

Darlington Local Plan

Heritage Impact Assessment – Additional Sites

December 2020

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1. Land at Beech Crescent East, Heighington – Site 95

Heritage Impact Assessment

Site Location and Description

The site is located to the east of the centre of the settlement of Heighington. The site consists of a single pasture field. The site lies on gentle sloping ground. The site is bound to the west by a dividing hedgerow and neighbours a separate plot which has already been granted approval for residential development. To the north the site is bound by the A6072, however between the site and the main road there is a bund of mature planting to the north and running along the western boundary is a row of mature tree planting and hedgerow in part. To the south of the site runs Station Road, which is a more minor road/ trackway. Again, between the road and site there is mature tree planting which runs the length of the boundary.

Aims of Study

The aims of this impact assessment are to provide an overview and description of the heritage interest within and around the proposed allocation site. To assess the suitability and soundness of the site for development. To provide recommendations on heritage-based constraints and opportunities within the site.

Planning Framework

Paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG 2019) outlines a series of tests to determine whether local plans are sound. Plans are considered to meet these tests of soundness if they are:

- 'Positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- Justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- Effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground;
- Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework.' (MHCLG 2019, 12)

In terms of assessing allocation sites for soundness from a perspective of heritage, the two most important aspects of these tests are whether such sites have been considered on the merits of proportionate evidence and whether the delivery of development on such sites would be consistent with national policy. The assessment presented within this site assessment represents the evidence base required to address the first of these. The conclusions presented at the end of this site assessment will draw together that evidence base to provide a statement on whether development within the proposed allocation site is considered consistent with national policy and legislation.

Summary and Methodology

Significance is the principal measure of what makes a historic place (normally given as 'heritage asset') special and worthy of conservation. It can be defined using several criteria derived from varied sources, all of which can contribute useful factors to the process. Where assessment of significance is necessary, particularly in determining potential effects of development, the following criteria have been adopted in part or in whole, depending on what can best articulate the nature of the heritage asset being described:

Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (English Heritage 2008) Assessment of Significance. This document highlights four 'values' contributing to significance: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal.

NPPF (MCHLG 2019) - Based upon the changes instigated through the now-cancelled PPS5 and its associated guidance, the assessment of significance is based upon four 'interests' and their relative 'importance':

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Artistic
- Historic

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 - This act gives guidance on the criteria considered during the decision to provide designated protection to a monument through scheduling. The criteria are:

- Period or category
- Rarity
- Documentation (either contemporary written records or records of previous investigations)
- Group value
- Survival/condition
- Fragility/vulnerability
- Diversity (importance of individual attributes of a site)
- Potential

Assessing Significance

The assessment of significance comprises three stages, as set out in Note 2 of the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning (Historic England 2015):

- Understanding the nature of the significance through identification of what values or interests (as above) contribute;
- Understanding the extent of the significance, and;
- Understanding the level of significance, perhaps the most important step in terms of planning-led assessment as it can dictate what level of test is applied when determining the potential effects of a proposed development.

It should be noted that the varied nature of heritage assets means that, in the majority of cases, they are unsuitable for assessment via a nominally 'objective' scoring of significance, and there will always be an element of interpretation and professional judgement within a considered assessment.

Defining the contribution of Setting is a contributory factor to the overall significance of a heritage asset, and assessment begins with identifying the significance of a heritage asset as described above. As outlined in Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: Note 3 The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England 2017), setting is defined as (quoting NPPF) 'the surroundings in which an asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance, or may be neutral' (ibid. 2). A recommended staged approach to the assessment of potential effects on the setting of heritage assets is also set out in the guidance (ibid. 7):

- Identify which heritage assets and their settings may be affected.
- Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings contribute to the significance of the heritage asset(s).
- Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether positive, neutral or negative.
- Explore ways to maximise enhancements and avoid or minimise harm.
- Document the process and decision and monitor outcomes’.

Identified Heritage & Archaeology

The assessment has made use of the Historic Environment Record, Historic England National Heritage List for England and information from Darlington Borough Councils records on the Heighington Conservation Area.

Heighington Conservation Area takes in the old village, some later development, and parts of the village’s open setting which contribute to significance. It is strongly influenced by its elevation, south-facing topography and underlying magnesian limestone geology. Possibly with late Saxon origins, its early medieval layout is strongly evident today. It was an important local centre for centuries. 17th, 18th and 19th century renewal left the built legacy seen today, and the village became an extended but conserved dormitory village in the 20th century, dominated by single family dwellings and the communal village green. Heighington is spatially significant. Its presence in the landscape is clear. Its crisp, organised, village green layout, ringed by linear plots, and with a largely unaltered set of routes, strongly describes its history. Open fields ‘outside’ the village contrast with the relative intensity of development ‘inside’ it. Open spaces including fields make a strong contribution. Views of, from and through the area are important.

The area’s built character is significant including distinctive plot layout and low density. Modest architectural characteristics create remarkable unity and appealing informal harmony in strings of historic houses, despite some variety in detail. Historic outbuildings and boundary walls add crucial integrity to building groups. The familiar rural village scene is rich, simple and charming, with history very evident in the clear rooftop and tree-filled horizon, backed by long green views. There is the strong sense of a historic, well-organised community settled quietly in the countryside for centuries, still partly encircled by open fields and thriving as a desirable, well-cared for place to live.

The majority of the records held by the HER are for Listed buildings which are within the historic core and Conservation Area. Closest to the site are a group of three separately listed Grade II buildings at Trafalgar House. These are positioned more to the south west of the site, south of Station Road. The listing for Trafalgar House also includes a section of wall running north from the house. Trafalgar House is much like the earlier grand houses in the village, but, in its own grounds outside the village. It is both notable and discreet. Extensive ornamental and cottage grounds still mark its presence on the south, east and north sides where it is thick with trees. Heavy boundary wall and imposing gateways define Station Road, and cobbled yards complete the intact scene. Although subdivided and its former grounds to the west redeveloped, it remains a greatly intact anchor east of the village.

A large number of Grade II listed buildings and separately listed walls lie closer to the historic core of the village, south west of the site and beyond later development to the settlement. Amongst these are a number of large principally stone houses, which include Heighington Hall, The Manor House and Eldon House.

At the heart of the village sits the Grade I listed St Michaels Church. As is noted in the record some of the surviving fabric of the Church is pre-conquest. The Churchyard walls and two tombs and Hearse House are separately listed at Grade II.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Within the site there does not appear to be any record of non-designated heritage assets. In the neighbouring site it is detailed that there is evidence of pond and other features which are understood to post medieval features. On the border of the neighbouring site and the site being assessed there is an existing historic field barn of which is recognised as having merit. It does however fall more into the neighbouring site, but consideration should be given to it. There has been some archaeological assessment in the area and there have been no significant features detailed in the immediate area. However, this is always subject to further archaeological assessment.

As noted from the HER a Bronze Age axe has been recovered in the vicinity of Heighington. Excavations at the Church has indicated Anglo-Saxon origins for the settlement. The distinctive form of the village has been taken as an indication of planned development which is possibly linked to the 12th century. It is noted from the records that the settlement was important prior to the Norman Conquest and again became so in the later Medieval period. The other record for the area is the recovery of a 15th century sword 100 metres to the south of the site.

An important feature of the site, is the natural historic hedge, which runs the length of the western boundary of the site. While not being built form, it is none the less an important element of the historic environment and character of the area, having been in location for over 200 years.

Conservation Area

The site lies within the Heighington Conservation Area. Conservation Areas are designated to managed and protect the special interest of a place, including features that make it unique. There is a Conservation Area Appraisal for the area which was adopted in March 2019. The area was included into to the Conservation Area in the 1999 extension to the original designated boundary. The area was included for the appreciation of the open views and include the rural foreground leading onto the main settlement. While it may be considered to have been included to protect the setting of the Conservation, this is covered under separate considerations. Within the Conservation Appraisal the significance of the site is stated that the main part of the site is of 'Some contribution to the special interest' of the settlement of Heighington. To the very south of the site running to the length of the southern boundary there is a section which is considered to be of 'High contribution to the special interest'. Looking at this focused area, the 'High Contribution' is considered to be in place due to the unaltered nature of historic land boundaries, which include historic hedgerows and planting. Equally the lane forms the original route of the east road, which was severed with the creation of the bypass. As noted the former east route includes the entrance way to Trafalgar House and the existence of the heavy mature planting and dominant walls forms an integral part of the character and significance of this area. The trees and hedgerows in part from natural tunnels which create a strong sense of the rural character. The road has a strong positive character of a forgotten rural lane and has retained its character.

Approval was granted in 2018 for the development of the site located to the west of the site being assessed, which also falls into the area considered to have some contribution to the special character of the area. While the site to the west has been developed, the site being assessed

remains unaltered. The site is the last remaining area of open space to the north eastern side of the settlement and within the boundary of the Conservation Area.

Historic Maps

The earliest detailed map available for the site is a 1838 Tithe map. The field boundary was significantly changed with the addition of the bypass, which effectively cut into the field boundary line to the west of the field system.



Figure 1 - 1838 Tithe Map

The first edition OS mapping is similar to the second edition mapping with the field remaining as a single field.



Figure 2 - 1856 1st Edition OS Map

Looking at the further map regressions the site remains unaltered right up into the creation of the bypass in the later 1980's early 90's. To the west of the site in the neighbouring plot there is some development with the erection of some semi-detached housing to the further south western boundary.



Figure 3 – 1948 5th Edition OS Map

Looking from the very earliest Tithe map through to the current mapping, except for the changes which were undertaken with the introduction of the bypass, the site has remained unaltered.

Assessment of Potential Impact

Following the review of the historic environment data, mapping, the site itself and taking account of the development permitted to the west of the site. It is considered that if this site were to be developed, there will be an impact on the Heighington Conservation Area. There is also likely to result in some impact to the setting of the related Grade II Trafalgar House. The impacts would largely depend upon the level of development being considered.

Constraints

The site is within the Heighington Conservation Area and the main part of the site is recognised as having some contribution to the special character of the area. The southern part of the site contributes highly to the character of the area.

There are no existing structures within the boundary of the site and no recognised non-designated heritage assets. However, the site forms a part of the contribution to the Conservation Area.

There are several key considerations any possible development of the site will need to consider identifying if any impacts can be mitigated against.

- **Access**
Any consideration of access to the site will be critical. Given the location of the site, access to the site is more restricted and this puts pressure on looking at access which will impact the historic character of the area. Access off Station/ Heighington Lane, will require significant justification and mitigation is to be considered as any works will likely erode the character of the Lane which forms an integral part of the overall contribution.
- **Archaeology**
Further archaeological assessment for the area would be essential to any development.
- **Landscaping**
As is detailed in the assessment the site benefits from existing mature landscaping and planting of which is a fundamental part of the character of the area. These include the overarching hedgerows and trees. Existing trees and hedgerows should be protected. Additional landscaping for the site should be to enhance the existing planting. The historic hedgerow to the west of the boundary is a critical element in this and should be retained and protected.
- **Design and Landscaping**
The layout and design of any considered development will need to have regard for the character of the area and high-density development would not be appropriate in this location. Designs should look to make use of traditional vernacular materials matching those in the area. It is likely that any development would need to make use of natural stone for facing materials.

Conclusion

It is considered that any potential development will have an impact to the Heighington Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II Trafalgar House, however development could be achieved on the site, subject to the following being considered.

- Further Archaeological assessment of the site will be required
- It is considered that the south section of the site, running along Station/ Heighington Lane, which is recognised as being of high contribution should not be altered and should be preserved and enhanced.
- Any development of the site should be of low density, to ensure an appropriate layout.
- Any development should be of the highest quality and standard of design, taking example from the local area and vernacular. The use of natural stone will likely be essential for an acceptable facing material.
- Landscaping for the site should be to enhance the existing mature tree and hedgerows. The existing trees and hedgerows should be protected.
- Boundary treatments should ensure they are of natural finish, making use of hedges and natural planting.

2. Land at Blackwell Grange East – Site 403

Heritage Impact Assessment

Site Location and Description

Blackwell Grange Hotel and the surrounding golf course are located on the southern fringe of Darlington. Together with South Park, they form an important green wedge extending into the urban area and create a gentle transition between rural agricultural land between Darlington and Croft, the leafy suburbia of the Blackwell area and the increasing urban environment of high quality Victorian and Edwardian suburbs that lead to the town centre fringe. The A66 Darlington Bypass and Stressholme Golf Course run to the south. The hotel site covers 3.64ha, is owned by Darlington Council and leased to the Hotel. The golf course covers approximately 32ha, of which 23.27ha is owned by Darlington Council and leased to Blackwell Grange Golf Club. The study area is the land owned by the Council, situated to the east of the A67 Carmel Road South. Historically, it was in part, parkland associated with Blackwell Grange, a private house and for many years the home of the Allan family who had an important role in the expansion of Darlington in the 19th century.

The proposed site allocation is positioned to the south of the park to the south of the former Mill Lane, which was a minor route through the parkland.

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- Assess whether, how and to what degree these settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage asset(s)
- Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether positive, neutral or negative
- Explore ways to maximise enhancements and avoid or minimise harm
- Document the process and decision and monitor outcomes.

Identified Heritage & Archaeology

The assessment has made use of the Historic Environment Record, Historic England's National Heritage List for England and information from Darlington Borough Councils records on Conservation Areas.

Historically, Blackwell was a separate village and township south west of Darlington and Blackwell Grange appears to have been built c.1710 for George Allan. Land around the house was laid out with formal avenues and walled gardens and orchards and beyond as arable land divided with hedgerows and trees. This land was redesigned in 1802 along naturalistic principles first made popular by the likes of Capability Brown in the 1760s. When the local mill fell out of use in the late 19th century, Mill Lane which extended from the village to the mill (now Skerne Park), was closed and the land to the south absorbed into the wider parkland around the Grange, thus extending it down to Blands Corner.

The special interest of the parkland is in the survival of historic documents which have allowed the pre-1790 planting regime to be identified amongst the subsequent 1802 planting design which survives in reasonable condition. These historic maps of 1790 and 1802 are of considerable historic significance. Using these maps, some correlation can be seen between present day trees and parkland features and those depicted on the 1802 map and even the 1790 map. This combined with the survival of ridge and furrow throughout the park has created a landscape that is a palimpsest with layers of landscape design, each identifiable with the help of the two maps. The presence of ridge and furrow in parkland is common, but the ability to identify the pre- English parkland scene amongst the later naturalistic styles is unusual and raises this parkland to a status that may well merit designation.

Listed Buildings

Blackwell Grange is listed grade II* and the 18th century stable courtyard and 19th century cottage to the north east are listed grade II. There are a few listed buildings in the surrounding area, but they are separated from the parkland by modern suburban buildings and are now divorced from any visual historic context. They include the Punch Bowl Inn which was formerly the home farm to Blackwell Grange and therefore has an historic association with it.

Grade II* buildings are those which are particularly important buildings of more than special interest and grade II buildings are those of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them. Only 10% of listed buildings nationally are listed Grade I or II* and there are about 500,000 listed buildings in England. Any alterations which would affect the character or significance of the listed buildings or elements of significance in their setting, would require listed building consent. Further, any buildings within the curtilage of the listed buildings and which was built before 1947 are also considered to listed. The boundary of the parkland as far as the line of the former Mill Lane, Grangeside, The Spinney, Blackwell Lane and Upsall Drive should therefore be considered as curtilage.

Registered parks and gardens

The parkland is not officially designated as a Park and Garden but is close to South Park which is registered grade II. Blackwell Grange Park is separated from South Park by Upsall Drive. Grade II sites are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them (English Heritage 2010, 3). While this is the case, the Parkland associated to Blackwell Grange is of high significance to the site.

Conservation Area

Conservation Areas are places where buildings and the spaces around them interact to form distinctly recognisable areas of special quality and interest. The nearest is the West End Conservation area. Blackwell Grange is not included in this area, however it does abut the Conservation Area boundary. These places are protected under the provision of section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which defines them as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. A Conservation Area appraisal has been produced for the West End Conservation area and it highlights tree cover and open green spaces as being significant features (Darlington Borough Council 2010, 3). While not being included in the area, there is direct correlation.

Historic Maps

The earliest detailed mapping of the site comes in the form of surveys which were completed in 1790. The plans appear to have been commissioned in advance of proposed new landscaping scheme which came forward in 1802.

The first edition OS mapping clearly shows the developed landscaping scheme, with the fishpond just to the north of Mill Lane.

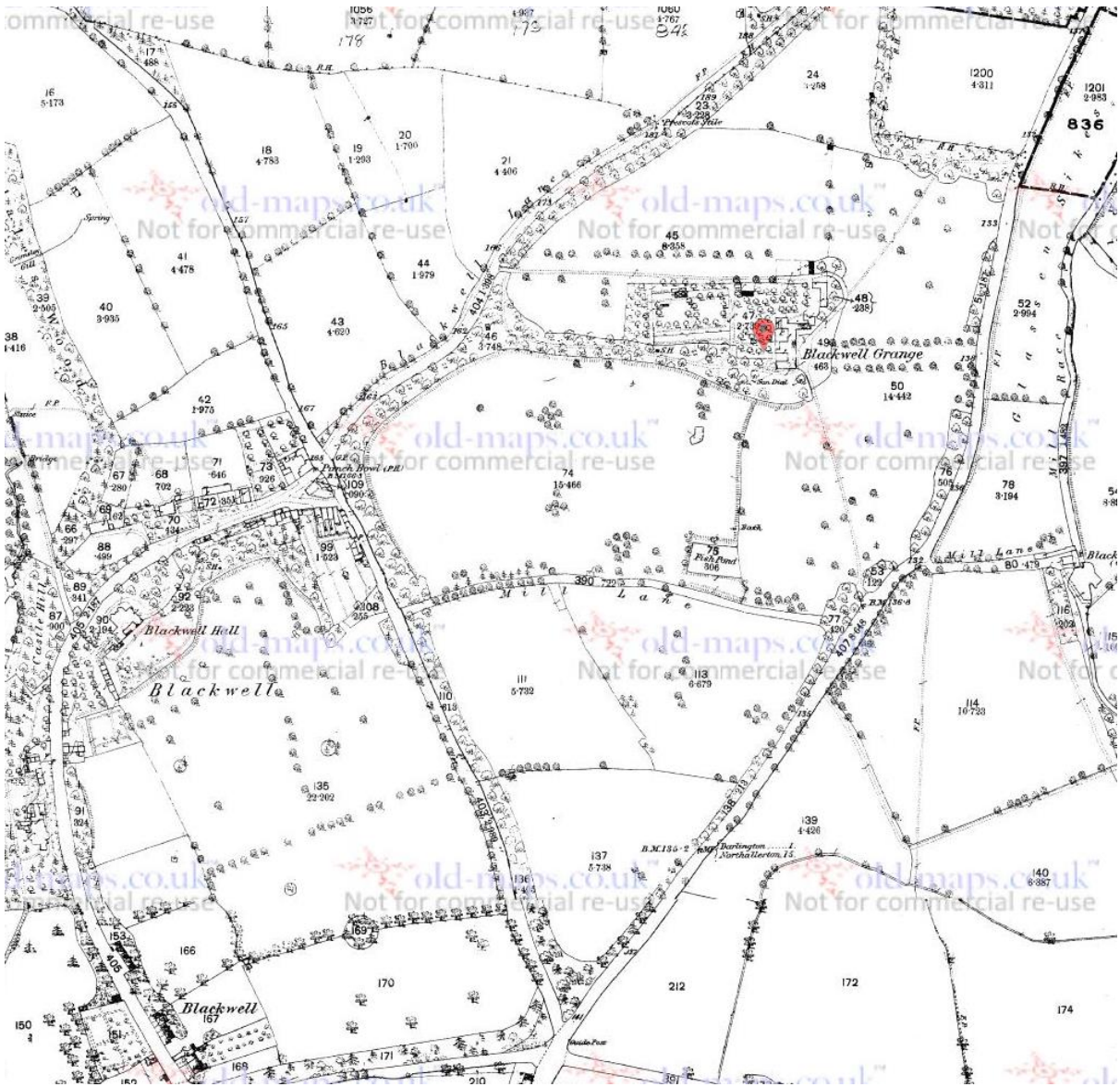


Figure 4 - OS 1856 - 25 Inch



Figure 5 - OS 1896 - 25 Inch



Figure 6 - OS 1912 - 25 Inch



Figure 7 - OS 1939 - 25 Inch

As is evident from the map regressions the site has a much wider context, however the focus of the significance of the site is directly to the north and south of Blackwell Grange. The mapping clearly illustrates that the land to the south of the former Mill Lane was paid lesser attention and not within the formalised landscaping scheme which was implemented.

Overall Significance

The special interest of the parkland is therefore in the survival of historic documents which have allowed the pre-1790 planting regime to be identified amongst the subsequent 1802 planting regime. These historic maps of 1790 and 1802 are of considerable historic significance. Using these maps, some correlation can be seen between present day trees and parkland features and those depicted on the 1802 map and even the 1790 map. It is possible that some of these tree clumps and avenues are original to the 18th century, although undoubtedly, some will have been replaced. This combined with the survival of ridge and furrow throughout the park has created a landscape that is a palimpsest with layers of landscape design, each identifiable with the help of the two maps, which are in effect, before and after images. The presence of ridge and furrow in a parkland is common, but the ability to identify the pre- English parkland scene amongst the later naturalistic styles is unusual and raises this parkland to a status that may well merit designation.

The presence of the two developments at the Spinney and Grangeside have diminished that significance, but not sufficiently to demote the park to only local significance. Indeed, the retention of the pleasure walks around Grangeside have helped to make an otherwise bland development fit in, whilst retaining the tree cover that is an important characteristic of the area.

The golf course has in some ways impacted upon the significance, however this is entirely reversible, and features and details can be reinstated. The earthmoving operations have made little impact on the ridge and furrow; the flat earthwork platforms of hole and tee adding to the palimpsest. The golf club have added to the tree cover rather than taking it away and have introduced arboricultural management which may well have extended the life of the mature trees.

The key designed views have been through some modification. The principal elevations of east and south views from the hotel remain, although the lack of tree management around the ha-ha has temporarily rendered them impossible; this is of course reversible. The avenue of limes no longer frames any view to the hotel and again this is reversible through better vegetation management. The coach road approach to the hotel no longer has the peep show drama that was intended in 1802 due to poor tree management and the northern coach road which exited just south of where Upsall Drive is now, has fallen out of use. The 1802 Pleasure Walks are still there; they need some restoration works in places and they incorporate earlier 18th century avenues in some cases. The key to the retention and enhancement of significance is through improved vegetation control and a planting regime that recognises the significance of this park.

Future management therefore needs to conserve and enhance the key features which either date from the earlier 18th century or to the 1802 remodelling as follows:

The fish pond which dates to the first landscaping between 1710 and 1790. The field boundary which extends from the fishpond to the Grange. The Pleasure Walks. The tree clumps and mature isolated stands north of Mill Lane (site of). The brick wall boundary, stone gateposts and the 'sunken fences' and ha-ha. Retain/ replace views from the Grange/hotel south to Mill Lane and east towards Skerne Park. The Lime Avenue

The walled garden and former orchards to the west. The basic structure should be retained but there is scope to consider their reuse in a way that brings the walls into active maintenance and allows future readability. The ice house is beyond saving but is an important part of any 18th and 19th century house. It could afford an opportunity for community excavation or interpretation. It can also be left untouched but should not be destroyed without detailed recording. The stone grounds mens' building on Carmel Road South should remain in use so that it is maintained. The northern Coach Drive could be reopened. The watercourse should be retained but offers opportunities for enhancement (but not as a serpentine lake as this was never implemented). Estate rails and kissing gates with pine cone tops offer a means to harmonise the parkland character where necessary.

Proposed site allocation

Land in the south of the park was not formally part of the designed landscape of 1802 or in the 18th century. Consequently, this area is less sensitive to change than land to the north of Mill Lane and future development may therefore be possible which extends the Spinney southwards along Carmel Road South and include the area nearest Blands Corner and the south end of Grange Road. It might also make this land more flexible for development if Mill Lane is restored as a minor country lane which would create an additional access point and return a clearly defined edge to the zone of high significance.

Assessment of Potential Impact

Following the review of the historic environment data, mapping and review of the site it is considered there will be some impact on the setting of the II* Blackwell Grange and formalized landscape. However, given the position of the proposed site, this will be lesser, and it can be mitigated against.

Constraints

The considered site while not being within the more significant areas, does still have significance to Blackwell Grange, therefore a considered development of this site would require detailed consideration, to ensure that any impact or harm is entirely and appropriately mitigated against.

Any development here would be best suited to high quality residential development which would need to retain a strong tree canopy to the perimeter including Mill Lane if it is reopened. There is considered benefit in reinstating Mill Lane.

- Access
Access to the site will need to be well considered, working with the grain of the site.
- Design
The buildings would need to be low lying so that the development was not obtrusive in views from the hotel. The emphasis should be on high quality innovative design that creates a well wooded character area of sufficient quality to justify the loss of this land. The existing stone building offers a flexible space with domestic scale windows and doors, as well as the large agricultural doors and should be retained and reused.
- Landscaping
The existing trees and planting should look to be retained to the perimeters and within the site where it can they can be practically incorporated into the layout. The perimeter woodland planting could extend the Pleasure Walks and provide a pedestrian route shielded from traffic. Additional landscaping should be to preserve and enhance the existing.

Conclusion

It is considered that any potential development will have some impact to the setting and significance of Blackwell Grange. However as indicated with consideration to the layout, design and landscaping potential harm by development can be sufficiently mitigated against.

- It is considered that the site is of lesser significance, however does still form a part of the setting of Grade II* Blackwell Grange.
- The existing tree planting and landscaping should be preserved and enhanced. Additional landscaping will be required for buffering to the north of the site and can be used to form the line of Mill Lane.
- Reinstatement of Mill Lane is considered to have positive consideration and could benefit the understanding of the site.
- Any development will be required to be of the highest quality, ensuring it is low lying, creating and innovative in design.
- The use of standard housing plan form will not be considered acceptable.