STAUNTON HAROLD CONSERVATION

AREA APPRAISAL AND STUDY

APRIL 2001

North West Leicestershire District Council
PREFACE

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that Conservation Areas are kept under review (Section 69(2)) and that local planning authorities in exercising their planning powers, pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas (Section 72). Having regard to these requirements and the advice contained in the English Heritage guidance notes 'Conservation Area Practice' and 'Conservation Area Appraisals', the District Council produced a draft Appraisal/Study of the Staunton Harold Conservation Area in November 2000. The draft document included proposed alterations to the boundaries of the designated Conservation Area (of June 1995).

The draft document was the subject of consultation and publicity over a seven week period between 20 November 2000 and 8 January 2001. Having considered the various representations and recommended amendments the District Council's Executive Board of 3 April 2001 resolved the following :-

(1) to approve alterations to the boundaries of the Conservation Area as outlined in the Executive Board report.

(2) that subject to the amendments outlined in the Executive Board Report the Conservation Area Appraisal/Study document be adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the policies of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan.*

As supplementary planning guidance the Conservation Area Appraisal/Study document whilst not having the same status as an adopted plan policy may be taken into account as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

* Following the closure of the Sue Ryder Palliative Care Home at Staunton Harold Hall and the grant of planning permission in May 2004 to change the use of the Hall to a residential and office use, the 'History and Development' section of this document (page 8) was revised. As this revision was wholly factual in its nature it was not the subject of public consultation.
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1. The Boundaries of the Staunton Harold Conservation Area 1 and 2
2. The Individual Factors Considered To Have A Positive Impact On The Character of the Conservation Area. 10 and 11
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conservation areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69 (1)(a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990). The Staunton Harold Conservation Area was originally designated by the District Council in June 1995 and in April 2001 the boundaries of the Area were revised. The Conservation Area forms part of an historic landscape extending up to some 90 hectares which is included at Grade II* on English Heritage’s Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The boundaries of the Conservation Area are shown on Map 1 and those of the Grade II* historic garden landscape are shown in Appendix A.

1.2 This Appraisal/Study document aims to fulfil two key roles. The Appraisal outlines the historical development of Staunton Harold and defines the special interest, character and appearance of the built and natural environment within and surrounding the existing Conservation Area boundaries. The Study identifies future opportunities for the preservation and enhancement of the Area. (The numbers in bold in the text refer to an associated plate/photograph).
2. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY OF STAUNTON HAROLD

2.1 Staunton Harold Hall and its parkland are situated on the western side of Melbourne Road (B587), some 5 km to the north-east of Ashby de la Zouch and 3.5 km to the south-east of Breedon on the Hill. The Hall is located close to the boundary with Derbyshire; Melbourne is some 4 km to the north and the former estate lands to Calke Abbey lie immediately to the north-west.

2.2 The Hall, its chapel, ancillary outbuildings and landscaped parkland occupy a position within a small valley one kilometre long created by the stream which flows north-eastwards through the site (1). The valley bottom is largely occupied by two man-made expanses of water; Church Pool and Fish Pond (North Lake).

Plate 1 : Staunton Harold Hall and the Chapel of the Holy Trinity
3. ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAUNTON HAROLD

3.1 Staunton is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086/7 and a manor house, deer park and village had been established by 1324 (Nichols, 1804, p114; Burnett Associates, 1995). The Shirley family acquired the manor house and its estate by marriage in 1423. In the medieval period two parks were created within the estate; the Little Park - surrounding the manor house - and the Great Park - centred on Staunton Lodge.

3.2 In 1653; to the south-east of the Hall; Sir Robert Shirley (d. 1656) founded the Chapel of the Holy Trinity (2). The building was not was completed until the mid-1660s (Pevsner and Williamson, 1992, p390)(1).

3.3 The Hall was enlarged between 1677 and 1701 with the addition of a five bay north east wing (3) for the first Earl Ferrers(2) and formal gardens laid out to this north-eastern side. A long canal was created running north-south parallel to the new chapel as part of the formal gardens and a wilderness may have been created to the south of the Hall (Burnett Associates, 1995, paragraph 2.15).

3.4 In the 1760s the Hall was substantially re-built and re-modeled by the fifth Earl Ferrers; Admiral Washington Shirley. The Earl, who may have acted as his own architect(3), added the eleven bay Palladian style east front (4) and the projecting wings to the south to create the Lion Court (5).
Plate 2 : Chapel of the Holy Trinity

Plate 3 : Staunton Harold Hall : Five Bay North East Wing
Plate 4 : Staunton Harold Hall : Eleven Bay East Front

Plate 5 : Staunton Harold Hall : South Elevation (Lion Court)
3.5 Contemporary with the re-modelling of the Hall, the grounds were laid out in the natural style. The remodelling works involved sweeping away the formal gardens, the long canal being made into a lake (Church Pool) and the creation of the Fish Pond (North Lake) to the north linked to Church Pool by a weir. The productive gardens were probably relocated to the west; to the site later occupied by the Walled Garden (English Heritage, 1999, p4). In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the stable block was built to the west of the Hall (6).

3.6 The early nineteenth century also witnessed a number of new works around the Hall including the expansion of the Walled Garden and the introduction of pleasure grounds to the south and east of the Hall. The pleasure grounds included an arboretum, terraced lawns and a (now demolished) gothic conservatory. New cottages were built within the estate in the second half of the nineteenth century, including West Lea/Nurseries Cottage and Park View/Home Farm' surrounding the Walled Garden (7). In circa 1870, the Hunt Kennels (now 'Hunt Lodge') were built for the 10th Earl Ferrers. The Staunton Harold estate continued as an entity until the outbreak of the Second World War.

3.7 In 1940, Staunton Harold Hall was requisitioned by the Army and in the decade immediately following the Second World War the estate was fragmented with the sale of the buildings/lands to a number of different owners. The Hall itself was initially sold to demolition contractors before its future was secured with conversion to a Leonard Cheshire Home (opened in 1955). Earlier, in 1954 the Chapel was given to the National Trust. A commercial nursery operated from the Walled Garden area from circa 1940 (National Trust, 1999, p6; Burnett Associates, 1995).(4)
Plate 6 : Former Stable Block (now Ferrers Centre)

Plate 7 : Park View/Home Farm
3.8 The Ferrers Centre was initially established in the former stable block in 1974 and in 1985, the Hall was acquired by the Ryder-Cheshire Foundation and was leased to Sue Ryder Care as a Palliative Care Home (opening in 1989). Other changes in the latter part of the twentieth century included the sub-division of the former Hunt Kennels into apartments (Nos. 1-4 Hunt Lodge), the erection of a bungalow (‘Wetecroft’) to the south of the Walled Garden and the conversion of former estate outbuildings to residential use (‘The Cart House’ and ‘Joiners Cottage’). In circa 1986 the Ferrers car parking area was created to the south of the Walled Garden (Staunton Harold Nurseries) to compensate for the closure of an informal parking area provided below the conduit house.

3.9 In March 2002, the Sue Ryder Palliative Care Home was closed and the Hall and the grounds within the ownership of Ryder-Cheshire Foundation were subsequently sold to a private party. In May 2004, full planning permission was granted to return a substantial part of the Hall to a single residential dwellinghouse and to convert the western wing into office accommodation.

Notes

1. The Shirley family had previously used the church at Breedon on the Hill which they had acquired from the Crown following the dissolution of the priory there in 1535 (Wain, 1965, p4). The Shirleys used the north aisle as a private chapel and gave over the remaining parts to be used as the church for the Parish of Breedon (Pevsner and Williamson, 1992, p110). The north aisle, which contains a number of memorials to the Shirley family and their former pew, was handed over to the Church Authorities in 1959 (Wain, 1965, p4).

2. The title Earl Ferrers was granted to the Shirley family in 1711.

3. The Earl may have relied on his clerk of works William Henderson (alias Anderson) of Loughborough, who lived at Staunton Harold from 1762 to 1772 and who designed Wilford Hall (1771-4) and Stanford Hall (1781) in Nottinghamshire (National Trust, 1999, p5; Pevsner, 1951, pp174 & 204).

4. The commercial nursery was initially run as a small concern by the 11th Earl Ferrers (Burnett Associates, 1995)

5. A portion served as the administrative offices of Sue Ryder Care.

6. A more detailed account of the development of the historic landscape is given in the entry for Staunton Harold in the Register of Parks and gardens of Special Historic Interest which is contained in Appendix A.
4. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING POSITIVELY TOWARDS THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Character Statement

4.1 The overall character of the Conservation Area is essentially that of a country house set within a naturalised landscape of the 1760s. The survival of earlier features and the evidence of later changes to the landscape implemented by members of the Shirley family (the Earls Ferrers), also however, provide other examples of contemporary garden design within the period spanning from the late seventeenth century through to the late nineteenth century.

4.2 The national as well as local importance of the Area is emphasised with the inclusion of the historic landscape on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. This national importance is further enhanced by the inclusion of nine buildings within the Area on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest (DoE, 1983, pp45-51).

4.3 Within the grounds, the Hall and the Chapel form an important visual group particularly when viewed with the lakes from the east. Nikolas Pevsner considered that 'for position, Staunton Harold, the house and the chapel, are unsurpassed in the country - certainly as far as Englishness is concerned' (Pevsner, 1960, p238). The principal approach to the Hall is from the eastern direction upon the descent of the drive leading from Melbourne Road (Melbourne Lodge) (8); the historic destination being a gravel turning circle (no longer extant) before the south-east front of the Hall (Everett, 1949, p35).
Plate 8: Staunton Harold Hall and the Chapel of the Holy Trinity viewed from the Melbourne Lodge Approach Road

4.4 In views from the Hall, the two man-made sheets of water; the Church Pool and Fish Pond (North Lake) form key elements. One view is from Hall's south-eastern front, past the Chapel, across Church Pool to the grassland rising towards Melbourne Road (9). The second view, much longer is from the north-east front, north along the valley occupied by the Fish Pond (North Lake) (10). The western side of the valley is pasture ground and fairly open, while the eastern side of the valley is well wooded (with many self-set trees).

4.5 The trees within the Hall grounds are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order. The Order includes a number of fine mature individual trees/groups of trees within the parkland landscape as well as the more densely boundary screens. Mature hedgerows divide some fields areas. The individual elements considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the Area are shown on Map 2.
Plate 9 : View Eastwards from South-East Front of Hall towards Melbourne Road

Plate 10 : View Northwards from North-East Front of Hall towards the Fish Pond (North Lake)
4.7 Staunton Harold Hall and The Chapel of the Holy Trinity are listed at Grade I as buildings of exceptional interest. Staunton Harold Hall is a two/three storey building, ranged around a quadrangle. In its 'Palladian' appearance the Hall superficially reflects the substantial re-building works undertaken in the eighteenth century. The Chapel of the Holy Trinity is in the gothic style and comprises of west tower, nave, chancel and north and south aisles. The building is one of the few churches to have been started during the Commonwealth - 1649 to 1660 (National Trust, 1999, p8-9). The interior incorporates box pews, a painted ceiling to the nave and a wrought iron grille between the nave/chancel designed by Robert Bakewell of Derby (National Trust, 1999, pp8-10).

4.8 The Gateway to the Garden (or 'Gate to Nowhere') (11) and The Golden Gates/Causeway Bridge (12) are listed at Grade II* as being buildings of particular interest. The Gateway to the Garden and the Golden Gates; both in the baroque manner; survive from the formal gardens of the late seventeenth century, although neither are in their original position (DoE, 1983, pp49; National Trust, 1999, p4).

4.9 The Gateway to the Garden; dated 1681; has heavy rusticated stonework with a large urn at its top. The structure is a piece of pattern-book architecture, based on a plate in the English edition of Vignola, published by James Moxon in 1655 (National Trust, 1999, p4). The stone piers to the Golden Gates incorporate twisted columns and are surmounted by the Shirley supporters of a hound and stag (the original gates were moved to Ditchingham Park).
Plate 11: The Gateway To The Garden ('The Gate To Nowhere')

Plate 12: The Golden Gates and Causeway Bridge
The other five listed buildings have Grade II status as being of special interest:

- the two storey outbuilding to the north-west angle of the Hall (13).

- the seventeenth century yard walling, gate piers and gates surrounding the Chapel of the Holy Trinity (14).

- the late eighteenth century two storey former stable block in a quadrangle arrangement (now The Ferrers Centre).

- the early nineteenth century Ashby Lodge and gates

- the seventeenth century conduit house to the east of Church Pool (15).

Plate 13: Outbuilding to North-west angle of Staunton Harold Hall
Plate 14: Walling, Gate Piers and Gates surrounding the Chapel of the Holy Trinity

Plate 15: Conduit House
4.11 There are also a number of buildings and structures of some architectural or historic merit within the Conservation Area which are considered to make a positive contribution to its character:

- the walled garden (now occupied by Staunton Harold Nurseries) which incorporates walling of eighteenth and nineteenth century dates.

- Hunt Lodge (built as the Hunt Kennels) - a two storey building of circa 1870 (now converted into four dwelling units).

- Nurseries Cottage/West Lea; a pair of two storey semi-detached cottages with date panel of 1877 (16).

- Park View/Home Farm; a pair of late nineteenth century semi-detached cottages.

- Melbourne Lodge; a two storey mid-nineteenth century lodge on Melbourne Road (17).

- No.1 Malt Cottage/'The Malthouse' (18); a pair of two storey cottages which appear superficially to be of an eighteenth/early nineteenth century date, although earlier timber framing survives to the rear.

- Joiners Cottage; a residential property created following the conversion of nineteenth century outbuildings.
Plate 16: ‘West Lea’/Nurseries Cottage’

Plate 17: Melbourne Lodge, Melbourne Road
Plate 18 : No.1 Malt Cottage/'The Malthouse'

- A cistern house; a late nineteenth/early twentieth century structure situated over a spring on the hillside to east of Church Pool.

- Dam/Weir between Fish Pond (North Lake) and Church Pool; a fine brick built bridge spans the eighteenth century spillway.

- Walled ha-ha to the south of the Walled Garden; a timber bridge crosses the ha-ha to provide access along the yew-lined walk which runs alongside the eastern side of the Walled Garden. The ha-ha continues eastwards to separate the former pleasure grounds from The Wilderness.

- Walled Ha-ha running between the former stable block (The Ferrers Centre) and the Fish Pond (North Lake)
Building Materials and Local Details

4.12 The Hall and many of the ancillary buildings on the estate are of largely brick construction. Fine stonework is, however, in evidence. On the Hall it is used as architectural embellishment; to the south-east front the centre three bays of the eleven bay elevation are of ashlar below a pediment and to the Lion Court, there are stonework surrounds to windows. The Chapel of the Holy Trinity, its yard walling and the seventeenth century Gateway to Garden and the Golden Gates are all of stone construction.

4.13 The stable block (Ferrers Centre) incorporates Swithland slate roofs and the roofs to Staunton Harold Hall are of copper. Roofs to other buildings within the estate are largely of Staffordshire blue plain tiles or Welsh slate.

4.14 A distinctive feature of the Conservation Area is the degree of survival of original window units and doors to many estate buildings; in part a consequence of the fact that a number are listed. Window units to many buildings are typically of a vertical sliding sash design (Figure 1) reflecting the polite architectural style of most buildings within the estate. The window units to some of the late nineteenth century estate cottages are opening casements (Figure 2).

4.15 The doors to the Hall are of a paneled design (Figure 3). The doors to the former stable block (Ferrers Arts Centre) and the estate cottages are typically of a vertically boarded ledged and braced construction (Figure 4).
Figure 1: Vertical Sliding Sash Window Unit

Figure 2: Casement Window Unit

Figure 3: Panelled Door

Figure 4: Ledged and Braced Vertically Boarded Door
Boundary Treatments and Ground Surfaces

4.16 A stone wall bounds the north-eastern side of the Area. The boundaries to much of the parkland; including that along Melbourne Road; predominantly comprise tree screens.

4.17 The main vehicular drives to the Hall are surfaced in grey tarmacadam, as for the most part are the pedestrian footpaths in the immediate vicinity of the Hall, the Walled Garden and the former stable block (The Ferrers Centre). The pathways within the Lion Court garden and to the yew lined walk are graveled (19). Within the pleasure grounds to the south and east of the hall the former gravel surfaced paths are traceable in parts.
The Archaeological Significance and Potential of the Area

4.19 The hillside to the east of Church Pool contains a complex pattern of earthworks, some of which are likely to be associated with the seventeenth century formal gardens (English Heritage, 1999, p4). As part of the arrangement of the formal gardens, a straight avenue was driven up the hillside towards Melbourne Road which is cut away at the top to extend the vista (Hartley, 1984, p39). Contour paths to the east of the conduit house may indicate the line of a walk intended to enjoy the fine view westwards to the Hall and Chapel (English Heritage, 1999, p4). Other earthworks, including platforms and ridge and furrow ploughing lines may represent the site of a deserted medieval village (Hartley, 1984, pp39-40).

4.21 The car parking areas to the Sue Ryder Care Home to the western and north-western sides of the Hall appear to occupy the site of seventeenth century terraced gardens. Visually, this is reflected in the split in the level between the respective parking areas.

4.22 Within the interior of the present hall, sections of the earlier buildings survive. The Justice Room, now restored to its original use as a chapel, remains of the Jacobean house and of the house of circa 1700 there is the staircase and venetian style painting to the ceiling of the first floor saloon (DoE, 1983, pp46-7). It also likely that below ground remains may survive of other structures predating the major rebuilding works of the 1760s, including the castellated gatehouse, outbuildings and garden enclosures shown on a Kip and Knyff engraving of circa 1700 (Hartley, 1984, p43). Of later structures, evidence may survive of a former gothic conservatory built to the south-west of the Hall.
The Approach Drives To Staunton Harold Hall

4.23 The principal approach to Staunton Harold Hall entered from Melbourne Road (B587) at Melbourne Lodge.

4.24 The Coach Road approach in the parkland from the Grade II listed Ashby Lodge runs to the north-east of The Wilderness (20), before continuing along the eastern side of Church Pool with a view across it to the Hall/Chapel, and joining the principal drive immediately to the east of The Golden Gates/Causeway. In the 1980s, a new section of road was constructed alongside the south-eastern side of The Wilderness to link the Coach Road with an almost parallel estate road which skirts the southern boundary of Area before connecting up with the approach road from Heath End (to the west). The new link also provides access from the Coach Road to the Ferrers car parking area created to the south of the Walled Garden (Staunton Harold Nurseries).

4.25 The approach from Heath End is via a single width drive contained within a much wider approach. Joiner's Cottage; created following the conversion and extension of a former joiners shop and saw shed; is situated adjacent to the approach road at its easternmost extent (21).

4.26 The Coach Road and the Heath End drive are both lined with mature trees.
Plate 20 : View North-Westwards from the Coach Road towards the Chapel of the Holy Trinity and The Hall

Plate 21 : View South-Eastwards along the Heath End Approach Road towards Joiner’s Cottage
The Relationship Between The Area and the Surrounding Landscape

4.27 There were two medieval deer parks at Staunton Harold; the Great Park and The Little Park. The Great Park; disparked in 1623; lay to the east of Melbourne Road and was centered on the moated Staunton Lodge. The hollow way cut in the steep hillside to the east of the Church Pool marks the start of the line of a drive which formerly curved via a straight elm-lined avenue eastwards from Hilltop House for approximately 1.5 km (through the former Great Park).

4.28 The Little Park; comprising the parkland immediately surrounding Staunton Harold Hall; was disparked in circa 1763, although the pale was subsequently reinstated at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Nichols, 1804, p718). In 1867, the park contained a herd of 230 fallow deer (Cantor and Squires, 1997, p65). With the sale of the estate in the immediate post War years, parts of the parkland have been put over to agricultural usage; both pastoral and arable.

4.29 Beyond the parkland surrounding the Hall, the estate historically contained substantial areas of land in agricultural use. These lands extended westwards as far as Callan's Lane and north-eastwards as far as Spring Wood. Dimminsdale at the north-eastern extent of the estate was an area of industrial activity; principally the mining and burning of lime; from the thirteenth century through to the latter part of the nineteenth century (Burnett Associates, 1995). Between 1830 and 1891, the area was served by a branch of the horse drawn tramway link originally established in 1802 between Ticknall and the Ashby Canal at Willesley Basin in the Ashby Woulds (Holt, 1996, p25). This branch of the tramway also served the former colliery in Rough Heath Wood on the estate.
5. FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

5.1 Although the overall character of Staunton Harold as a country house within its naturalised eighteenth landscape remains extant, there are a number of factors which are considered to detract from the special character of the Conservation Area.

Demand for Visitor Facilities

5.2 The conversion of the Hall to a Care Home and of the former stable block to the Ferrers Centre secured a future for these listed buildings. These re-uses, along with the operation of Staunton Harold Nurseries from the former walled garden, have however, introduced a number of negative elements into the Conservation Area in attempting to meet the needs of visitors to the estate.

5.3 The uses within the Area, in particular the Nurseries and the Ferrers Centre, generate substantial levels of vehicular traffic, particularly at weekends/holiday periods during the summer months. The provision of car parking to meet this visitor demand is the most visually harmful aspect to the Area's appearance.

5.4 The staff and visitor car parking facilities to the western and north-western sides of the Hall are detrimental to the setting of the building (22&23). The impact of the areas is compounded by their poor quality surfacing along with open storage adjacent to the staff parking facilities. The creation of the parking areas may also have caused damage to the seventeenth century terraced garden archaeology.
Plate 22: Staff Car Parking Area (Sue Ryder Care Home) to West of Staunton Harold Hall

Plate 23: Visitor Car Parking Area (Sue Ryder Care Home) to North-West of Staunton Harold Hall
5.5 The car parking area to the south of the Walled Garden (Staunton Harold Nurseries) at present appears as a large expanse of hardsurfacing (24). In the long term its associated landscaping may reduce this impact to some extent.

5.6 A further detrimental impact on the historic environment caused by vehicular traffic has been the erosion to grass verges as a result of informal parking and vehicles passing along the narrow approach roads. Similarly, there has been the creation of informal pedestrian footpaths away from the established historic paths.

5.7 Within the immediate setting of the Hall/Ferrers Centre, there has been the provision of ground mounted lighting and the new timber decked pathway. Although of a relatively minor nature, collectively such additions can have a significant impact on the character of the Conservation Area.

5.8 Similarly, directional signage represents an incremental alien addition into the historic landscape; its impact is, however, at least lessened by the use of a standard design within the site. The large expanses of grey tarmacadam surfacing to roadways and paths surrounding the Hall/Ferrers Centre have introduced a more urban setting to the Area (25).
Plate 24 : Ferrers Car Parking Area to South of the Walled Garden (Staunton Harold Nurseries)

Plate 25 : Tarmacadum Surfaced Areas surrounding Staunton Harold Hall
New Development

5.8 A detrimental impact on the character of the Staunton Harold estate has occurred as result of the incremental alterations and extensions undertaken to some of the former estate buildings in the post war period following the break up of the estate. Properties such as The Cart House and Joiner's Cottage have been significantly extended following their residential conversion from former agricultural buildings. Whilst most additions in themselves are of a high standard of design, the former scale and nature of the original function of the buildings has been undermined. The conversion to dwellings has also introduced new residential curtilages - with their associated domestic paraphernalia - into the grounds surrounding Staunton Harold Hall.

5.9 To the south of the Walled Garden the plain urban appearance of 'The Bungalow' appears discordant with the character of the cottages of the former estate. The area within the Walled Garden itself was the subject of significant change in the latter part of the twentieth century. The developments included the erection of new glass houses and new commercial buildings with its move away from a 'traditional' nursery to a more retail based establishment. This change of emphasis in the operation of the Nurseries has generated additional visitor (and hence vehicular) movements into the historic grounds as well as displacing some visitor parking to outside the walled enclosure. Furthermore, unlike the re-uses secured for the Hall and former stables, the nursery use has not necessarily secured the maintenance and repair of historic structures.
Fragmentation of the Historic Asset

5.10 In the immediate period after the break up of the estate a number of works detrimental to the overall character of the grounds occurred. These works included the felling of trees along the avenues approaching the Hall in the late 1950s. By 1960, the Wilderness had also been cleared and the area planted with poplars (English Heritage, 1998, p4). (Prior to the Second World War beech trees had been removed on the horizon line to the north-east).

5.11 Another significant change to the landscape has been the conversion of areas of former parkland to pasture land; the hillside to the east of Church Pool and the eastern side of the valley alongside Fish Pond (North Lake) being examples. In these areas the introduction of stock fencing detracts from the open parkland landscape. The historical context of the landscape has also been diminished with the establishment of self setting trees - principally sycamore, birch and alder - within the parkland. These in places - for example to the eastern side of the Fish Pond (North Lake) - have surrounded the mature trees.

5.12 With regard to maintenance, although the principal buildings have been well looked after, other structures within the Parkland have deteriorated including the ha-has which run to the south of the Walled Garden, between the former pleasure grounds and the Wilderness and between the former stable block (Ferrers Centre) and the Fish Pond (North Lake). Along the lengths of these structures are number of points where the retaining stone/brick walls have collapsed. The Cistern House to the east of the Church Pool has also partially collapsed.
6. FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Planning Policies

6.1 The Conservation Area is wholly within open countryside and is therefore subject to the Countryside Policies of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan (principally Policy S3). Any development proposals will also be considered having due regard Policies E10 and E11.

6.2 Proposals affecting listed buildings will be considered having regard to policies E13, E14, E15 and E16 of the Local Plan. Policy E18 is relevant to the area covered by the historic park and garden designation and due regard must be had to Policy E19 in relation to any development affecting a site of archaeological interest. The Local Plan policies as they relate to the historic environment are outlined in Appendix B to this report.

The Removal of Permitted Development Rights

6.3 A fundamental contribution to the character of the Conservation Area is the number of unlisted dwellings which retain their traditional painted timber window and door units, roofs of clay plain tile/Welsh slate and fine chimney stacks. The loss of these details and features would severely undermine the character of the Staunton Harold Conservation Area and in order to seek to influence retention of such architectural details, an Article 4(2) Direction was served in May 2001 removing certain permitted development rights in respect of most unlisted pre-Second World War properties in the Conservation Area (a copy of the Article 4(2)
Direction, which indicates the properties affected by the Direction and the restrictions imposed, is contained at the back of this Appraisal/Study document).

6.4 The overall aim of the District Council in the serving of the Article 4(2) Direction is not to prevent all change to the properties the subject of the Direction, but rather to ensure that any changes which are proposed are compatible with the architectural and/or historical qualities of the buildings in the Conservation Area. The District Council has prepared a guidance note for owners, tenants and prospective purchasers of the properties the subject of the Article 4(2) Direction. The guidance note is available from the Planning and Environment Division.

**Repairs to Historic Building Fabric**

6.5 The District Council operates a discretionary historic buildings grant scheme which makes available grant aid for private individuals in relation to the repair of listed buildings and unlisted buildings which are considered to contribute positively to the character of a Conservation Area. Full details of the scheme (which has a limited budget) are available from the Planning and Environment Division. A similar scheme is operated by the Heritage and Resources Team in the Environmental Management Department at Leicestershire County Council.
7. APPENDIX A: REGISTER OF HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS: ENTRY FOR STAUNTON HAROLD
LEICESTERSHIRE
HALL

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE
STAUNTON HAROLD
SK3821

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

A landscape park of 1760s associated with a contemporary country house; park incorporates some elements of extensive formal gardens laid out in later C17.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Shirley family held Staunton from the C15 to 1940. They acquired it in 1423, when Ralph Shirley married Margaret, heiress of John de Staunton, whose family had held the manor since the C12. In 1653 Sir Robert Shirley, fourth baronet Ferrers, who had inherited the estate in 1646, built a chapel next to the Hall. Shirley was a royalist, and it has been argued that its construction was an act of political and religious defiance, rather than a purely practical measure intended to avoid the 8km journey to the parish church at Breedon on the Hill. It is one of only a handful of ecclesiastical buildings new-built during the Commonwealth. Shirley’s second son, created Baron Ferrers in 1677 and Earl Ferrers in 1711, added a new north-east front to the Hall and laid out extensive formal gardens around it. A contemporary described him as ‘a great improver of gardening and parking’ (CL 1913, 526). Thereafter, for sixty years, there were few changes; the second and third Earls died as minors, while the fourth Earl ‘led a dissolute life, drank heavily and neglected his estates’ (quoted unsourced, in Chris Burnett Assocs. 1995) before being hanged for the murder of his steward in 1760. In the years after 1763 the fifth Earl, formerly Admiral Washington Shirley, added the eleven-bay Palladian east front to the Hall and the projecting wings which enclose the Lion court. At the same time the formal gardens were swept away and canals made into Lakes.

The Hall was requisitioned by the army in 1940. Its contents were sold in 1949, and in 1954 the Hall and estate lands were sold to different owners and the church given to the National Trust. The Hall became a Cheshire Home in 1954, and in 1985 was sold to the Ryder-Cheshire Mission which remains the owner (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

Staunton Harold Hall stands in a small valley 5km north-east of Ashby de la Zouch. To the east the park is partly bounded by the B587 road from Ashby to Melbourne, and to the south-west by a track. Otherwise the boundary follows field edges. The area here registered is c. 90ha.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal, and most scenic, approach is from the north-east, via an entry to the park adjoining the Melbourne Lodge, a two-storey brick lodge of the mid C19. This was probably also the main approach in the C17. From here a drive runs south, downhill, before turning a right-angle to begin a straight approach to the Golden Gates (listed
grade II*), an ornate stone structure in the Baroque manner of the late C17, with late C18 pedestrian archways to either side. Surmounting it are the Shirley supporters of a hound and stag. The Gates, moved here at an unknown date from what Country Life (1913, 526) claimed was the entrance to the bowling green, lie at the east end of a brick causeway bridge (also grade II* listed) across the north end of Church Pool, from which there is a fine view across the water to the south-east front of the Hall and the chapel. The drive now continues north of the Hall to link up with that from the west, although the main historic destination was a gavel turning circle (no longer extant) before the south-east front.

Another approach is from the south-east, via the kilometre-long drive from the entrance adjoining the early C19, single storey, Ashby Lodge (listed grade II). Some 200m north-west of this, on the west side of the drive is the C18 Coach Road Cottage (listed grade II). This drive runs along the east side of Church Pool, giving a view across it to the Hall, before joining the drive from Melbourne Lodge east of the Golden Gates.

The third main approach is from the west, via an 800m long tree-lined drive from Heath End which approaches the rear, west side of the Hall between on the one (south) side the kitchen gardens and on the other the stables and Home Farm.

A deep and wide hollow way cut in the steep hillside east of the right-angle turn in the drive east of Golden Gates marks the line of a drive formerly carried via a straight elm-lined avenue east from north of Hilltop House (outside the registered area) for 1.5km.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Staunton Harold Hall (listed grade I) is a two-storey brick building, low, wide-spreading and ranged around a quadrangle, largely the product of a building campaign begun in 1763 although incorporating a Jacobean house altered c. 1700. It is uncertain how much of the remodelling of 1763 should be attributed to the fifth Earl, and how much to his clerk of works William Henderson (or Anderson) of Loughborough, who lived at Staunton from 1762-72. The north-east front, of c. 1700, is of five bays, that to the south-east (1763 and later) of eleven, the centre three of ashlar under a pediment, while to the south-west projecting wings embrace the Lion Court. This takes its name from the figure of a lion on its facade, one of several sculptures with which the exterior is adorned.

A late C18 brick stables complex (listed grade II) stands c. 100m north-west of the Hall, slightly uphill and effectively behind it. West of this is the impressive C18 Home Farm.

The chapel of the Holy Trinity (listed grade I) of 1653 stands on the shore of the Church Pool 50m south-east of the Hall, with a tall stone wall (listed grade II). Of stone and in the gothic style, the chapel comprises west tower, nave, chancel and aisles.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The Lion Court is occupied by a formal garden completed in 1990 with box hedges and brick-edged beds. South-west of this, extending to a walled ditch, is a lawn. This is terraced along its north-west side, presumably as part of the improvements to this part of the grounds undertaken between 1828-9 (see below). Specimen trees around its edge may also be early C19. A bridge crossed the ditch to a low-lying area of woodland and shrubs, bounded to the south-west by a yew-edged path, again probably
part of the work of 1828-9, which runs north before turning along the outside of the south-east wall of the kitchen gardens. There are also lawns south-east and north-east of the Hall which run down to Church Pool and the Fish Pond. On the north-west side of the Hall is a car park.

Adjoining the south-west side of the Chapel yard wall is a stone gateway (The Gate to Nowhere) of 1681 (listed grade II*) in the baroque manner, the rectangular panel above the doorway being carved with foliate swags, eagles and cornucopia buttresses. This is surmounted by a pediment with urn. The gateway originally stood on the north-west edge of the main formal gardens, and was presumably moved here when they were swept away in the 1760s.

Those formal gardens, shown on painting of c. 1702 attributed to Leonard Knyff and on a view of 1706 by Kip and Knyff (Harris 1995; Cantor and Squires 1997), were laid out by Baron Ferrers c. 1680. There is no record of who was responsible for their design. The main garden, terraces ranged either side of a broad axial path and with a canal across the bottom, lay north-east of the Hall. A summerhouse at the east end of the main cross axis adjoined the west end of a predecessor of the present causeway bridge, to the south of which, pat the chapel, extended the rectangular Church Pool. West of the southern part of the Pool was a roughly square block of woodland, possibly a wilderness, although that name is not associated with the area until the Ordnance Survey map of 1887. Further pools lay along the valley bottom north of the Hall and gardens. Woolley, in 1711 (171), notes the gardens as ‘well watered with fountains and canals, very good aviaries and a decoy and a great many exotic waterfowls. The gardens lie on the north-west (sic) of the house, consisting of several parterres of easy descent from the house, which add a gracefulness to the one and the other.’

The fifth Earl Ferrers may have ordered the removal of the formal gardens soon after inheriting the estate, and a painting of Staunton Harold attributed to Thomas Smith (d. 1767) (Harris 1979) shows the landscape much as now. Perhaps the main change, other than the removal of the formal gardens, was the creation of the present Fish Pond north of the causeway bridge.

In 1828-9 a new pleasure ground was laid out in the area between Hall, Chapel and Wilderness under the direction of Christopher Chamberlain. Among the elements were a parterre and a gothick conservatory. These were largely removed in the early C20.

PARK

The Hall lies in the southern part of a landscape park, presumably created c. 1763 about the time the old formal landscape around the Hall was swept away. The park comprises a one kilometre long section of a valley whose bottom is largely occupied by two sheets of water: Church Pool, and to its north the longer Fish Pond, the latter fed with water via a weir at its southern extremity. The pools form the key elements of the two main views from the Hall. The first is from its south-east front, past the chapel, across Church Pool to the lush grassland rising beyond. Midway up the hillside is a stone conduit house(listed grade II), probably C17. The second view, much longer, is from the north-east front, north along the valley and Fish Pond. The west side of the valley is pasture ground and fairly open, while the east bank of the pool and the valley side is well wooded. A stone wall bounds the north-east side of the park, and can be seen from the Hall running along the skyline. A second length of stone wall adjoins Heath End on the west side of the park.
The conduit house, 250m east of the Hall, stands amidst a complex pattern of earthworks. Some of the earthworks are likely to be associated with the later C17 formal gardens, while others, including hollow ways and some ridge and furrow, may represent the site of the medieval village of Andrewskirk. Contour paths running around the slight spur 150m east of the conduit house may indicate the line of a walk intended to enjoy the fine view west to the Hall and chapel. North of the conduit house is a stone cistern.

There was a deer park at Staunton by 1324, and later two, the Little Park and the Great Park. The Little Park is believed (Chris Burnett Assocs. 1995 para 2.10) to have occupied the present parkland area. Nichols (1804) reports that the fifth Earl disparked it c. 1763 but that the pale was reinstated at the beginning of the C19. The Great Park (disparked 1623) lay east of the registered area, centred on Staunton Lodge.

Major changes followed the break up of the estate in 1954. The avenues approaching the Hall were felled in the late 1950s, as were beeches on the horizon line adjoining the park wall. By 1960 The Wilderness had been felled and replaced by a poplar plantation.

KITCHEN GARDEN

The brick-walled kitchen gardens, 130m east/west by 90m north/south, are now occupied by a garden centre. They lie 200m west of the Hall and south of the stables and Home Farm. No glasshouses survive. Some of the walling is probably C18, while other stretches probably date from the 1820s and 1830s when major improvements to the kitchen garden area documented. Outside, and north-west of the garden, is a pair of estate cottages of c. 1900.

The gardens presumably replaced the unwalled productive gardens, which Kip and Knyff’s view of 1706 shows immediately north-east of the east end of the causeway bridge. It would seem likely that the productive gardens were removed c. 1763, and certainly there is no sign of them on Smith’s view of the mid 1760s.

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Maps

OS 6" to 1 mile: Leicestershire sheet 9 SW, 1st edition published 1887
Leicestershire sheet 9 SW, 2nd edition published 1901
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Leicestershire sheet 16 NW, 1st edition published 1887
Leicestershire sheet 16 NW, 2nd edition published 1904
Leicestershire sheet 16 NW, 1927 edition

OS 25" to 1 mile: Leicestershire sheet 16.2, 1st edition published 1881

Description written: May 1998
APPENDIX B : POLICIES OF THE NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL PLAN
IN RESPECT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

POLICY E10

Development will not be permitted within Conservation Areas, or where it would affect the setting of such areas, which would:

(a) Be detrimental to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of:
   (i) scale, proportions and massing;
   (ii) layout, grouping and setting;
   (iii) detailing and materials of construction.

(b) Be detrimental to the setting of buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

(c) Result in the loss of open spaces or important views within, into and out of the Conservation Area.

(d) Result in the loss of particular features which contribute positively to character and appearance of the Conservation Area, including:-
   (i) Walls and other means of enclosure;
   (ii) Ground surfaces;
   (iii) Natural features (such as trees and hedgerows); and
   (iv) Features of archaeological interest.

(e) Be detrimental to environmental quality in terms of:-
   (i) Traffic generation;
   (ii) Noise and other forms of environmental intrusion.

POLICY E11

Consent for the demolition of buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area will not be granted unless:-

(a) It can be demonstrated that the condition of the building makes it impracticable to repair, renovate or adapt to any reasonably beneficial use for which planning permission would be given; and

(b) There is clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use of the building, or to find a viable and acceptable new use or uses.

In the case of buildings which make little or no contribution to the character and appearance of their conservation area, demolition will not be permitted unless redevelopment of the site or the creation of an open space would make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area concerned.
POLICY E12

Replacement or alteration of existing shop fronts within Conservation Areas, or where they would affect the setting of such areas, will only be permitted where:-

(a) The existing shop front is of insufficient quality to warrant its retention; and

(b) The replacement or alteration is of a design which is appropriate to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

POLICY E13

Consent for the demolition of a listed building will not be granted unless:-

(a) It can be demonstrated that the condition of the building makes it impracticable to repair, renovate or adapt to any reasonably beneficial use for which planning permission would be granted; and

(b) There is clear and convincing evidence that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use of the building, or to find a viable and acceptable new use or uses.

POLICY E14

Change of use of a Listed Building will only be permitted where no detrimental effect is likely to arise from the proposed use on the character or appearance of the building or its setting.

POLICY E15

Alterations or extensions to Listed Buildings will not be permitted which are detrimental to the special architectural or historic interest of the building or to its character or setting.

POLICY E16

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect the setting of a Listed Building, in terms of scale, massing, form, siting, design or materials of construction.

POLICY E17

Where a historic byway makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the surrounding landscape, development which would significantly diminish that contribution, or otherwise detrimentally affect the setting or amenity value of such byway will not be permitted.
POLICY E18

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect the character or appearance or setting of historic gardens included in the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, and identified on the Proposals Map.

POLICY E19

Development will not be permitted which would affect a scheduled ancient monument or other nationally important archaeological site, as shown on the Proposals Map, or subsequently recognised, or its setting or amenity value. Where known sites of county or local significance are affected, planning permission may be granted in terms which would allow preservation in situ, or, where this is impractical, by investigation and recording.

In areas of archaeological potential, planning permission will not be granted without proper evaluation of the archaeological implications of the proposed development.

POLICY E43

Outdoor advertisement consent will be granted where the proposed advertisement respects the interests of amenity and public safety.

In assessing the likely effect of proposed advertisements on such interests, regard will be had to all material factors, and in particular :-

(a) In the case of amenity, to the general characteristics of the locality, including (where relevant) the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural of similar interest; and

(b) In the case of public safety, to the effect of the proposal on all aspects of pedestrian or vehicular safety.
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