

# **The Setting of Heritage Assets**

## **at Woodcote House**

### **Leek Wootton**





## **Introduction**

### **The Setting of Heritage Assets**

A process for identifying Heritage assets and the likely impact upon their settings is set out by English Heritage in their publication "Setting of Heritage Assets". The site which is under consideration for development is to the west of Woodcote Lane and to the east of Woodcote House and grounds . The process for the identification of historic assets and their settings and the impact of the setting on the significance of the assets has been followed as set out below .

- 1.** Identification of the Historic Assets.
- 2.** Assessing whether, how and to what degree settings make a contribution to the significance of the Heritage Assets.
- 3.** Assessing the effect of the proposed development.
- 4.** Maximising enhancement and minimising harm.
- 5.** Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.

## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Identification of Historic Assets

The historic assets identified, the settings of which could be affected by development on the site, are Woodcote House which is grade II listed, in Leek Wootton Conservation Area and the locally listed park and garden around Woodcote House.

### 1.2 Key Attributes of the Heritage Asset

Asset	Key Attributes
Woodcote House – Grade II listed Woodcote House grounds – Locally listed park and garden	<p>Built in 1861 and extended in 1869 on the site of an earlier house. Designed by John Gibson is a Jacobean style for Henry Wise , built in sandstone, 6 bays long and 4 bays wide with stone mullioned windows and a central projecting porch which has a carved stone armorial balustrade. The chimney stacks have been truncated. The interior has good period features including a double height entrance hall. The house is linked to the east to significant 1960/70 buildings developed as part of the Warwickshire Police HQ.</p> <p>The front elevation of the former stables range exists to the south east of the house. This has modern buildings behind a retained façade and is not listed.</p> <p>The locally listed park and garden has not yet had its boundaries confirmed . The grounds around the house were formed by Henry Wise by diverting Woodcote Lane to the north and using the old road as the driveway to the house .</p>
Leek Wootton Conservation Area	<p>Leek Wootton probably originated as an Anglo Saxon hamlet in the woods the church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century but was largely rebuilt in 1789.</p> <p>The Conservation Area comprises the historic core of the village and also includes agricultural land to the</p>

south and east of the church, which links significant parts of the village together. The main street is characterised by a number of timber framed cottages. The Wootton Padocks which is the former rectory stands to the south of the church. Woodcote Lane leads off to the west from the centre of the village and gives access to the grounds of Woodcote House which is grade II listed. The Conservation Area terminates at the 19<sup>th</sup> century entrance lodge to Woodcote House, to the north side of Woodcote Lane are Quarry Cottages which are 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages forming part of the Woodcote estate, these are also included in the Conservation Area.

In terms of important views within the Conservation Area they are towards Stone Edge and from Stone Edge to the south side of the village, views of the church from the main street and around the road junction at the Anchor Public House. The other important view of the entrance to the Conservation Area is along Woodcote Lane where there is a strong sense of enclosure, both approaching the Conservation Area and from within, down to the junction with the Anchor Public House.

## Chapter 2

### **2. Assessing whether, how and to what degree setting makes a contribution to the significance of the Heritage Assets**

This section should identify the contribution made by the setting to the Heritage Assets using the English Heritage check list as follows:

The two assets identified are Woodcote House and the Leek Wootton Conservation Area. In terms of identifying the settings of these two assets, the two will be taken together through the English Heritage procedure.

#### **2.1 The Asset's Physical Surroundings**

##### **2.1.1 Topography**

Woodcote House is set in an immediate area of the parkland which is generally flat with a slope towards the north where the grounds are formed into ornamental lakes. There is also a gentle fall of the land towards Woodcote Lane. Woodcote House is set back from the road which forms a curve around the former parkland with a lodge gate to the north and another lodge gate to east. East lodge gate now forms the main entrance to the Police Headquarters and is itself within the Leek Wootton Conservation Area. There is therefore an overlap between the settings of the Conservation Area and the setting of Woodcote House in this particular location. In terms of the setting of Woodcote House itself, this is now partly destroyed by buildings of the 1960s onwards to the north of the main house. The area to the east, however, does remain open and the development site forms part of this open land which stretches to the east from Woodcote House towards Leek Wootton village itself and the Conservation Area boundary.

##### **2.1.2 Other Heritage Assets including building structures, landscapes, and areas of archaeological remains**

The other level of designation that surrounds Woodcote House is the locally listed park and garden for which a boundary has not yet been determined. At the time Woodcote House was built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the grounds were significantly landscaped towards the north where the land falls away towards a series of small lakes and Woodcote Lane was diverted to incorporate this. Around the house itself a terrace was formed to the north west and to the west which still remains in part. To the east the driveway from East Lodge (which was the original Woodcote Lane) is lined by rhododendrons and larger trees being the main entrance to the house. The development site is partly hidden behind the tree belt of the main drive to the house. This area therefore all originally formed part of the grounds of the main house.

### **2.1.3 Definition, scale and grain of surrounding streetscape, landscape and spaces**

In terms of Woodcote House itself, the access point is via the original drive from Woodcote Lane past the East Lodge cottage. This is a very treed approach to the house and very clearly defined by the heavy planting, particularly at the east end of the driveway. In terms of the driveway approaching the house, development has taken place in the 1950s with housing for Police staff set back from the driveway on a private road. This has clearly changed the original setting of this part of the driveway which would have been visually over open landscape. This is generally to the south side of the drive, although one new house has been built (Broome House) to the west side of the drive adjacent to the grounds of East Lodge. In terms of the approach to the house, many large trees remain and the house still remains as a dominant feature. There is, however, an area of car parking in front of the house between the house and the former stables building which has been described as part of the Woodcote House asset. To the north of the house is a large collection of 1960s and later buildings which clearly do impact on the setting of the house from this side. To the south and north west are the remains of the terrace gardens which currently overlook the golf course which would originally have been part of the grounds of Woodcote House itself.

In terms of the Conservation Area, this is a varied streetscape of timber framed houses, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses with some 20<sup>th</sup> century infill. Woodcote Lane which impacts and is nearest to the development site stretches from the junction of Woodcote Lane with Warwick Road, which has varied timber framed buildings at the junction progressing to the west. The houses are a variety of inter-War and more recent properties with mature boundary treatments which give a distinctive character and enclosure to the approach to East Lodge and the drive to Woodcote House itself which is the full extent of the Conservation Area. Previously described the approach to the Conservation Area along Woodcote Lane from the north west is of a treed enclosed road which is continued with its sense of enclosure to the junction with Warwick Road.

### **2.1.4 Formal design**

Woodcote House, clearly the house was designed within formal grounds in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of the formal grounds, the terraces to the south and north west remain and the driveway from East Lodge which would have been part of the formal layout. The north west beyond the modern Police headquarter buildings are the small lakes which are all part of a formal garden layout, now somewhat detached from the main house by the later developments. In terms of the grounds to the east of the house, this is currently occupied by the forecourt with car parking with the grassed area beyond leading into the development site to the east, looking towards Woodcote Lane

which was diverted by Henry Wise to include this area of land. To the north of the forecourt to the house, are the remains of the stable building now incorporated into later buildings and to the far northwest of the stable building is an avenue of trees leading to an 18<sup>th</sup> century gate which is possibly the remnants of an earlier garden layout for the house which preceded the present Woodcote House. Clearly this is an important aspect of the layout of the original garden and a feature of note within the locally listed park and garden. In terms of formal design, there is clearly a significant element of the formal design of the original grounds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Woodcote House remaining together with this particular aspect of the 18<sup>th</sup> century grounds of the earlier house. In terms of the development site, this would be the area of land due east of the avenue of trees and Woodcote House itself.

In terms of formal layout for the Conservation Area, this is less evident and the village has developed as a linear village with a lane formed around the junction with Woodcote Lane. The church itself has historically always been set back from the road with an area of agricultural land between the road and the church with a narrow pedestrian access to the church itself. Wootton Paddocks which was formally the vicarage is a substantial house to the south of the church set in its own grounds which does have an impact on the village itself. Hill Wootton Road leads off from Warwick Road to the east, retaining walls of an earlier garden enclosure of a house now demolished which is occupied by 1970s dwellings known as the Hamlet.

### **2.1.5 Historic Materials and Surfaces**

In terms of Woodcote House itself, the setting historically would have been perhaps of a formal garden around the house, as previously described, with parkland beyond. In terms of remnants of the parkland, the land due east of the house, between the house and East Lodge and Woodcote Lane is the remaining undeveloped area of parkland now partly used as a sports field by the Police Association. Included within this area of land is the development site adjacent to Woodcote Lane. The area of land, originally possibly kitchen gardens, beyond the former stables site has now been heavily developed with 1960s and 70s buildings and has lost its original surface functions. The land to the south of the house is now a rather manicured golf course formed with much earth movement which originally would have been open countryside/parkland associated with Woodcote House itself. The driveway is now a metal driveway but still retains a rural setting. In terms of the actual Conservation Area, this is formed of village roads, metalled surfaces, pathways, some with retaining granite curbed edging. Areas of the road throughout the village are in part lined with some grass verges and there is still an element of rural character to the roads throughout the village.

### **2.1.6 Land Use**



The uses of the land have already been described, Woodcote House the land around the house would traditionally have been gardens and parkland. The current uses as a Police headquarters have required the forecourt to be enlarged to create a car park area. There is, however, to the east former parkland, now used as a sports field and the development site which is agricultural land beyond, to the boundary with Woodcote Lane. The land use to the south of the house is a golf course, to the north a terrace garden and the former water gardens now somewhat detached from the main house by the 1960s buildings. To the north west of the house are later 1960s Police Headquarters buildings and housing.

In terms of the Conservation Area, the land use obviously is mixed village uses. There is an area of agricultural land to the east of the church which has a significant impact on the setting of the Conservation Area itself. The core of the village is now largely residential with one public house and shop. The school itself has now moved out of the village to a new location outside the Conservation Area to the south. It is therefore very much an area of mixed residential dwellings.

#### **2.1.7 Green Spaces, Trees and Vegetation**

In terms of Woodcote House, although used as Police Headquarters with significant later development in the grounds, many of the mature trees have been retained and the approach to the house has been retained high rhododendron hedges and a strong sense of enclosure much as it would have been when a private dwelling. Woodcote Lane itself retains many mature trees. In terms of green spaces, these have already been identified as the area to the east of the house, partly used as playing field and partly agricultural now the proposed development site. To the south of the house is the golf course and to the north the terraced gardens and remains of the former water garden which still contains many significant trees. Clearly the area to the north west of the house has changed where significant development has taken place. However, of note again is the avenue of trees to the north east of the former stables which are remnant of an earlier garden layout pre-dating the present Woodcote House.

In terms of the Conservation Area, the main green space is the area of agricultural land to the east of the church. There are significant areas of trees, particularly around the Glebe House and leading to Stone Edge which forms a distinctive treed approach into the Conservation Area from the south. Leading out of the Conservation Area to the north west, the road again is very treed.

#### **2.1.8 Functional Relationship and Communications**

In terms of the actual access points to Woodcote House itself, the traditional access via East Lodge has been retained in much of its original setting and still gives access to the house as it traditionally would have. In terms of North Lodge, this also still retains the function

of the secondary lodge, possibly always the service access to the house and currently still a secondary access point into the Police Headquarters itself. The secondary access has, however, been much developed by later buildings relating to the Police Headquarters.

As with the access to the house, the traditional road pattern within the Conservation Area has largely been retained as it historically would have been a linear village. As a linear village, there are two main access points off Warwick Road, one being Woodcote Lane leading to the house, the other being Hill Wootton Road which is now distinguished only in historical terms by the remains of the brick wall formerly to a now to a demolished house.

### **2.1.9 History and Degree of Change over Time**

Taking firstly Woodcote House, this clearly has in terms of function changed from a country house to a headquarters building for the Warwickshire Police. In terms of change to create the headquarters building, this has evolved over time and has already been described. However, to take account of the changes once again, the main drive access to the house is retained much as it would have been with a private dwelling with large trees and rhododendron planting either side of the drive and traditional lodge house retained now as a private dwelling. To the south of the drive, however, are a series of Police houses set well back from the original drive along a private road thus not impacting directly on the original driveway. In terms of the immediate confines of the house, the forecourt has been enlarged to the east to create a significant car park and the stables to the north west of the house completely redeveloped as single storey ancillary buildings retaining the frontage wall to the original stables. To the north west of the stables is an avenue of trees leading to the an 18<sup>th</sup> century gate probably the remains of an earlier garden. . Beyond this to the north are the walls of what would most likely be the kitchen garden, although this is now a car park area. To the north west of the house, significant 1960s more recent developments have taken place, which, with proposed redevelopment of the site, would be removed and hopefully replaced by more sympathetic buildings. To the north is the water garden which still remains with many of its trees. To the south and south west is the golf course which remains as open land although significant earth mounding has taken place from the original layout .

In terms of the Conservation Area itself the linear pattern of the village has been retained with the two main roads of Woodcote Lane and Hill Wootton Road intersecting. There has, however, been significant new development, particularly in the area between Warwick Road and Hill Wootton Road which does not form part of the Conservation Area. Also to the east of Warwick Road more developments have taken place. Generally, the area around the church with the agricultural land in front has retained its original setting with a heavily treed surround to the Glebe House and various small developments and conversions around existing properties along Warwick Road. In terms of the area

of Conservation Area closest to the development site, Woodcote Lane itself is a mixture of inter war and later housing with mature gardens, which again have been largely retained. The interface between Woodcote House and the Conservation Area is at East Lodge where extensions have taken place in a sympathetic manner to retain the original character of the Lodge House as a significant entrance feature to Woodcote House itself. Beyond East Lodge, Woodcote Lane bears off to the north west around the development site. Although this part of Woodcote Lane is out of the Conservation Area, it does form a significant access and egress point to the Conservation Area and therefore the sense of enclosure is an important aspect. To the north side of Woodcote Lane, the former estate houses to Woodcote form part of the Conservation Area but are not generally visible from the road as they are set up on the high bank in the area known as the quarry. A sense of enclosure around the bank is important to the Conservation Area; on the opposite side of the road is the development site to the quarry area. Looking through the development site to the Conservation Area, there are views of various roofs, some of which are within the Conservation Area.

## **2.2 Experience of the Assets**

### **2.2.1 Surrounding Landscape / Townscape Character**

Taking firstly Woodcote House, this has largely been described in the foregoing section. The original character is that of a country house set in grounds largely remodelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but retaining the avenue of trees and 18<sup>th</sup> century gateway, and possibly kitchen garden walls of the earlier house dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The character around the house is still largely that of a house set in its own grounds, although to the north west the significant 20<sup>th</sup> century developments have destroyed the original setting in that direction. To the south/south west and north west, however, there is still a significant area of open landscape, being the formal water gardens and the golf course. The later developments off the driveway are set well back and therefore do not detract from the initial experience when driving up Woodcote Drive from East Lodge. In terms of views out from the forecourt of Woodcote, these are currently over former parkland now playing fields towards the development site which is agricultural land with trees beyond and views of buildings within the Conservation Area. There is, in terms of the experience of Woodcote, still a traditional access drive with the dominance of Woodcote House still being experienced.

### **2.2.2 Views from, towards, through, across and including the assets**

In terms of Woodcote House itself, taking firstly the views from East Lodge along the drive, these as previously described are lined with rhododendrons for the first part of the drive with mature trees set back and mature trees for the length of the drive towards the house itself. This approach has changed little from the original approach to a country house. However, the latter sections of the drive give other

views of Police houses set back from the driveway and of the developments to the north of the house, a more recent date. Hence within the forecourt of the house there are a range of varied views, the house still retains its dominance and to the south are views across the golf course and to the south west similar views with more distant views of the trees around the formal water garden, all of which are relatively unchanged. Views from the forecourt however to the north and north west are of the 20<sup>th</sup> century developments within the grounds which are significantly different to the original setting of the house. Long term development plans for the site do include the removal of these and possible replacement with more sympathetic buildings. The view to the east is across the car park towards the former parkland, now a playing field and the development site which is agricultural land, formerly part of the parkland for the house. This view clearly is relatively unaltered with the exception of the roof tops of some houses in the Quarry off Woodcote Lane which are inter war and later and also estate cottages for the house itself. Broome House, which is a modern development off the drive, is not particularly visible from this vantage point due to the heavy planting along the driveway. Views back from the house towards the south side of the drive bring into visibility the Police houses set back along the drive within their own grounds. In terms of views from Woodcote Lane itself, there are no views of the house from the access to East Lodge; clearly the planting was such that the house was revealed as one progressed up the drive. From Woodcote Lane there are also no direct views as the lane is set within banked sides and there would historically have been a view across from the North Lodge towards the house. This, however, is now largely of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century developments within the site. On entering the Conservation Area via Woodcote Lane there is sense of enclosure. However, there are also clear views across the development site and also views back towards the house before the road sinks between banked verges .

In terms of views from a Conservation Area, there are no real views of Woodcote itself from the Conservation Area; clearly this was a designed element of the grounds of Woodcote House to maintain an element of privacy and also an element of surprise on approaching the house down the driveway. In terms of the area of Conservation Area abutting the development site, the approach down Woodcote Lane has already been discussed as an important treed approach to the Conservation Area before reaching East Lodge itself. There are clear views across the development site at the present time from this approach with banking on the east side with the developments of the quarry hidden behind the banks. Views down Woodcote Lane to the east are of mature gardens towards the junction with Warwick Road and further down are views of the timber framed cottages at the junction and the side gable at the Anchor Public House with another timber framed cottage on the east side of Warwick Road. Looking back in a westerly direction at Woodcote Lane, there are views of East Lodge and the heavily treed area around the entrance to Woodcote itself.

There are other important views within the Conservation Area including the views of the church across open agricultural land. These, however, are not relevant to the current development site which is being assessed. There are also views of Stone Edge and the southern edge of the Conservation Area, again which is not impacted upon by the site in question.

### **2.2.3 Visual dominance, prominence or role as a focal point**

As has already been identified, Woodcote House still retains its visual dominance as a listed building and is still experienced in much the way that it was intended by the progression of the tree lined drive to the views opening out in front of the house itself. Significant elements of this dominance have been eroded by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century developments to the north and west of the house and the loss of the stables as functioning buildings to the immediate north of the houses have also degraded the setting. Adjacent to the stables, the avenue of trees to the 18<sup>th</sup> century gates still retain their visual dominance as does the view to the east from the forecourt of the house across the playing fields to the development site. Although much development has taken place within the grounds of Woodcote, the house itself does still retain significant visual dominance. In terms of the Conservation Area, there is no significant area of visual dominance and the areas of enclosure or open space are in many senses more important to the setting of the Conservation Area than visually dominant elements. The church itself retains its visual dominance by way of the area of open land between it and Warwick Road.

### **2.2.4 Indivisibility with other historic and natural features**

In terms of Woodcote House itself, there is little indivisibility from the house itself into the Conservation Area, although the Conservation Area is experienced from East Lodge along the driveway to the house itself, which still retains much of its original visual character. There are clear views between the open countryside which is now the golf course to the south west of the house itself, and views across the formal water garden and the dominant trees around the water garden.

### **2.2.5 Noise vibration and other pollution or nuisance**

Clearly the setting of Woodcote House as a private house has been significantly altered by the amount of traffic now accessing the site for use as a Police headquarters, and the cars parked within the grounds. There has therefore over the years been a clear change in the noise levels and other forms of pollution by way of the property being used as a headquarters and accessed by many vehicles.

### **2.2.6 Tranquillity, remoteness and wildness**

Originally the house would have been set in its own grounds and would have been accessed by the family and visitors living there. The number of visitors has significantly increased through the Woodcote

site. In terms of the Conservation Area itself, Warwick Road is the main thoroughfare through the village, although not now the main access road between Warwick and Kenilworth, as it historically had been before the Warwick bypass was constructed. Woodcote Lane, past the East Lodge gate to Woodcote House, is less significantly trafficked as this is a minor road running into Kenilworth.

### **2.2.7 Sense of enclosure, seclusion, intimacy or privacy**

The areas of enclosure have already been identified for both the Woodcote House and the Conservation Area. To restate these, Woodcote Lane retains a strong sense of enclosure both in its approach from the village and as approached from the north west. The driveway to Woodcote House itself retains its historical enclosure for a significant part of its length due to the planting which helps to mask the later developments to the south side of the driveway.

### **2.2.8 Dynamism and Activity**

In terms of activity, as a headquarters building, Woodcote House itself has a significantly increased level of activity which is, to an extent, a negative factor in terms of the original setting of the house. The Conservation Area retains a relatively tranquil setting; although Warwick Road is a main road it no longer takes all the traffic between Warwick and Kenilworth as it would have done before the Warwick bypass was constructed.

### **2.2.9 Accessibility, permeability and patterns of movement**

In terms of Woodcote House itself, access has significantly increased by members of the public since it became a Police headquarters after the second world war. As a private country house, there would have been limited access. Access is still, however, limited in terms of it being the Police headquarters and there is no general public access, although the house may be visible from public footpaths which cross the area of land to the south which is now a golf course.

In terms of the Conservation Area, this is quite readily permeable and there are interesting footpaths leading round the church and back past the Glebe House which give a broader experience of the more tranquil areas of the Conservation Area.

### **2.2.10 Degree of interpretation of promotion to the public**

As a headquarters building, Woodcote House is clearly a high security area and therefore it is not publicised to the public, although a small guidebook has been written about the history of the house itself. There are, however, a lot of members of the public who do visit and experience the setting of the house.

In terms of the Conservation Area, this is readily available to the public. A book has been written about the history of the village.

### **2.2.11 A rarity or comparable survival of setting**

This is particularly relevant to Woodcote House itself as this has seen significant changes since the late 1940s when the house became the headquarters for Warwickshire Police. In terms of a rarity and survival, the aspects of the original setting which remain are those which are most important now to be retained or enhanced in terms of the setting of a grade II listed house and also being part of a locally listed park and garden, and adjacent to the Leek Wootton Conservation Area. The main elements of the historical setting which survive are the driveway from East Lodge being lined by Victorian planting with taller trees set back from the drive. The closer approaches to the house do obviously introduce more elements of change to the original settings with the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century developments to the north of the house and the Police house is to the south of the drive. In terms of views from the house, there is still a clear view in an easterly direction across the car park and then parkland/playing fields towards the development site which is agricultural land and the roofs of developments in the quarry area off Woodcote Lane to the east. This view remains relatively unchanged, although historically it would have been all parkland to the junction with Woodcote Lane, with possibly glimpsed views of the estate cottages at the quarry beyond. To the south and south west of the house, the setting again is reasonably unchanged, although off the golf course which has been manicured with earth moving. There are still clear views towards the water garden and the tall trees of the water garden although the modern communications centre is clearly within this view, particularly from the south west of the house. In terms of the rarity within the Conservation Area itself, the aspect close to the areas closest to the development site are Woodcote Lane and the development in the Quarry. These have been developed in the twentieth century and there are houses which now have mature gardens and which border Woodcote Lane and form part of the character of that lane. In terms of unique survival, enclosure is still to an extent maintained to the East Lodge and then the traditional driveway leads on from there. The approach into the Conservation Area is also very similar to that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century approach with the development site on the south side of Woodcote Lane and the estate cottages are hidden behind banking at the quarry on the north side.

## **2.3 The Assets' Associated Attributes**

### **2.3.1 The Associated Relationship between Heritage Assets**

The relationship between the Woodcote House estate and the Conservation Area have already been described and the Conservation Area clearly encompasses the entrance into the estate as being part of the character of that asset, with the grounds to the house being on the local list of parks and gardens and being part of the setting of Woodcote House it

### 2.3.5 Conclusion

How and to what degree setting provided by the development site plays a contribution to the significance of Heritage Assets of Woodcote House as a grade II listed building, Woodcote locally listed park and garden and Leek Wootton Conservation Area.

Bringing together the findings of chapter 2, as to the part played by the development site on the setting of Woodcote House, Woodcote locally listed parks and garden and the Leek Wootton Conservation Area, a conclusion can be drawn.

In terms of Woodcote House itself, there is a strong inter linkage between this and the locally listed park and garden, the boundaries of which have not, to date, been defined. The main driveway to Woodcote House passes by the development site which is to the north of the drive. However, it is not visible from the immediate access point into the drive, due to the heavy Victorian planting of rhododendrons and tall trees. Lodge House is still a relatively dominant element at the entrance point, with the heavy planting leading on to the more open aspect at the arrival point towards the house. The development site is then to the north of the driveway and not generally visible until arriving at the forecourt to the house, which is now a car park. The dominance of the house still draws the visitor and is the main visual point in view, both on arrival along the entrance drive and from the forecourt area. The view has been, to an extent, significantly impacted upon by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century developments to the north; however the views to the south are still over open countryside of the golf course. The views back from the main entrance to the house are across the former parkland now playing fields and across the development site. The development site is separated from the playing field area in front of the house by park style iron railings which may indicate some historical difference of use for this part of the site. However there is clearly an impact on the setting of the house itself and the experience of the grounds around the house of the development site, being clearly within the easterly view towards Woodcote Lane itself. Later developments in the Quarry are visible to the east side of Woodcote Lane but these are softened by the trees above Woodcote Lane itself, and mature garden planting around the properties themselves. Moving around Woodcote to the south and south west side where there are formal terraced gardens, the development site would still be visible from the southern terrace, but would diminish as the nearer to the south western corner of the house and from the south west side of the house there would be no views of the development site as views would be out over towards the water garden and the agricultural land beyond. Given the setting of Woodcote House as being significantly impacted upon by the 20<sup>th</sup> century developments, particularly to the north and to the north west, the settings to the south, south east and south west where they remain relatively intact, are important to the maintenance of the setting of this particular building and also the locally listed park and garden.



In terms of the locally listed park and garden, clearly, historically, the development site was part of the land to the east of Woodcote House and within the ownership of Woodcote House, and clearly part of the original parkland setting to the house itself, the original road having been diverted to include this area of land together with other land to the north and west of the house. Although now divided from the area immediately to the east of the house which is used as playing fields, the two would have been visually one, whereas today the maintenance of the grass in the two sites is quite different and they are now visually distinctly different. This historically would not have been the case.

In terms of the setting of the Conservation Area itself, the development site divides to the north and north west of the most westerly extent of the Conservation Area along Woodcote Lane to the East Lodge and driveway into Woodcote itself. Woodcote Lane at this point takes a turn to the north west and sits within a shallow banked site with more steeply banked sides to the east around the area known as the quarry. This approach into Woodcote Lane and Leek Wootton itself is an important approach being the most rural approach into the village itself. Other approaches have been developed with more recent developments being more prominent, particularly along Warwick Road, both ends of Warwick Road and also Hill Wootton Road, which is heavily developed with 20<sup>th</sup> century houses. There is therefore a uniqueness to the character of Woodcote Lane in terms of this particular approach into the Conservation Area itself. The development site being on the south side of Woodcote Lane at this juncture is an important area of open land along with the playing fields to the east of Woodcote House which have remained undeveloped. This provides a visual buffer between the impact of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development around Woodcote House itself as viewed from Woodcote Lane and the residential developments of the Conservation Area and Woodcote Lane itself, which are softened by the mature gardens and boundary treatments. There is therefore a significance in terms of the development site, in terms of providing this buffer, as well as helping to maintain the most rural approach into the Conservation Area itself.

## **Chapter 3**

### **3. Assessing the effect of the proposed development, using the English Heritage check list**

#### **3.1 Location and Siting of Development**

##### **3.1.1 Proximity to Assets**

This has been outlined in the foregoing sections, however the proximity is that, in terms of Woodcote House itself, it would be due east of the main front of the house between Woodcote Lane on the house itself. In terms of the Conservation Area, it would be adjacent to the Conservation Area's most westerly extremity.

##### **3.1.2 Extent**

The extent of the development would be residential and would occupy the area outlined on the site location plan.

##### **3.1.3 The position in relation to land form.**

As the development is not known in detail, it is assumed that any of the flat pasture land and tree belt area could be developed

##### **3.1.4 Degree to which location will physically or visually isolate assets**

The development site lies between the two identified assets, being Woodcote House and the locally listed park and garden, and the Conservation Area. If developed, there would therefore be a significant new area of development between these two assets, currently the Conservation Area and the locally listed park and garden, and Woodcote House do sit adjacent to each other with areas of open land being in the development site. There would, by developing this site, therefore be an element of isolation of Woodcote itself from the Conservation Area, although the main driveway with the Victorian planting presumably would not be impacted upon by the development and would be screened from the main driveway by this level of planting.

##### **3.1.5 Position in relation to key views**

The development would be in one of the key views from Woodcote House itself in an easterly direction towards the Conservation Area and village of Leek Wootton. Historically, this would have been an open view across parkland to the boundary with Woodcote Lane itself, and with glimpsed views of development at the quarry being the estate houses for Woodcote House itself. By developing this site there could be a very changed view from this particular point at the entrance to Woodcote House itself and one of the vantage points across other aspects of the park and garden around Woodcote House.

In terms of the Conservation Area, there would be an impact on views into the Conservation Area from Woodcote Lane as there are currently views of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century developments adjacent to the north lodge leading up to Woodcote House, there would then be views of housing development at the junction into Leek Wootton itself and the Leek Wootton Conservation Area.

### **3.2 Forms and appearance of the development**

As there are currently no applications for the site, it could just be assumed this would be residential and clearly there would be normal two storey housing.

#### **3.2.2 Changes to skyline.**

In terms of the views from Woodcote House in an easterly direction there would certainly be a change to the skyline in that there would be either domestic properties, domestic roofs visible or a significant tree belt if this were used for mitigation. There would also be changed views to the skyline going in an easterly direction on Woodcote Lane towards the village of Leek Wootton itself. In terms of the approach to Woodcote from the village/Warwick Road it is unlikely the houses would be seen due to existing tree and vegetation cover subject to this remaining in place. It is also unlikely that the housing would be seen when entering the drive to Woodcote due to existing dense planting, however this would be subject to the retention of the planting.

#### **3.2.3 Noise, odour, vibration, dust, etc.**

This is only relevant in the sense of additional dwellings having an access onto Woodcote Lane.

#### **3.2.4 The lighting effects and lights spill.**

Woodcote site now has a lot of buildings where light spillage could be an issue. The provision of further domestic dwellings will to an extent increase any light spillage onto Woodcote Lane, subject to any boundary planting. There would also be light spillage closer to the view to the east from Woodcote House itself. Light spillage however is perhaps not a major problem in this area.

#### **3.2.5 Change to general character (e.g. suburbanising or industrialising).**

The area for development is currently open agricultural land formerly part of the parkland setting of Woodcote House. The proposed development will bring a more residential urbanised character to this

part of the grounds and also to the setting of Leek Wootton Conservation Area being adjacent to the boundary of it. There is already an element of urbanisation by the fact of the police houses to the south side of the drive, however these are well set back and do not immediately impact on the character of the driveway. It is unlikely that the houses would impact immediately on the character of the driveway as this is heavily planted with Rhododendrons and tall trees, however should the planting diminish the urbanising would be clearly visible. In terms of views from Woodcote House itself it is accepted that views to the north and west have been significantly changed by mid-twentieth century buildings, however the introduction of further area of housing to the east would bring urbanisation closer to the Grade II listed building and to the grounds of Woodcote itself.

### **3.2.6 Changes to public access use or amenity.**

The land is not generally publicly accessed therefore would be little change in terms of access to the land although public amenity in terms of the views across Woodcote Lane would be changed.

### **3.2.7 Changes to land use, land cover, tree cover.**

Clearly there will be a change in land use from agricultural parkland to residential. This will impact in the ways that have already been described on the Conservation Area and Woodcote House itself.

### **3.2.8 Changes to archaeological context, soil, chemistry, or hydrology.**

A separate archaeological investigation would need to be carried out if the site were to be included for development.

### **3.2.9 Changes to communication/accessibility/permeability.**

Currently the site is not publically accessible therefore there would be little impact on the way the site is appreciated from access to it. The sites main qualities are as a visual area of open space read in conjunction with other spaces.

## **3.3 Permanence of the development**

### **3.4.1 Anticipated life time.**

Clearly housing development will be permanent and there is little possibility of reversibility. By allowing development in this area the village would have expanded into this part of the grounds of Woodcote House by having crossed Woodcote Lane which currently serves as a boundary to this western part of the village. This is also a historic boundary in that the houses built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as estate cottages were placed on the east side of Woodcote Lane and not within the confines of the grounds of the house purely for visual purposes.

## Chapter 4

### **4. Maximising enhancement and minimising harm.**

The English Heritage Guidance gives a list of measures which could be taken in terms of enhancement may be achieved, these are as follows and only the relevant ones have been investigated in this instance.

#### **4.1 Removing or remodelling intrusive features and replacing detrimental features by new and more harmonious features.**

In the instance of this particular site, there is no record that anything existed on the site that might be restored or anything detrimental that could be removed. The site currently is rather overgrown and visually there is a distinction between the mode area of parkland/sports field and the current site, this historically would not have existed however it is unlikely that development could restore a part of this site back to its original appearance in this way.

#### **4.2 Restoring or revealing lost historic features.**

There is no real capacity to do this as the site would be fully developed for housing and would in fact remove part of the view across the site to Woodcote Lane.

#### **4.4 Introducing a wholly new feature that adds to the public appreciation of the assets**

There is no beneficial element that would add to the appreciation of either Woodcote or the Conservation Area other than enclosing the housing largely by tree belts. Introduction of tree belts would be a possibility particularly in terms of screening the development from the view in an easterly direction from Woodcote House itself. Currently the view is of the open playing field and the development site beyond looking towards the boundary of Woodcote Lane and some rooftops beyond. A tree belt would bring vegetation nearer to Woodcote itself and would enclose the remaining piece of parkland now used as a sports field more closely. As the site is not a particularly large site the provision of tree belts would be limited, possibly would be most beneficial to provide a tree belt between the immediate grounds of Woodcote and the development itself and leave open the views into the site from Woodcote Lane itself. This would clearly make a significant change to the entrance into the village and will also alter the setting of East Lodge which is currently heavily treed and forms a charming entrance into Woodcote itself.

Depending on the long term future of Woodcote House itself, there may be significant redevelopment of the existing mid-twentieth century

building which will have some impact on the land around Woodcote from Woodcote House itself and from the view across the entrance into Leek Wootton from Woodcote Lane. Clearly the views from within the site to the north and west have already been significantly changed and would change again with any form of redevelopment which hopefully would be more sympathetic than the current buildings alongside Woodcote. It is likely that if additional tree planting is used against the redevelopment adjacent to Woodcote, further tree planting in front of development on the site under review could be designed as a continuous element. This would to an extent limit the park and setting of the house both to the north and to the west.

#### **4.5 An Alternative form of development**

In terms of the actual proposals for the site a small group of 5 houses is proposed to the north of East Lodge and 30 houses proposed for the greater part of the site to the north of Broome House .

To form two means of access to these two sites ( setting aside the impact of the proposed development ) would have a destructive impact on Woodcote Lane and the approach to the village. In terms of access to the two sites a single access may be possible off the straight section of Woodcote Lane before it reached the bend and the heavy belt of holly and other trees .

A smaller site incorporating the two sites with one access as previously described has been suggested as an alternative for consideration . This would effectively cut the present development site in half , on a line with the grounds of Broome House ( which is a modern house ) .

## Chapter 5

### 5. Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.

**5.1** This section deals with the weighing up of the degree of harm to the significance of Heritage Assets against the benefits of change including development affecting setting (the publication from English Heritage refers to PPS5, clearly this is now overtaken by the NPPF). The relevant sections of the NPPF to be considered are 132 to 134, Section 132 states substantial harm or loss to a Grade II Listed Park or Garden "should be exceptional", being clearly relevant to the situation under review as in this context we are dealing with a Grade II Listed Building and a locally listed park and garden and Conservation Area which is also classed as a heritage Asset. Mitigation would be by the provision of tree belts either adjacent to the western boundary with Woodcote itself or the eastern boundary along Woodcote Lane would be the main provision in terms of hiding any development. Development which could not to be hidden by trees would need to be specifically designed to suite the location. This could be in the form of in some form of ancillary building to Woodcote House itself. Given there are likely to be other similar building types closer to Woodcote itself when the site is redeveloped at some stage in the future, a provision of a lookalike stable building or a series of estate houses is possible but the limiting . Given that historically estate cottages were placed on the east side of Woodcote Lane away from the house itself, there is a clear indication that there was never historically any intention to have estate cottages other than the two lodges within the grounds of the house itself. There is therefore no real historic context as there may be some historical estates for the proliferation of estate type houses within the grounds of the house itself.

In the context of substantial or less than substantial harm, the harm to the setting of the Assets from the analysis of this Settings exercise it can be quantified as follows:-

- The view looking east from the front entrance and forecourt of Woodcote itself would be significantly changed either by the view of housing development or of a tree belt planted to mitigate against the views of the development. Views into Leek Wootton Conservation Area from Woodcote Lane travelling in an easterly direction would be affected by the housing development which would be visible across what is now an open view towards the drive of Woodcote House. View would be reduced as the road turns in a southerly direction towards the lodge and the development site is less visible by nature of the banking of the sides of the lane.
- In terms of the grounds around which are locally listed park and garden, although the boundaries have not been drawn the area of land between Woodcote itself and Woodcote Lane was clearly all part of the original estate and formed part of the original setting of Woodcote House as rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the road was diverted to include this land. There is clear evidence of a garden layout with the avenue of trees running in a northerly direction to

the 18<sup>th</sup> century gateway and former walled garden. The setting of these historical elements of the garden would be impacted upon by the housing development which would bring development closer to these elements .

- The grounds of Woodcote House have been significantly impacted upon by development in the mid-twentieth century as part of the Warwickshire Police Headquarters. Significant changes have taken place in certain areas of the grounds from that which existed when the property was a private country house. Similarly, although an open aspect has been retained on the south side, this has now become a golf course and clearly the management of the land has changed although the open aspect has been retained.
- The progress of the arrival to Woodcote House was clearly a designed element as East Lodge is placed at the head of Woodcote Lane driving out of Leek Wootton village giving access to the grounds with a lane bearing off to the north west. Once in the grounds, there are views of the attractive East Lodge which has been carefully restored and extended together with heavy Victorian planting which has been retained, the planting includes Rhododendrons and taller trees. The house not being visible at first arrival is glimpsed through the trees as progression is made up the drive with a wider aspect of the house coming into view as progression is made up the drive. Clearly the mid-twentieth century developments also come into view although the dominance of Woodcote itself is still maintained. Once into forecourt, there are views of the front of the house in a westerly direction, views of the open aspect of the golf course southerly and in an easterly direction a view across the parkland/playing fields towards the development site and the vegetation along Woodcote Lane with some house roofs visible in the far distance. It is this view that would be changed were development to take place in terms of the whole experience of Woodcote House from arriving at East Lodge to the front of the house itself.

Taking into account these four points , there have clearly been many changes within the grounds of Woodcote since it became a Police Headquarters over 50 years ago. However, the basic structure of the park and open aspects to the house have been retained and the view to the east forms part of those areas which are still relatively intact. Given that there has already been significant development within the park, the harm created by the housing development is less than substantial to the overall park and setting of the listed building and conservation area .

Given the harm is quantified as less than substantial, paragraph 134 of the NPPF should be taken into account which states "where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing optimum viable use".



Given the development is for housing, there is clearly a public benefit in terms of housing provision at Leek Wootton itself. In this circumstance I have given consideration to the alternative proposal set out in section 4.5 above where a lesser number of houses are proposed on a smaller site with one vehicular access rather than the two for the two sites which made up the original proposal. The impact of such a reduced development will still have much the same impact on the easterly view from the front of Woodcote House but could be mitigated by a tree belt which is set further back within the site, thus still retaining an area of land beyond the iron park fence as open land. A tree belt of suitable mature trees would be needed at the outset designed in a very careful manner to make this at all acceptable.

In terms of the impact of such a scheme on Woodcote Lane and the boundaries around the site, the access point would be reduced to a single access at a point described in 4.5 above. This would allow for most of the dense boundary treatment to be retained. This form of layout would need to be the subject of a carefully prepared design brief for this site which reduced the impact of the single access and ensured that as many houses as possible, particularly at the east end of the site are off private drives (to reduce the impact of the access road itself on the site).

Such a form of development could be acceptable under the terms of section 134 of the NPPF given that public benefit in this particular village, may outweigh the less than substantial harm to the historic assets that have formed the basis of this study.

