



# YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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Val Hepworth  
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Dear Sir/Madam

**26/00685/4FULM and 26/00690/LBCM Hybrid planning application comprising: Full planning permission for demolition works, remediation of the previously developed land; conversion and change of use of High Melton Hall to residential use to form 15 apartments; extension to day nursery (Use Class E) at 'Willow Cottage'; extension to 'The Lodge' (Use Class E); Use of the 'Former Forest School' as a training centre (Use Class F1), with flexibility for commercial use (Use Class E); use of 'The Stables' for commercial uses (Use Class E); refurbishment of 'The Pavilion' building to support continued education use (Use Class F1) and commercial uses (Use Class E); new buildings for commercial and community use (Use Classes E and F); conversion of the existing 'Workshop' building to new community hub and club house (Use Class F2); all weather community sports facilities (Use Class F2); use of former garages as storage; main access to the site and internal access arrangements; landscaping; associated infrastructure and associated works; and Outline planning permission with all matters (save for access) reserved for residential development of up to 200 dwellings; access; public open space; landscaping; demolition works; and associated infrastructure and works. High Melton Hall, High Melton, DN5 7SZ**

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to sites included by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks & Gardens. The Yorkshire Gardens Trust (YGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations.

Our apologies for the lateness of this response which has been due to illness. Despite this we trust that you will be able to take our comments and advice into consideration in any determination.

This response is from the Yorkshire Gardens Trust whose research team has undertaken an assessment of the significance of the historic designed landscape at High Melton Hall. Our response to this planning application focuses on the landscape. We were pleased to visit the site in 2022 and comment on the Preapplication 22/00042/PREAPP (letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to Mr Jonathan Standen, Planning Director, Lichfields).

Although High Melton Hall and Park is not on the HE Register of Parks and Gardens, it is on the Doncaster MBC Parks and Gardens Local List, it is also in the High Melton Conservation Area, and within the Green Belt. In addition to the Hall which is Listed Grade II, it is the setting for other listed

buildings including St James' Church (Listed Grade II\*) and Scheduled Monuments (Icehouse and Wildthorpe Medieval Settlement).

High Melton Hall is situated in an area of significant designed landscapes including Sprotborough, Cusworth, Hickleton and Brodsworth and these must have had an impact on the evolution of its historic landscape. No leading designer has been identified for the work carried out but this may be due to scant archival material. The wealthy Fountayne family developed the site for over two hundred years from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, reflecting the changes in style of gardens and parks. Large parts of the designed landscape still remain, together with associated buildings, despite the estate having been a college for over sixty years up to 2017.

The Yorkshire Gardens Trust has included a more detailed historic report on High Melton Hall on the Research Section of our website, but I am appending some brief notes in an Appendix below along with the excellent description from your Authority's entry on your Local List of Parks and Gardens.

As we noted in 2022, we do not have objection to the principle of some development at High Melton Hall and the sympathetic re-use of existing historic buildings and development of the old college buildings. We advised that there is considerable potential to restore historic views and the setting of the heritage assets, and these aspects should be incorporated into the plans for the site.

However this proposal equates to a near complete loss of the historic designed landscape, which if carried out would have a significant impact on the historic, cultural, and aesthetic significance of High Melton Hall and on the wider setting of the Conservation Area and Green Belt in this essentially rural landscape. It is an area that is very special within the City of Doncaster's remit. We acknowledge that High Melton Hall has suffered considerable harm from the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments and unsympathetic planting, but we hoped for a better future. We consider that the northern, and northwestern areas are being treated as any suburban piece of land for development.

We are concerned about:

1. The volume of new housing proposed in the north-western area and its very suburban layout in what is essentially a historic village of c. 200 dwellings, in a Conservation Area and the Green Belt. We consider this to be overdevelopment and query how this is justified in the overall scheme? Although there is belt woodland (Crow Plantation), the land falls away to the west into a rural landscape. So, we are concerned about impact on views. In addition, there is proposed an additional group of houses south beyond the avenue that extends from the western boundary towards Dean's Walk. Overall, we are not supportive of housing beyond the current built zone and certainly object to this further extension of development alongside Dean's Walk. There is also the issue of the Icehouse, which is located close to the proposed housing here, and how this will be conserved. The icehouse had funding and conservation work in 2016.
2. The new access roads and hard landscaping that are proposed are utilitarian and should be more sympathetic to the historic patina of the estate. This again gives a suburban texture to what is a historic estate and could be so much better alongside the careful retention of trees and new planting.
3. The northern area is the area of the former gardens including the 'Fernery' (also called an aviary). The historic north wall of the walled garden near the Fernery is important. We are unsure about the future of the Fernery and the remaining structures of the Walled Kitchen Gardens (there were 3) in the north/north-western section. Similarly, the remains of the abutment to the bridge that once crossed the main road to connect with the pleasure grounds to the northwest of the hall.

The triangular Village Green is a core landscape feature that historically included a cross. It is the access point into the Hall and grounds and as such is a transition point.

4. The impact of the recreation facilities on Nelson's Clump – it would be an island within all the development losing its significance and design intention.
5. We welcome the repairs to the ha-ha but we are unsure about removal of all the trees if they are not impacting on the structure. However, we haven't seen a detailed tree survey.

Overall, the Yorkshire Gardens Trust has severe reservations and concerns about this application in its present form. High Melton Hall's designed landscape heritage would be severely damaged by the proposed development.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth  
Trustee Conservation and Planning

Cc: Dr Kristof Fatsar, Historic England Regional Landscape Architect – North of England;  
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## APPENDIX

YGT Brief Notes:

It is undoubtedly the changed use of High Melton Hall (Grade II) to that of a higher education institution, together with its location in a part of Yorkshire often associated with industrial and extraction blight, that has led to its neglect by garden historians. The three-line entry in Pevsner's *West Riding* just about sums up the minimal historical, architectural and landscape significance given to it over recent decades: '(Training College.) Built c. 1750, though the tower which runs up the centre of the building is supposed to be medieval. Wing added in 1878.' Colvin attributes the rebuilding of the ashlar sandstone mansion in 1757 to James Paine, for Dr John Fountayne (1714–1802), Dean of York. Paine was responsible for work on a number of houses in this part of Yorkshire, including Nostell Priory, Hickleton, Cusworth, Wadworth, Sprotborough, Sandbeck, and – just over the county boundary – Serlby, in Nottinghamshire.

Leaving aside its earlier history, the mid 1600s saw the estate pass into the Fountayne family through marriage, and, in 1739, into the hands of John Fountayne, who resided there for the 54 years he served as Dean. He married three times, amassing a considerable estate and fortune in the process, especially from his third wife, Ann Montagu, only daughter of Charles Montagu of Papplewick, Nottinghamshire. A second remodelling of the house is likely to date from this third marriage. (There may be a connection with William Mason (1724-1797), poet and garden designer who had professional and personal links to John Fountayne through the latter's marriage to Ann Montagu of Papplewick.)

When John died in 1802, his grandson Richard Fountayne Wilson inherited (the Wilson connection coming from the marriage of the Dean's daughter Elizabeth to Richard Wilson of Rudding Park). His son Andrew Wilson took the name Montagu in 1826, thereby succeeding to the Montagu estates in Nottinghamshire; he became the wealthiest commoner in England. Andrew had links to the Tory party and was responsible for financing Benjamin Disraeli by buying up his debts (some £60,000). The Montagu family had income from industry, such as coal mining and the Aire and Calder Navigation Company. The Melton estate, together with that at nearby Barnburgh Hall, was sold in 1927 to the Meanley family, and later purchased by Doncaster Education Committee and converted to a college just after WWII.

The park, to the south of the house, was probably constructed at the same time as the rebuilding of the house, mid-1700s. It is set on the edge of the magnesian limestone escarpment and is surrounded by woods and shelter belts. Fallow deer and black sheep were kept in the park ('Deer Park' is shown on C19 OS maps, south of the house). Remains of landscaping and planting survive, as do some of the garden and park structures, albeit all in quite poor or altered condition: an ice house and ponds south of the house; an 'aviary' (or fern house – possibly early C19); bath houses and ponds to the west (but no longer part of the estate); Nelson's Clump (with some original trees remaining); Melton Wood (originally 300 acres), intersected with formal rides and paths, to the north. A neo-classical temple, in Melton Warren Wood, to the north-west, has not (apparently) survived, and a bridge over the road, linking the grounds to the north, was demolished by a bus.

Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1995)

Michael Klemperer, *Style and Social Competition in the Large Scale Ornamental Landscapes of the Doncaster District of South Yorkshire, c.1680–1840* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010)

Anon, *The Parish History of High Melton* (no date)

## **High Melton Hall Park, High Melton from Doncaster MBC Parks and Gardens of Local Historic Interest.**

### **History**

In the 14th century the manor was a joint lordship having connections with both the Haringels of Frickley and the Cressi families. The ownership became even more complex in the 16th century but was bought by Dr Berrie in the mid 17th century and past in to Fountayne family by the marriage of his heir (great niece) in 1666. Later John Fountayne inherited the estate; he was made Dean of York in 1747 (Miller 1804). He married three times in his 54 years at Melton, and as a result amassed a considerable estate. His third wife was Ann Montagu whose family was incredibly wealthy (Klemperer 2010). His great grandson Andrew Fountayne Wilson inherited the estate as well as much other property and in 1827 took the name Montagu by Royal License and became the wealthiest commoner in England. He had links to the Tory party and financed their leader Benjamin Disraeli by buying up his debts (Barber 1997/Klemperer 2010). The Montagu family derived considerable income from their industrial interest, such as coal mining and the Aire and Calder Navigation Company. The family sold the estate in 1927 to Messrs GW Meanley and Sons, building contractors, as part of a package for £200,000 and it was converted to a college in 1948 -1949 (Tuffrey 2000/Klemperer 2010).

**Description** High Melton Hall is a Grade II listed building. The Hall itself dates from 1757 with additions of 1878 and major alterations of 1948-49. There is a suggestion that the central tower dates from the medieval period. The 1757 building was built for the Fountayne family and is attributed to James Paine and is Ushaped which has later been extended to the rear to form an H-shaped. It is in dressed sandstone with a slate roof. The building was originally a country house but in the mid 20th century was extended and converted in to a training facility which it still remains. Close to the house are the auxiliary buildings including a former stable block of ashlar sandstone which is now a conference facility and a relatively modern lodge building onto the main Doncaster Road which splits the estate. There is also the kitchen garden which lies to the north; and to the west and north, gardens and pleasure grounds ornament the rear of the hall and include a decorative building which is thought to be potentially a 'fernery' or 'aviary'. The wider parkland was originally 100 acres (40ha) in area. It has an elevation of 45-90m and a SW aspect and is set on the edge of the magnesian limestone escarpment, and is surrounded by woods and shelter belts. It was landscaped in the 'natural style' to accompany the new Hall in the mid 18th century. The southwest front of the hall faces an open lawn looking south down the scarp slope, which has a ha-ha between it and the main park that once contained deer. These are noted in the Victoria History of the counties of England (1913) as being a park of '200 acres, and is stocked with about fifty fallow deer; it is well wooded' (Page

1913/Klemperer 2010). The wider estate is similarly well wooded, and by the 1840s, the landscape was dissected with a series of walks and rides, southwards towards Wildthorpe Cliff, west through Melton Warren, and across Barnburgh Cliff towards Hickleton. There are the remains of abutment of a former bridge that once crossed the main road to connect with the pleasure grounds to the northwest of the hall. To the north, Melton Wood, which covered nearly 300 acres, was similarly intersected with rides and paths. These areas were used as part of the decorative circuit, and, as to confirm this Melton Warren has a decorative folly, called imaginatively 'The Temple' and which still remains as a ruin (Klemperer 2010). The later 19th century landscape sprouted considerably more planting in the parkland, including Nelson's Clump (to commemorate Trafalgar), an icehouse (which is now a scheduled monument), an enlargement of the pleasure grounds to the northwest and three large decorative avenues. The first the 'Deans Walk' to Melton Cliff Wood walk, the second westwards past the bath house, and the last, and perhaps most impressive, stretches in a 'hockey stick' shape from south of the hall northeast to join Cadeby Lane. These latter features are not shown on the 1854 OS map, and were probably therefore executed in the 1870s at a similar time to the (1878) alterations to the hall (Roberts 1995). It is also notable that an avenue of Wellingtonia, Sequoiadendron giganteum (intro. 1853) was planted to the north of the house, which compares to others in the locality – such as Sprotbrough (Klemperer 2010). Further modifications of the landscape were carried out when the hall was converted into a college in 1948-49 and parts of the grounds are now a golf course. Also within the estate is the Grade II\* Church of St. James. There was a medieval village around the church, which was destroyed by the 'process of landscaping, rebuilding and road altering...since the mid eighteenth century' (Magilton 1977). Several buildings in the village are connected with the main house such as estate cottages, farm buildings and former village hall and the whole help to form High Melton Conservation Area. Now isolated from the main parkland and also from the conservation area but still of historic significance are the bath house and ponds that once were part of the wider estate, which are from the mid 18th century. These ponds are to the west of the hall, having a separate carriageway, and are surrounded by ornamental planting. The area is complex, appearing to have two sets of bath houses, two round ponds and a further pond to the south divided into three.

**Significance** The grounds make up the setting of High Melton Hall (now college) and incorporates important garden features including the scheduled icehouse, avenues, woodlands and remnants of footbridge. The grounds also help to create a green backdrop for the conservation area. It is therefore considered to be of sufficient significance to be a park and garden of local historic interest.