



YORKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

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Dear Mr Standen

22/00042/PREAPP PRE APPLICATION Proposals for the development, preservation and reinstatement of High Melton Hall and Gardens. Conversion of old hall to 14 private houses, demolition of former college buildings. Within the wider estate a mixture of residential development with village centre and associated small retail gateway, commercial hub comprising starter units, existing sports hub and pitches, woodland education, retaining the existing business hub and restaurant at the Stables. Melton Park, Doncaster Road, 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.

Thank you for inviting us to comment on the Preapplication.

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 17th 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 below. I haven't visited the

site since 2011 when YGT had its AGM there and we walked some of the designed landscape including seeing the icehouse and the very interesting 'ferney'.

Having in mind the historic, cultural, and aesthetic significance of High Melton Hall, the GT /YGT find the preapplication proposals totally at odds with the historic designed landscape, the site of the medieval village and its historic link pattern (hollow-ways) with the church. We consider that the whole site is being treated as any suburban piece of land with seemingly ad hoc areas of various types of development. In the documents that we have seen we cannot determine any overall plan, any design rationale or justification and we consider that it is overdevelopment and harmful to the special significance of the two Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Area and the High Melton Park and Garden. Although we recognise that there has been considerable background work undertaken for the Statement of Significance, (including historic material/photographs from YGT's report), we cannot see how the proposals in the masterplan are responding to and understand the existing heritage assets, the past additions to the estate, and the historic landscape, planting and designed views.

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 advise 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, turning to our particular concerns:

Proposed Residential Zone 2 is in the undisrupted – and therefore still historically legible - part of High Melton Hall estate and covers the hollow- way from the site of the medieval village to the church. Development here would result in a high level of harm to the Scheduled Monument and to the Conservation Area and be contrary to NPPF (July 2021) paragraphs 199, 200, 201 and in terms of the historic park, paragraph 203.

Northern Area is also very concerning as it is the area of the former gardens including the 'ferney' where parking and a village hub are proposed. The historic north wall of the walled garden near the ferney is important and the northern end of the ha-ha is proposed to be removed and covered by the car park. The proposed development in the northern area would erode the difference between the historic estate and the village.

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. The Gateway Retail in front of the more recent Lodge is proposed as a large rectangular block with resulting tree loss. This would be a very poor point of arrival and visually and environmentally damaging.

The Off-Grid residential houses area in the northern part of the western woodland belt are located within the through viewpoint to the south- west from the Hall. This impacts on the integrity of the historic designed landscape and the access is punched through the avenue shown on the OS 1st Edition map and which is still legible.

Proposed Residential Zone 1 in the area of the old college buildings. Although we have no objection in principle, the layout design is very suburban and does not preserve the historic character. This area needs much more thought as to how the development will respond to the historic nature of the site and the Conservation Area.

Sports Hall. The lighting and security measures here and indeed throughout the proposed development will need to be designed to have as little impact as possible on the heritage assets.

Overall, the Gardens Trust and Yorkshire Gardens Trust have very severe reservations and concerns about this pre-application in its present form, and the damage that it would do to the heritage of High Melton Hall.

Yours sincerely

Val Hepworth
Trustee Conservation and Planning

cc. **Malcolm Thomas**, Design and Conservation Officer, Economy and Environment, Doncaster Council.

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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)