horse paddocks and the modern additions to Woodfold Park Farm. The new villa will be placed outside the designed landscape of Woodfold Park and outside the original park wall and belts of planting. It could be considered to harm the setting of Woodfold Park Farm, had Woodfold Park Farm – firstly – been a listed building and – secondly – not been altered to the point of considerable damage to its historic integrity (figure 13). The modern extensions on the west side do not sit on the same footprint as the original buildings; there is visual clutter arising



Figure 13: Woodfold Park Farm, seen from the south-west. The original elevation can be seen on the right (arrow), the projecting bays of the rest of the building, to its left in this view, are modern additions and sit outside the historic footprint of the building. The more complicated elevation on this side is alien to the original restrained architecture and has undermined the historic integrity and legibility.

from the individual units all having individual gardens of a variety of styles and characters; plus garages, car parking, areas of tarmac, modern signs etc. The extensions and modern gardens remove the legibility of the buildings as a single unit of built form around a courtyard for the service of the mansion. The clutter removes the original aesthetic intent and confuses the archaeological and historic record.

The impact on the unlisted Huntsmans Cottages is also argued.

While these dwellings have been adapted in a more sympathetic manner than Park Farm, the building is seemingly not unaltered. It would never have been high status in historic terms and would have been accommodation for staff. Thus it was never supposed to have ornamental views. Indeed there would not have been views into the potential site of the villa from these cottages had the sleeve of planting along the north drive been maintained. Moreover, the effect of the scheme on the setting of Huntsmans Cottages can be ameliorated by the reinforcement of this sleeve (as suggested above) and the new planting planned for the setting of the villa (discussed below).

The Lancashire Gardens Trust’s letter goes on to state: ‘past and present harm should not be compounded by more harm to the park, its estate buildings and their setting.’ I agree with this statement, but this design does not further harm the park as it sits outside it and out of sight of

the mansion. Indeed it could be a benefit in terms of a degree of restoration of historic features around the periphery to the park, as outlined above.

In their letter the Lancashire Gardens Trust also state: 'the site has high rarity value, as it is a remarkable survivor in an industrial area.' I agree it is a survivor, but to be a 'remarkable survivor' I would expect the built structures to be more intact and the ownership to be less fragmented. I do not think this development will effect that rarity value. It will not erase the existence of a mansion and parkland in an industrial area. The development is outside the park wall and will enhance the setting by removing the scruffy accoutrements of its equestrian use.

Another debatable assertion is: 'the standards of design embodied by the RPG are impeccable in that the Palladian mansion is complimented by estate buildings which fulfil the role of usefulness with beauty, a Georgian principle, because they are in harmony with the design of the house and are subservient to it in size, mass and distribution.' This would be a valid point had the park been in a better condition and its significance had not been so eroded (as discussed above). The dictionary definition of 'impeccable' is 'without faults' or 'perfect' and is therefore the sort of term that should be reserved for a Grade I landscape which has been continually well-maintained and is not in any way degraded, such as Chatsworth – to give but one example. Woodfold Park in its present condition is hardly comparable. Sadly, the estate buildings are no longer subservient in mass, for example the rebuilt coach house behind the mansion and the modern garage blocks – the combined footprint of which is almost as great as the main (originally polite) block of the mansion.

In summarising the section on impact on significance, the Lancashire Gardens Trust letter states: 'the immediate setting of the park is completely as intended, that is to say pastoral...' In my opinion the standard of presentation of the current paddocks proposed as the site for the villa as 'setting of the park' cannot be described as 'pastoral'. The fields on the north side of Further Lane are 'pastoral' – grazed by sheep and complete with traditional hedgerows. The horse paddocks have visually intrusive fences and buildings. Nor is any element of the original designed landscape within the RPG 'completely as intended'. Not one heritage asset is intact, unaltered and in good condition.

The development of Woodfold Villa will not impact on the supposedly high rarity value of the RPG of Woodfold Park. It will not affect the reading of the estate, the legibility of which – as stated above – is already severely compromised.

Assessment of the proposed landscape design of Woodfold Villa
(Based on planting plans dated October and November 2022).

The construction of Woodfold Villa would present an opportunity to address some of the harm that has been perpetrated on the northern edge of the historic designed landscape of Woodfold Park – with new design of high quality, that reads as parkland and is appropriate as setting for both the new house and the environs of a historic estate. There is perhaps a parallel in the background and aims of the present client and Henry Sudell. Mr Hussain, just like his eighteenth century predecessor, is a prominent local resident of some standing, building himself a villa outside the industrial town. It could be seen that Woodfold Villa is therefore *in* the tradition, rather than eroding the tradition – and far more so than other developments within the historic estate allowing in the last 20 years or so.

This section of land, the wedge of c.15 acres of horse paddocks to the south of Further Lane and north of the park wall is something of an anomaly of the landscape – neither parkland nor farmland, but sandwiched between both. Historically speaking it contains elements of the story of Shorrock Green Hall, but is also part of the later Woodfold Estate, yet not part of original extent of Woodfold Park. It retains archaeological evidence of that past in the causeway running across it. It deserves a distinct treatment – which the new landscape design would give it – raising it from its present low status character to something that signals Woodfold Park beyond the wall and also references the lost Shorrock Green Hall.

A single dwelling in its own setting here would mean none of the visual clutter and detritus that, for example, affects Woodfold Park Farm – with its individual gardens, fences, garages, parking areas. The setting for the new villa will mould into its surroundings (hedges into farmland, trees into belts and parkland) – as shown in the photomontages.



Figure 14: Looking north-east from the drive near the east side of the house towards Woodfold Park Stud which is clearly visible on the ridge (red arrow). The orangery, with its clumsy modern roof line, sits on the left of this photo.

The villa will be sited over the brow of the hill from the Woodfold Hall, the pleasure ground and the bulk of the parkland, both of which lie, essentially on southward facing slopes. It will therefore not be visible from any of these heritage assets. In contrast Woodfold Park Stud (figure 14) and the pair of houses in the former walled kitchen garden are far more intrusive on the designed landscape. The houses in the

To take inspiration from the late works of Humphry Repton is appropriate. The palette of suggested trees is generally good, but more of the most historically appropriate species could be used. Many limes and some oaks are planned, but these should be augmented with beech and horse chestnut, as these are the dominant four species in the pleasure grounds and parkland. It would be beneficial to introduce more evergreens into the final scheme, especially along the east side of the plot, helping to reinforce the sleeve planting along the north drive. Rather than a beech hedge, a less formal, less linear planting, with a dense drift of a variety of species, especially holly (which is common in the surrounding countryside and is also present within the historic designed landscape), would help the boundary planting blend into and reinforce the sleeve planting along north drive. Rhododendrons are the most common understory in the pleasure grounds of the mansion and could be used to good effect in the new design.

The site is very damp, so the creation of a pool into which to drain the land is a practical response. Any landscaper of the late 18th and early 19th century would have done exactly that given how wet the site is. A walk around the pool, utilising a section of the approach drive as part of circuit to return to the house is totally appropriate to an early 19th century villa. The short approach drive heading towards the house at an oblique angle is also historically correct to the period which has inspired the design. Given the quantity of rhododendron in the pleasure grounds of the hall, I would suggest considering the use of these shrubs along the walk as it moves away from the house.

The suggested horticultural intensity and greater formality of planting planned close to the house is in keeping with the Reptonian inspiration. Parkland planting of open grown trees and small clumps further from the house also appropriate (figure 15). These are planned to lead the eye to the further, historic planting of belts around edge of designed landscape. In the further reaches, groupings of 3 or 5 trees of different species to give contrasting foliage, which Repton called 'cheerful clumps', are appropriate. Flanking the causeway there will be loose groupings of parkland trees, of a single species, oaks or (probably better) limes. These would remind the viewer of the former tree-flanked route to Shorrocks Green Hall and utilise a technique used by 'Capability' Brown of breaking up avenues into clumps. Thereby removing the formality of the avenue, but still allowing vistas to be channelled along its former route.

Conclusion.

It is my belief that the high quality of the exemplary design for the architecture and the carefully considered landscape setting of the house, would be a significant enhancement – greatly improving the condition of this northern edge of the Woodfold Park estate. Given the general deterioration of the designed landscape and the extensive, unsympathetic, low quality development allowed within the Registered Park and Garden, in the last 20 years or so, I believe the proposed development would enhance the setting of the designed landscape. Moreover, the improved visual appearance and standard of presentation of the setting for the villa could also encourage higher standards of presentation elsewhere within the neighbouring areas and even – perhaps – be the catalyst for the restoration of the historic features within the park.