

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 22nd September 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2022/0612
Site Address: Woodhead Hall, Cherry Lane, Cheadle
Proposal: Erection of three storey apartment block containing 21 one-bedroom apartments (Class C2 retirement living apartments be marketed for over 55's) and a single storey building accommodating staff facilities, and 3 one-bedroom apartments. Widening and resurfacing of access and track from Lockwood Road

Conservation Advice – Amendments

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in the vicinity of Woodhead Hall, which is a Grade II Listed Building and within the historic parkland setting of the hall, the latter of which is identified on the Historic Environment Record.

Woodhead Hall (Grade II) is a c.1873 country house designed by notable local architect William Sugden. The building was constructed for William Allen, a Manchester merchant, and was later used as a school in the early-20th century and government communications headquarters in the second half of the 20th century. The building is constructed in red brick, with stone dressings and a hipped slate roof. It is 2-storeys and is designed in an eclectic mix of Neo-Classical detailing, including pedimented gables, double-height bay windows, balustrading, pilasters and sash windows. The significance relates to its origins as a Victorian country house, later association with Cold War communications headquarters, association with local notable architect, illustrative eclectic architectural style which was popular in the late-19th century and designed grandeur accentuated by the parkland and rural setting.

The landscape park surrounding the hall is identified on the Historic Environment Record. A hall at Woodhead and a landscaped garden appear to be shown on Yates c.1775 mapping. An earlier country house existed on the site built c.1720 and was demolished and rebuilt in 1873 for the existing building. The landscaped parkland surrounding the hall remained and, as illustrated in the 19th and 20th century mapping, formed an important aspect of the designed orientation and appreciation of the hall. With reference to the Council's 'Local Heritage Register' SPD, the landscaped park around the hall is a representative example of parkland for a country house and makes an important contribution to the character of the area. Therefore, this designed landscape is considered a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.



Fig.1 c.1880 OS map [online] (National Library of Scotland)

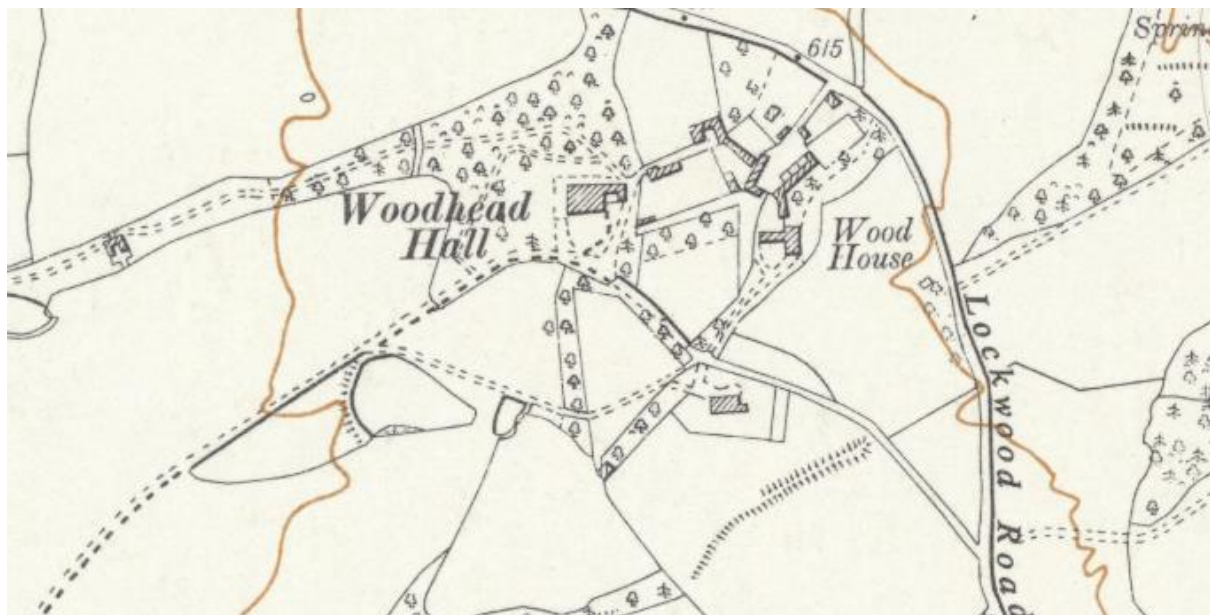


Fig.2 c.1954 OS map [online] (National Library of Scotland)

Assessment and Impact

Previous conservation comments raised objections to the proposal due to the scale and massing of the proposed development and harmful impact this would have on the setting of the listed hall. Amended plans have, subsequently, been submitted.

These comments are based upon the following amended plans / further information received:

- *Proposed ground floor plan (dwg no. 21 012-PL-(0)-223)*
- *Proposed first floor plan (dwg no. 21 012-PL-(0)-224)*
- *Proposed second floor plan (dwg no. 21 012-PL-(0)-225)*
- *Proposed Plans & Elevations of Other Buildings (dwg no. 21 012 228)*
- *Proposed East & West Elevations (dwg no. 21 012-PL-(0)-226)*
- *Proposed North & South Elevations (dwg no. 21 012-PL-(0)-228)*
- *Site Access Plan as Proposed (dwg no. 21 012 229)*
- *Viewpoint 1*
- *Viewpoint 2*
- *Viewpoint 3*

The initial proposal consisted of a large U-shape development, the courtyard of which faced eastwards. The amended proposals have reduced the scale of development to 24 units and re-orientated the buildings. The amended proposal would involve a U-shape multi-storey building facing northwards towards a row of 1-storey mews cottages. The development would also involve reuse of the stable and coach house on the site.

The proposed development site sits immediately adjacent to the listed hall and is currently a car park enclosed by a modern brick boundary wall, both of which are of no heritage value and do not make a positive contribution to the setting or significance of the principal listed building.

Including the excavated area, the 3-storey building would be approx. 9.5m in height which is a similar to height to the initial proposed building. This would be a hipped roof with terminating gable projections. The 1-storey aspect of the proposal would be 4.2m in height and this would be a continuous linear roofline with some gablet detailing to the front. The updated application form outlines the facing materials would be brick walling and tile roof. No details are provided on materiality of windows and railings ect.

Overall, the height, massing and bulk of the 3-storey part of the development still remains a dominating visual feature within the immediate setting of the listed building. A sectional site elevation has been provided (dwg no. 21 012 228) which illustrates the ridgeline of the 3-storey building would match the height of the highest part of the adjacent coachhouse/stables building. However, the highest point is only for one small part of the adjacent building and the rest of the outbuilding is approx. 5.3m in height. The proposed bulk and massing of the new development would still dwarf and overbear the designed subservient character of these ancillary buildings.

In the context of the listed building, the proposed development faces away from the designated heritage asset and the majority of the development visible from the hall would be a blank elevation. Coupled with the bulk and massing of this building, this

would be quite an overbearing and dominating feature which would distract from the designed prominence and architectural interest of the principal hall.

The fenestration and design of the large 3-storey element would be very regimented and uniform, with double-height projecting bay windows with eaves dormer details. Its appearance would be reminiscent of more urban residential or office development, the appearance of which would not relate to the surrounding rural country house character. In addition, whilst the proposed 1-storey element would be subservient in height (approx. 4.2m to the ridge) its domestic and suburban appearance would diminish the historic legibility of the ancillary and hierarchical layout of the hall and its outbuildings.

It is recognised that the existing hardstanding and modern brick walls in the site are not positive features or features which are of historic interest, but this does not justify further heritage harm to the setting of the Listed Building.

The proposal seeks to reuse the stables and coach house to the east of the hall, the principle of which offers a minor benefit in the scheme. However, these buildings have been considerably altered by the 20th century uses on the site and the proposed conversion would involve the installation of large expanses of glazing creating a very contemporary and more domestic fenestration. This would further diminish the ancillary / coach house character of these outbuildings. The minor benefits of reuse of would not be balanced or outweighed by the harm caused by the principle of infill development and the proposed scale, massing and design of the new development.

The proposal would unlikely harm the landscape park, which is considered to be a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) as what remains that is of significance lies chiefly to the west of the principal hall.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Building (s. 66).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (par.213).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in a high degree of harm to the setting of the Listed Building. This would fail to satisfy the provisions of s.66 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be ‘less than substantial harm’ to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework), but at the higher end of the scale of harm. The proposal would cause no harm to the significance of the Non-Designated Heritage Asset (par.216 of NPPF). There would be some minor benefits arising from the principle of reuse of the coach house and stables, but this would not be balanced or outweighed the high degree of heritage harm arising from new development within the immediate setting of the Listed Building.

In addition, it is acknowledged that there are elements of the hall’s setting which are not intact, or which make a positive contribution to the building’s significance, such as the modern bungalow and buildings to the north and west, large areas of hardstanding to the east and modern boundary walls within and around the site. However, these existing features do not justify further harm to the setting of the Listed Building, and the proposal does not offer many heritage-related benefits which would balance or outweigh the high degree of harm arising from the proposal. Therefore, we still maintain an objection to the proposal from a conservation perspective and recommend it is refused.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson