

**Woodlands Castle,
Taunton, Somerset**
Heritage Statement

DRAFT - NOT FOR PLANNING

Client: ABBEY MANOR GROUP &
BELSTONE FOX LTD

AB Heritage Project No:60579

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Woodlands Castle, Taunton, Somerset Heritage Statement

Client Abbey Manor Group & Belstone Fox Ltd
Project Number 60579
Prepared By Paul Cooke
Illustrated By Pighill Illustrations
Approved By Daniel Dodds

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Enquiries To:

AB Heritage Limited (Head Office)
Jarrow Business Centre, Rolling Mill Road
Jarrow, South Tyneside, NE32 3DT
Email: info@abheritage.co.uk
Tel: 03333 440 206



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 AB Heritage Ltd (hereafter AB Heritage) has been commissioned by the Abbey Manor Group and Belstone Fox Ltd to produce a Heritage Statement to cover proposed development within the grounds of Woodlands Castle (formerly Woodlands House), a Grade II Listed Building situated between the outskirts of Taunton to the west, and the village of Ruishton to the east.
- 1.1.2 This report has been requested by the client in order to help them better understand the likely heritage implications of their initial designs in advance of a formal planning application.

1.2 Statutory Designations

- 1.2.1 Woodlands Castle is a Grade II Listed Building, which was listed on 12th October 1978 (National Heritage List for England, 2018, List Entry Number: 1344556). The property was formerly known as Woodlands House, which is its Listing title.
- 1.2.2 The National Heritage List for England (NHLE) List entry comprises the house and adjoining stable block. The house is described as being constructed *c. 1810, remodelled and enlarged by Richard Carver c. 1833 for Mrs Lock... A good example of the Tudor style villa, unaltered apart from verandah and typical of this local architect* (abbreviated from full List entry).

1.3 Site Location & Description

- 1.3.1 The proposed site consists of the c. 12 acres of land surrounding the property, located at Woodlands Castle, Ruishton Lane, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 5LU (Figure 1). The approximate National Grid Reference (NGR) for this property is ST 26051 24800.
- 1.3.2 The property and its curtilage consist of:
- The main house, with an enclosed courtyard at its north edge, bounded by a range of stone and brick buildings;
 - A large pavilion and patio area to the east of the courtyard arrangement, with an adjoining covered walkway connecting it to the rear (north) of the house;
 - An access road leading to the property from Ruishton Lane to the north-west, as well as three linear car-parking areas north-west of the building complex; and
 - Open areas containing garden beds, lawns and meadow areas with sparse mature tree-cover surrounding the building complex, with a plot containing a single structure to the north-east separated by the access road and car-parks.
- 1.3.3 The southern edge of the Woodlands Castle estate is bounded by the A358, while its northern and western boundaries are formed by Ruishton Lane. The eastern edge of the estate is formed by field boundaries.
- 1.3.4 Further afield, the western extent of Ruishton village lies as close as c. 30m from the eastern boundary of the site, while Junction 25 of the M5 lies c. 375m west of the site boundary.

1.4 Proposed Development

1.4.1 The current outline proposal is for a mixed-use scheme comprising the following (Figure 2):

- The construction of three timber-framed commercial units and associated parking and access in the north-west of the site;
- The provision of a new road running to the north of Woodlands Castle providing access to the eastern half of the site;
- The construction of c. 15 bungalows forming a care village at the east side of site;
- Construction of a two-storey 40 bed care home in the south-east corner of the site; and
- The provision of an additional entrance from Ruishton Lane in the south-west corner of the site, with associated parking.

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2. AIMS & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 NPPF paragraph 189 requires local planning authorities to request descriptions on the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. This states that:

'The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'

- 2.1.2 The aim of this report is to facilitate such a process by understanding the historical development of the application site and the likely impact upon any surviving heritage assets resulting from the proposed development, devising appropriate mitigation responses where necessary.

2.2 Data Collation

- 2.2.1 The assessment has been carried out, in regard to the collation of baseline information, in line with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (January 2017) and the Historic England guide to The Setting of Heritage Assets (2015).

- 2.2.2 This assessment includes relevant information contained in various statutory requirements, national, regional and local planning policies and professional good practice guidance, including:

- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990
- The National Planning Policy Framework, 2018

- 2.2.3 The Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of information concerning the current state of archaeological and architectural knowledge in this area. A study radius of 750m was deemed the most appropriate to assess any cultural heritage assets which could potentially be affected by the proposed development.

- 2.2.4 This information was supported by examination of data from a range of other sources, principally:

- Heritage Gateway for information from the Historic England National Monuments Record and the National Heritage List for England;
- Pastscape and other research resources, including the National Archives and British History Online;
- A site visit was undertaken on 22nd November 2018 by Paul Cooke (Assistant Heritage Consultant, AB Heritage). During the visit, an inspection of Woodlands Castle and its associated buildings and grounds was made and views into and out of the estate were

noted and digitally photographed using a Canon EOS1100D DSLR 12.2 Megapixel camera with a CMOS sensor; and

- Additional relevant documentary resources at the Somerset Heritage Centre were accessed on the 22nd November 2018.

2.2.5 Information from these sources was used to provide a greater understanding of:

- Local statutory designated sites;
- Key cultural heritage issues of the proposed development site and surrounding area;
- The impact of the proposed development on the known and potential cultural heritage resource.

2.3 Assessment of the Cultural Heritage Resource

2.3.1 The importance of identified cultural heritage resources is determined by reference to existing designations (Table 1, below).

Table 1: Assessing the Importance of a Cultural Heritage Site

SCALE OF SITE IMPORTANCE	
NATIONAL	The highest status of site, e.g. Scheduled Monuments (or undesignated assets of schedulable quality and importance). Grade I and Grade II* Listed Buildings. Other listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations not adequately reflected in the listing grade. Conservation Areas containing very important buildings. Undesignated structures of clear national importance. Extremely well-preserved historic landscape, whether inscribed or not, with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factor(s).
REGIONAL	Grade II Listed Buildings or other designated or undesignated archaeological sites (in addition to those listed above), or assets of a reasonably defined extent and significance, or reasonable evidence of occupation / settlement, ritual, industrial activity etc. Examples may include areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character, burial sites, deserted medieval villages, Roman roads and dense scatter of finds.
LOCAL	Evidence of human activity more limited in historic value than the examples above, or compromised by poor preservation and/or survival of context associations, though which still have the potential to contribute to local research objectives. Examples include sites such as 'locally designated' buildings or undesignated structures / buildings of limited historic merit, out-of-situ archaeological findspots / ephemeral archaeological evidence and historic field systems and boundaries etc.
NEGLIGIBLE	Assets with very little or no surviving archaeological interest. Examples include destroyed antiquities, structures of almost no architectural / historic merit, buildings of an intrusive character or relatively modern / common landscape features such as quarries, drains and ponds etc.
UNKNOWN	Insufficient information exists to assess the importance of a feature (e.g. unidentified features on aerial photographs).

2.3.2 For some types of finds or remains there is no consistent value and the importance may vary, for example Grade II Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. For this reason, adjustments are occasionally made, where appropriate, based on professional judgement.

2.4 Impact Assessment Criteria

- 2.4.1 The magnitude of impact upon the archaeological and heritage resource, which can be considered in terms of direct and indirect impacts, is determined by identifying the level of effect from the proposed development upon the baseline conditions of the site and the cultural heritage resource identified. The criteria for assessing the magnitude of impact are set out in Table 2 (below).
- 2.4.2 In certain cases, it is not possible to confirm the magnitude of impact upon a cultural heritage resource, especially where anticipated buried deposits exist. Where possible a professional judgement as to the scale of such impacts is applied to enable the likely 'Significance of Effects' to be established; however, a magnitude level of 'uncertain' is included for situations where it is simply not appropriate to make such a judgement at this stage of works.

Table 2: Criteria for Determining Magnitude of Impact

IMPACT LEVEL	DEFINITION
HIGH	Changes to most or all of the key archaeological or key heritage baseline elements, or comprehensive changes to the setting of such key features that lead to total or almost complete alteration of a features physical structure, dramatic visual alteration to the setting of a heritage asset, or almost comprehensive variation to aspects such as noise, access, or visual amenity of the historic landscape.
MEDIUM	Changes to many key archaeological materials/historic elements, or their setting, such that the baseline resource is clearly modified. This includes considerable visual change to many key aspects of the historic landscape, noticeable differences in noise or sound quality, and considerable changes to use or access changes to key historic landscape elements
LOW	Detectable impacts which alter the baseline condition of an archaeological or heritage receptor to a slight degree – e.g. a small proportion of the surviving heritage resource is altered; slight alterations to the setting or structure, or limited changes to aspects such as noise levels, use or access that results in limited changes to historic landscape character.
NEGLIGIBLE	Barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site, possibly because of distance from the development, method of construction or landscape or ecological planting, that are thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of a resource.
UNCERTAIN	Extent / nature of the resource is unknown and the magnitude of change cannot be ascertained.

- 2.4.3 The overall Significance of Effects from the proposed development upon the Cultural Heritage Resource is determined by correlating the magnitude of Impact against value of the Cultural Heritage resource. Table 3 highlights the criteria for assessing the overall Significance of Effects. Where effects are moderate or above these are classified as significant.

Table 3: Significance of Effects

IMPORTANCE	MAGNITUDE			
	HIGH	MED	LOW	NEG
NATIONAL	Severe	Major	Mod	Minor
REGIONAL	Major	Mod	Minor	Not Sig.
LOCAL	Mod	Minor	Minor	Not Sig.
NEGLIGIBLE	Minor	Not Sig.	Not Sig.	Nt.

Not Sig. = Not Significant; Nt. = Neutral; Mod = Moderate; Ext. = Extensive

2.5 Limitations

- 2.5.1 It should be noted that the report has been prepared under the express instruction and solely for the use of Abbey Manor Group and Belstone Fox Ltd, and any associated parties they elect to share this information with. Measurements and distances referred to in the report should be taken as approximations only and should not be used for detailed design purposes.
- 2.5.2 All the work carried out in this report is based upon the professional knowledge and understanding of AB Heritage on current (November 2018) and relevant United Kingdom standards and codes, technology and legislation. Changes in these areas may occur in the future and cause changes to the conclusions, advice, recommendations or design given. AB Heritage does not accept responsibility for advising the client's or associated parties of the facts or implications of any such changes in the future.
- 2.5.3 This report has been prepared utilising factual information obtained from third party sources. AB Heritage takes no responsibility for the accuracy of such information. It should also be noted that this report represents an early stage of a phased approach to assessing the archaeological and cultural heritage resource of the application site to allow the development of an appropriate mitigation strategy, should this be required. It does not comprise mitigation of impacts in itself.
- 2.5.4 At the request of the client, due to the early nature of the proposal, no consultation was carried out with the Local Planning Authority Conservation Team.

3. HERITAGE REVIEW OF SITE

3.1 Historic Development of Site

- 3.1.1 Archaeological work within the study radius, such as at the Park & Ride site c. 50m south of the site boundary, has revealed evidence of early occupation spanning the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman periods (Somerset HER entry 28213).
- 3.1.2 Medieval settlement of the local area is indicated by the survival of Norman architectural elements within the Grade I Listed Church of St. George (NHLE List Entry Number: 1177015), located c. 350m north-east of the site in the village of Ruishton. Ruishton is mentioned in the 14th century (Page, 1911), and there is no reason to assume this settlement hasn't been occupied from the early Medieval period to the present day.
- 3.1.3 Woodlands Castle, formerly Woodlands House, is described in the NHLE listing as being originally constructed c. 1810, and it is clearly present on the 1840s Tithe map (Plate 1) (Know Your Place, 2018).

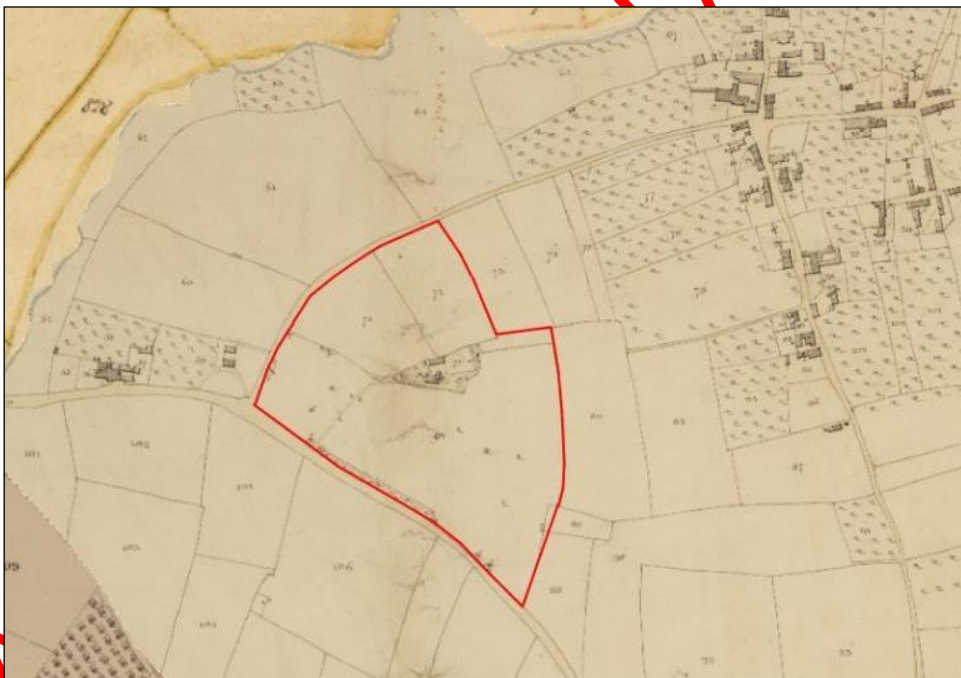


Plate 1: 1841 Tithe map

- 3.1.4 This map shows a property occupying the current location of Woodlands Castle, with a separate building immediately to its north. The plot is accessed via a lane which runs off the road to Henlade (now the A386) to the east of Ruishton Lane.
- 3.1.5 The 1842 tithe apportionments list the house and small square plot to its east (70) as 'House, Garden, Plantation', occupied by Charles & Maria Maher and owned by Elizabeth Lock, likely to be the Mrs Lock referred to in the NHLE Listing Entry. The large plot to the south of the house (69), is listed as 'lawn (meadow)', with the same owner and occupiers (Somerset Heritage Centre, 2018).

- 3.1.6 Plots 70 & 71 to the north-west of the house are listed as arable, with different owners and occupiers to the house and lawn (*ibid*).
- 3.1.7 According to the 1842 tithe apportionment much of the surrounding land is shown as pasture, arable fields and orchards, with the exception of Ruishton to the east and a small cluster of buildings beginning west of Ruishton Lane, c. 80m west of the site.
- 3.1.8 The Kelly's Directory of Somerset 1861 mentions Woodlands House in its entry for Ruishton, stating: 'Woodlands, the seat of Major the Hon. Charles Napier, is a pretty villa residence, situate in well laid-out grounds, and commands a fine view of the Cothelstone Hills' (Cothelstone Hill is located c. 10.3km to the north-west of the site) (Somerset Heritage Centre, 2018).
- 3.1.9 This entry is repeated in 1866, but not in 1872, although it is still owned by Major the Hon. Charles Napier, and in 1875 a smaller entry describing the house (without mentioning the views) lists it as being 'the seat of the Hon. Mrs Napier'. In 1883 it is then listed as the residence of James and Edward Hardwill, Esqrs (*ibid*).
- 3.1.10 The 1888 publication 25-inch Ordnance Survey map appears to show the property enlarged from the depiction on the tithe map (Plate 2).

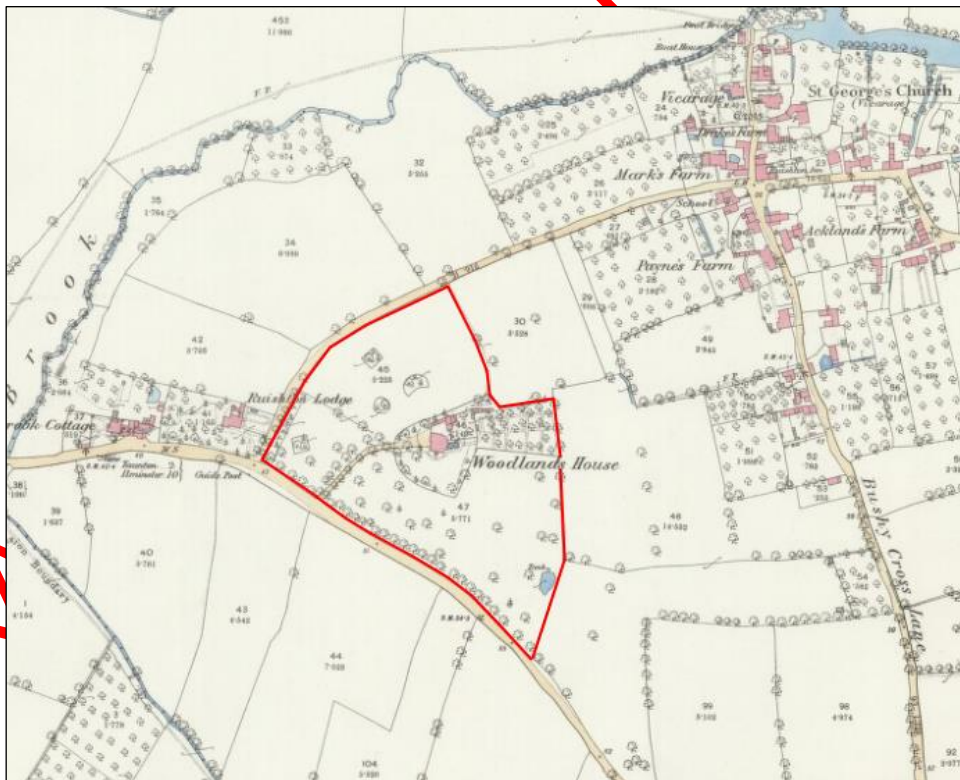


Plate 2: 1888 publication 25" OS Map

- 3.1.11 The main property is clearly marked as *Woodlands House* and appears increased in size, as well as gaining further outbuildings to its north and north-west, in a configuration recognisable from the current complex. An apparent conservatory lies against the east elevation of the house.

- 3.1.12 The markings on the map show that the two former plots at the northern limit of the site boundary are part of the estate, which is supported by the apparent removal of the former field boundary and the depiction of small stands of trees. Trees are depicted throughout the estate, including forming an apparent plantation to the east of the house, as well as lining a southern lawn, the road to Henlade (modern A368) and the southern end of Ruishton Lane (perhaps in response to the construction of *Ruishton Lodge* across the lane to the west). A pond is also shown at the south-east corner of the estate.
- 3.1.13 It is unclear whether the expansion of the house, grounds and outbuildings relates to the 1830s work described in the NHLE entry which were not accurately mapped on the 1841 title map, or whether these constitute another phase, perhaps relating to the occupancy of the Napiers, when the Kelly Directory remarks upon the 'well laid out grounds'.
- 3.1.14 The 1904 publication 25" OS map shows the site in a similar state to that depicted on Plate 2, however the plantation to the east of the main building complex has been removed and two plots of uncertain purpose are now visible.
- 3.1.15 To the south, c. 120m from the site boundary, the Grade II Listed Building *Ruishton House* can be seen to have been constructed.

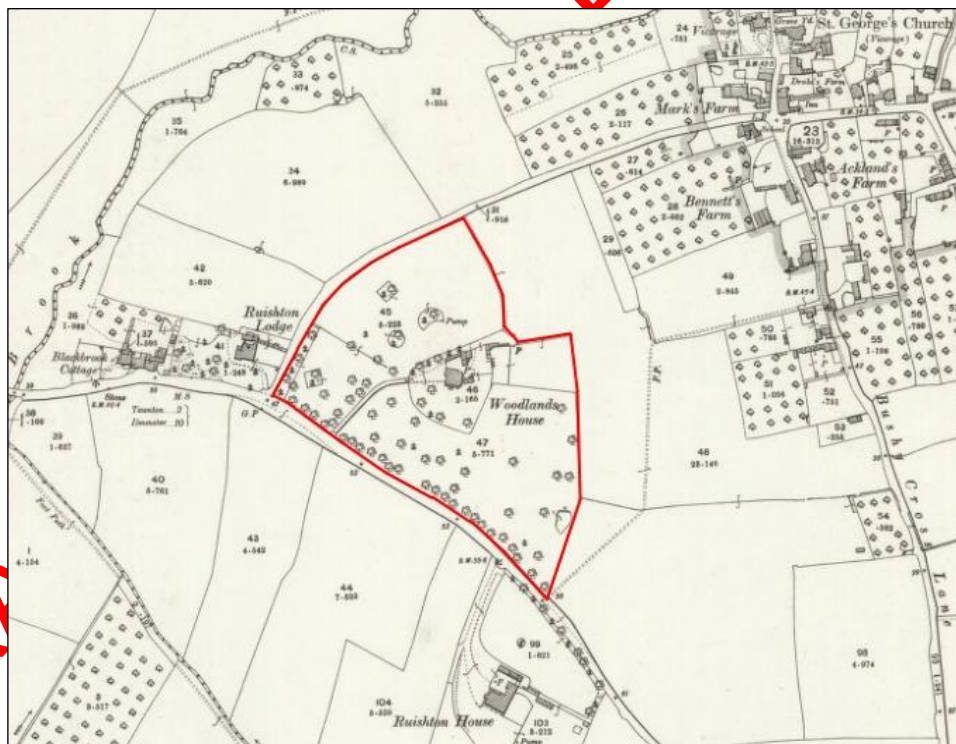


Plate 3: 1904 publication 25" OS map

- 3.1.16 The 1914 publication 25" OS map (not depicted) shows the site in much the same form as seen on Plate 3, with the exception of some small sub-divisions of unclear form and function in the gap between the ancillary buildings to the north-west of the main house, as well as a small building at the eastern edge of the plot. These are all still visible on the 1930 publication OS map (Plate 4), which also shows a small structure at the east edge of the lawn.

3.1.17 Plate 4 also depicts the construction of a pair of buildings c. 25m east of the site boundary, the still extant *Ruishton Lane Cottages*.

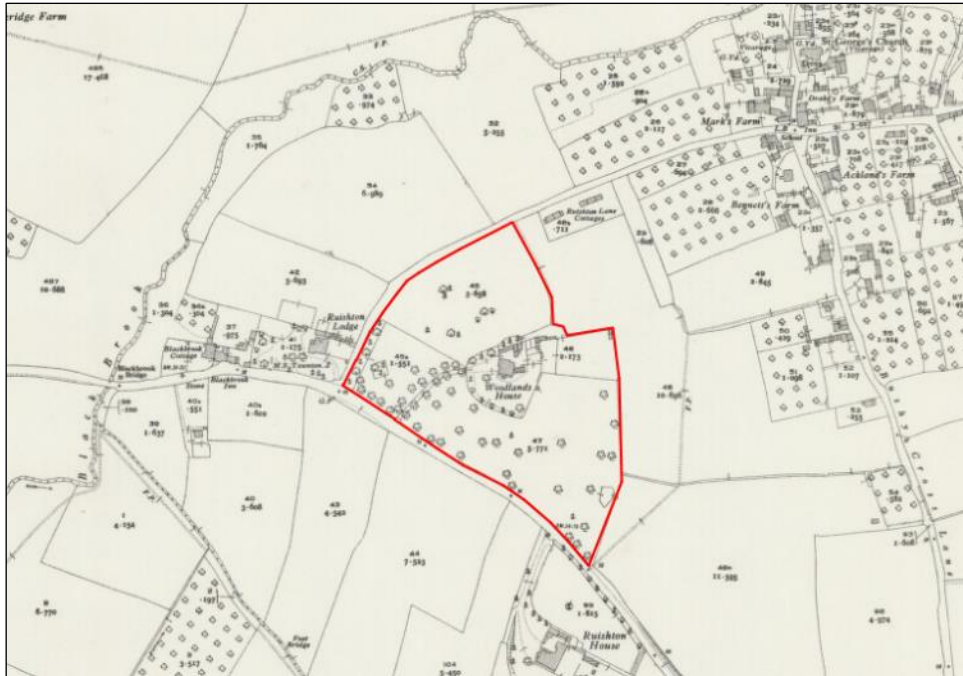


Plate 4: 1930 publication 25" OS map

3.1.18 While at a larger scale, the 1:25,000 scale 1959 OS map of Great Britain depicts the site as nearly entirely unchanged, down to the plot boundaries, and including the small building at the east boundary (Plate 5). The only apparent change from Plate 4 is the depiction of a building in the northern corner of the site.

3.1.19 The Historic Imagery feature on Google Earth demonstrates recent changes to facilitate the use of the property as a wedding venue occurred between 2010 and 2013.

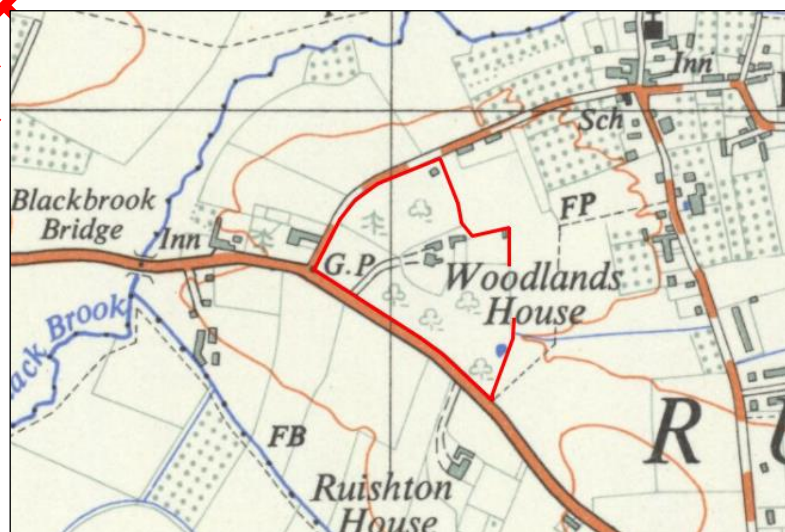


Plate 5: 1959 publication 1:25,000 OS map

4. SITE VISIT

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 A site visit was undertaken by Paul Cooke (Assistant Heritage Consultant, AB Heritage) on the 23rd November 2018. The purpose of the site visit was to better understand the heritage significance and setting of Woodlands Castle and its associated grounds, as well as to assess any likely impacts upon other nearby heritage assets.

4.2 Woodlands Castle Exterior and Outbuildings

- 4.2.1 Woodlands Castle is currently accessed via a road from Ruishton Lane at the northern edge of site, which leads to three linear car-parks before arriving at a tarmacked area in front of the western elevation (Photo 1).



Photo 1: Western elevation of Woodlands Castle

- 4.2.2 The western elevation appears in good condition. The courtyard wall with crenellations which leads NNW from the main house, and slightly asymmetrical projection of the northern wing of the house, are likely to date to the changes visible on Plate 2. It is unclear whether the bay window, or basement windows, are later insertions, as these aren't arranged as symmetrically as the other windows in this elevation, which also feature identical moulding above them.
- 4.2.3 The southern elevation, aside from a broken pane on the second floor and some faded paintwork, also appears in good condition (Photo 2). The symmetry, style of the windows and survival of details such as the moulding above the windows suggests this has seen minimal work since the original re-build.
- 4.2.4 It is considered likely from its arrangement and design that the southern elevation is the principal elevation from which the building was designed to be appreciated, especially in conjunction with the landscaped lawn which it overlooks.



Photo 2: Southern elevation of Woodlands Castle

- 4.2.5 The eastern elevation of Woodlands Castle is largely obscured by external structures, most of which appear to be modern in origin, such as the pavilion and covered walkways leading both east from the house and south from the pavilion (Photo 3). These also obscure a small brick building (Photo 4). The brick wall east of the pavilion is likely to survive from a former north-south aligned range of buildings visible on Plates 3 & 4 and has been extended previously.
- 4.2.6 The eastern aspect of Woodlands Castle exhibits many of the same features as the western and southern elevations, such as the moulding above the windows, but the layout of the window positions and the elevation itself is asymmetrical and betrays what is likely to be different construction phases, as visible between Plates 1 and 2.



Photo 3: Eastern elevation of Woodlands Castle



Photo 4: Brick building between Woodlands Castle and pavilion

- 4.2.7 The northern elevation of Woodlands Castle is noticeably different to the other elevations (Photo 5). Beyond the slightly more weathered appearance of the paintwork and window-frames, several key contrasts are discernible. The windows are small and narrow, and lack much of the symmetry and the moulding seen in the other elevations. Furthermore, the construction materials are still visible; rough-shaped stone forms the main northern wing visible, while the southern wing (set further back at the left of Photo 5) is built from brick. Closer inspection of some of the brick-work found it to be very roughly pointed, although this may be the result of later work in that specific area (Photo 6).
- 4.2.8 Inspection of the stone-built wing showed all the windows to have brick arches and sides, while the small porch (centre bottom of Photo 5) and the courtyard gateway wall (Photo 7) are also brick-built.

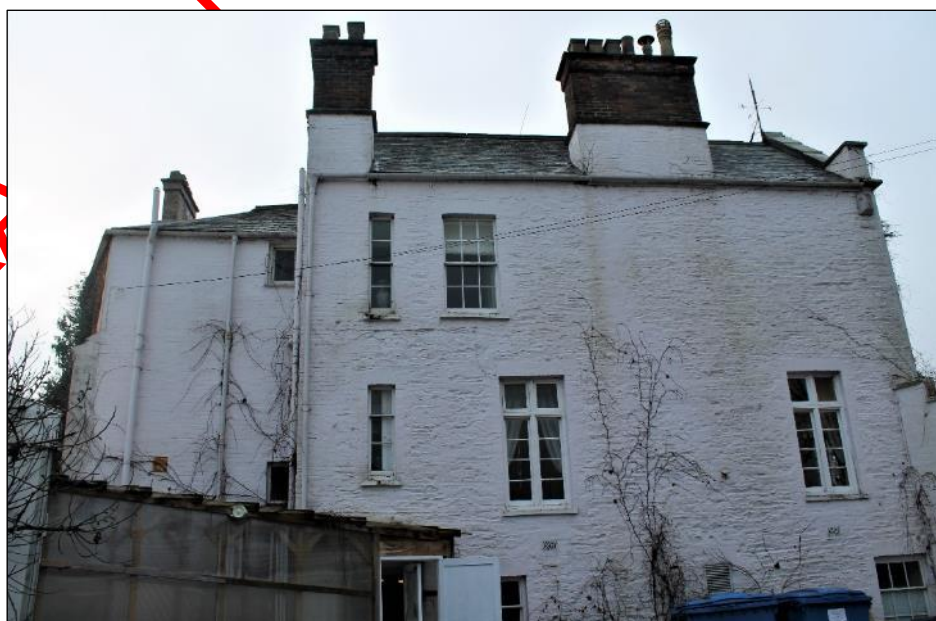


Photo 5: Northern elevation of Woodlands Castle (view from courtyard)



Photo 6: Brick porch and rough pointing, southern elevation of Woodlands Castle



Photo 7: Inside of courtyard gateway, eastern elevation

- 4.2.9 The range of buildings visible on the right of Photo 7 are likely to be the remains of the stable block included in the Listing entry and which appear to be present on the tithe map (Plate 1). These have been modernised to varying extents, with a new roof, uPVC windows, and render on the southern elevation; however, their likely original appearance is still visible along their northern elevation (Photo 8).



Photo 8: North facing elevation of stable buildings

4.2.10 The rise in height visible at the eastern end of this building range (left of Photo 8) corresponds with a collection of four different sized buildings visible on Plates 2 – 4. These are of mixed stone and brick construction (Photo 8).

4.2.11 The yard itself is cobbled (Photos 7). The full interiors of all the buildings around the courtyard was not inspected, however the original stable range had, at its western end, a modern toilet, while the next room had brick partitions and a stone floor.

4.3 Woodlands Castle Interior

4.3.1 The main entrance to the house is via the western elevation, with a porch and steps leading to the entrance hall of the ground floor, including the main staircase (Photo 9).



Photo 9: View from inside western entrance

- 4.3.2 Both the ground floor and first floor appear to be in good condition, and exhibit an array of apparently historic features, such as dado rails, brass picture and curtain rails, moulded doors and frames, ornate plaster moulding, wooden heater covers, etc (Photos 10 – 11).



Photo 10: Decorated plaster moulding, ground floor



Photo 11: Historic features, ground floor

- 4.3.3 Details such as differing fireplace designs (including brick-built, marble / marble effect, gas replacements (Photo 12) and completely blocked), demonstrate that the historic design and decorative features are likely to represent multiple phases of alteration.



Photo 12: Gas fire insertion into possible former fireplace, first floor

- 4.3.4 Modern insertions in the ground and first floors are limited in nature, consisting primarily of modern electrics and heaters, security systems, boilers and toilets. The public gents' toilets on the first floor are a good example of modern alterations covering, but not appearing to replace, earlier fabric.
- 4.3.5 The basement level of the house is currently used to facilitate the operation of the property as a wedding venue, and as such consists of kitchens, store-rooms and a laundry room (Photo 13).



Photo 13: Main basement kitchen

- 4.3.6 As a result of the functional role of the basement, historic features and fabric were largely lacking, although apparently historic wooden latched doors were present, while brick floors

were still exposed in places. In one store-room, the rear stone wall and with brick-wall partitions were visible (Photo 14).



Photo 14: Stone and brick walls in basement store-room

- 4.3.7 The second floor / attic of the property appears to be in the process of being converted into a self-contained flat. Much of the space has had new flooring and wall / ceiling surfaces added (Photos 15 – 16).



Photo 15: Second floor room, modernised but with metal fireplace and wooden window-frames



Photo 16: Second floor room in process of being modernised

4.3.8 Where gaps remain, original fabric can be seen to survive below the contemporary surfaces. Historic features survive in the form of a metal fireplace (Photo 15), a wooden door into the rest of the attic space, and wooden window frames (Photo 15). The frames and windows were in mixed condition, with one pane broken, all frames with varying degrees of paint flaking off, and some of the metal handles showing signs of rust. These overlook the south and west of the site only.

4.4 Woodlands Castle Grounds

4.4.1 From a vantage point to the south of the house, the designed landscape is characterised by open grassed areas, with sparse mature trees, and bounded by mature trees which screen the A386 to the south (Photo 17).



Photo 17: View towards Woodlands Castle from south-east

- 4.4.2 Beyond the house to the west is a similar area of open grass and sparse mature and ornamental trees (Photo 18).



Photo 18: Western area of site, view from north

- 4.4.3 This gives way at the north of the house to an area set aside for guest parking for the wedding venue, comprised of gravelled parking bays and two all-weather access tracks (Photo 19).



Photo 19: Car-parking areas, view from south

- 4.4.4 To the NE of the house and bounded by Ruishton Lane to the north is an open grassed area, with some saplings along its edges and a low hedge along its north and east edges. This contains a former scout hut in its north-east corner, likely to be the structure depicted on Plate 5 (Photo 20).



Photo 20: North-eastern plot, view from south-east

- 4.4.5 To the east of the house is an open grassed area used as a football pitch. This is bordered by a mixture of mature trees and an earth bund (Photo 21).



Photo 21: Land east of Woodlands Castle, view from north

Views out from Woodlands Castle

- 4.4.6 Views south from Woodlands Castle are largely restricted by the trees which line the garden, as well as the southern site boundary with the A386, which is also embanked as it runs east (Photo 22). As a result of this, despite being located only c. 120m to the south of the site, there are no views to the GII Listed property of Ruishton House or its grounds (Photo 23).



Photo 22: View south from the south of Woodlands Castle



Photo 23: View south-east from Woodlands Castle

4.4.7 Views east from Woodlands Castle are similarly reduced by the presence of the pavilion, mature trees and an earthen bund (Photo 24). What glimpsed views there are consist primarily of the modern houses at the west of Ruishton village.



Photo 24: Bund at the east end of the site

- 4.4.8 There are views to the north from the upper floors of Woodlands Castle, although these are restricted to the north-east and north-west, by the presence of mature trees. Photo 25 shows the view back towards the property to best illustrate this.



Photo 25: View to Woodlands Castle from the north

- 4.4.9 Views west from Woodlands Castle are similar to those to the south, being limited in nature due to mature trees located along the current drive, the former drive, and the site boundaries (Photo 26).



Photo 26: View west from Woodlands Castle

Summary

4.4.10 The views from Woodlands Castle can be summarised as follows:

- View to South: Restricted by trees around the lawn c. 30m south of the house and boundary planting c. 70m south of the house;
- View to West: Restricted by mature planting bordering the lawn and drive c. 20m and 50m west of the house, as well as further mature trees beyond. Glimpsed views of Premier Inn c. 165m from house;
- View to North: Unrestricted from the first floor of the house, restricted to the north-east and north-west by mature trees; and
- View to East: Restricted by planting and embankment c. 90m to the east of the house. Glimpsed views of modern housing.

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5. SETTING OF RELEVANT HERITAGE ASSETS

5.1 Heritage Assets affected by the Proposed Development

5.1.1 Based on the site visit, the heritage assets deemed to be potentially affected by the development proposals are:

- The setting of Woodlands Castle and stable block adjoining (NHLE List Entry Number 1344556)

5.1.2 During the site visit, an examination of the views out of the grounds of Woodlands Castle (see Section 4.4, above), indicated that settings of the outlying Heritage Assets such as Ruishton House, or the Church in Ruishton Village, would be unaffected by the proposed development. This was further tested by visiting each of these and visually assessing for any likely settings impact. The overriding assessment was for visual impact, as distance and/or intervening development rendered other setting considerations irrelevant.

5.2 Heritage Importance of Woodlands Castle

5.2.1 As a Grade II Listed Building, Woodlands Castle and its adjoining stable block is considered to be a heritage asset of National Importance (in line with Table 1). This is because of the exceptional nature of its preservation combined with the survival of much of its immediate historic setting.

5.2.2 It is considered that this asset derives its primary heritage importance from its architectural design, with the NHLE Listing commenting that the house is 'A good example of the Tudor style villa, unaltered apart from verandah and typical of this local architect' (NHLE List Entry Number 1344556).

5.2.3 Its good preservation, and apparent survival of much of its planform as well as internal features demonstrating two centuries of use as a relatively opulent and well-maintained country house are also considered to contribute to its heritage importance.

5.2.4 The heritage review of the site demonstrates that the property is inextricably linked to its grounds.

5.3 Current Setting of Woodlands Castle

5.3.1 At present the immediate setting of Woodlands Castle includes its grounds, which to the S and the NW retain much of their original, designed landscape appearance, comprising large grassy areas with sparse trees and tree-lined borders, in keeping with an 18th century grand residence. Recently this has been altered by the change of use of the property from residential to commercial as a wedding venue and has included the additions of a modern pavilion, and car-park to the E and N of the house, between 2010 and 2013.

5.3.2 The wider setting beyond the estate is mixed. While some farmland survives along the east edge of the site, the village of Ruishton has been enlarged during the 20th century, encroaching towards Woodlands House. To the west, the construction of the M5 (and

Junction 27) c. 320m west of site has led to light industrial and commercial activity to the west and south of the site, such as the park and ride site located c. 50m SW of the site.

- 5.3.3 The wider setting beyond the estate is considered of less importance to the appreciation of the asset, as demonstrated by the planting of trees and creation of bunds to shield the estate along much of its south, east and west edges. The exception to this is the possibility of historical long-distance views to the Quantocks and Cothelstone Hill to the north-west (see Para 3.1.7), although the house appears arranged to primarily face, and be viewed from, the south and west.

5.4 Summary

- 5.4.1 It is considered that the setting of Woodlands Castle is best discussed in terms of an 'inner' and 'outer' setting, as defined below.

Inner Setting

- 5.4.2 The inner setting is considered to consist of the designed, landscaped grounds which are situated to the south and west of the house. West of the house, the current access road forms the northern boundary. To the east of the house, a loose boundary is formed by the southern end of the fully grassed area used as a football pitch.

- 5.4.3 This inner setting reflects a planned parkland style landscape, to be appreciated from the principal southern and western elevations of the house.

Outer Setting

- 5.4.4 The outer setting is considered to consist of those parts within the site boundary that have been left as open meadow. These comprise the area to the east of the house and the plot to the north of the house containing a solitary structure.

- 5.4.5 These areas do not have the same landscaped design as the inner setting, lacking the placement of rows or stands of mature trees, and provide views only to the less noteworthy east and north elevations of the property.

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6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Proposed Development

6.1.1 The current outline proposal is for a mixed-use scheme comprising the following (Figure 2):

- The construction of three timber-framed commercial units and associated parking and access in the north of the site;
- Car-parking to the west of the house;
- Provision of c. 15 bungalows forming a care village to the east of site, with associated access road; and
- Construction of a two-storey 40 bed care home in the south-east corner of the site.

6.1.2 No part of the proposal is considered to have a direct impact on Woodlands Castle.

6.2 The construction of three timber-framed commercial units and associated parking and access in the north of the site

6.2.1 The design proposal intends for the construction of three timber-framed commercial units in the open plot to the north of the house. The proposed units would be arranged along the northern, eastern and southern edges of the plot, with car-parking in the central space between them, accessed from the existing entrance road.

6.2.2 At this early stage it is not clear how tall these units would be, but their outline design would suggest either single storey or equivalent to a storey and a half in height.

6.2.3 The proposal is considered to lie within the view afforded from the north elevation of Woodlands Castle – particularly from the first floor of the house, and this is unimpeded by the presence of planting or trees.

6.2.4 While not a designed landscape in the same fashion as the rest of the estate, the proposal in this northern area will alter the pastoral appearance of this part of what is considered to be the outer setting of the house (see Section 5.4).

6.2.5 The change of use from open meadow to a site of commercial activity would be a noticeable change from the baseline setting.

6.2.6 It is considered that this proposal would constitute a Low Adverse Magnitude of Impact in line with Table 2, because a small proportion of the heritage resource is altered; with limited changes to historic landscape elements.

6.2.7 Therefore, it is considered that this development would constitute a Moderate Significance of Effects, in line with Table 3.

6.2.8 Sympathetic design of the buildings, to reduce the appearance of hard angles or intrusive materials, coupled with the growth of tree-lined boundaries, will help to mitigate the visual changes of the proposal and help to tie the complex into the pastoral character of the historic and existing site. These mitigation measures could conceivably reduce the Significance of Effects to a Minor level.

6.3 Car-parking to the west of the house

- 6.3.1 The proposal includes provision of car park spaces in the area to the west of the house off a new access route from Ruishton Lane. This area is considered part of the inner setting of Woodlands Castle (see Section 5.4).
- 6.3.2 The proposal will include the provision of all-weather access roads/tracks with green parking bays to either side. It is proposed to retain the trees that currently exist.
- 6.3.3 Such changes as proposed would not have a direct impact on views from the house.
- 6.3.4 The insertion of the roads could alter the pastoral appearance of this key part of the designed setting of the house.
- 6.3.5 The area when filled with parked cars, albeit intermittently, will also provide a marked change from the current use of the land, with the extra vehicles and people presenting an increase to the current levels of ambient sound and to the tranquillity of the site.
- 6.3.6 This proposal is therefore considered to be a Low Adverse Magnitude of Impact in line with Table 2 because a small proportion of the heritage resource is altered; with limited changes to historic landscape elements.
- 6.3.7 These changes can be weighed against the design of the proposal to retain the trees and the historic planted boundaries, which could mean that the space could revert back to its existing appearance quite easily should circumstances require it.
- 6.3.8 Therefore, it is considered that this would constitute a Minor Significance of Effects, in line with Table 3.

6.4 Provision of c. 15 bungalows forming a care village to the east of site, with associated access road

- 6.4.1 The proposal for the eastern part of the site is for 15 detached care bungalows, arranged in non-linear fashion, and accessed by an all-weather access road which would lead from the current parking to the north of the house.
- 6.4.2 This area is considered part of the outer setting as described in Section 5.4. This plot of land is not part of the historic or surviving landscaped arrangement seen to the south and west of Woodlands Castle.
- 6.4.3 The proposal in this part of the site would be unlikely to be detectable from Woodlands Castle in anything more than a glimpsed way. The presence of mature planting close by the eastern side of the house would almost completely restrict views to the proposed bungalows (see Photo 3).
- 6.4.4 The proposed construction of 15 care home bungalows would be a change in use from the existing pasture field, to a much more residential land-use, however this is not entirely unlike the pattern of land use c. 90 m to the east which is currently occupied by bungalows and gardens on Parkway and Woodlands Drive.

- 6.4.5 It is therefore considered that this proposal would constitute a Low Adverse Magnitude of Impact in line with Table 2, '[resulting in] limited changes to use or access changes to key historic landscape elements'.
- 6.4.6 Therefore, it is considered that this would constitute a Minor Significance of Effects, in line with Table 3.
- 6.4.7 As with the proposed construction of three timber-framed commercial units and associated parking and access in the north of the site, sympathetic design and construction of the bungalows using quality materials could help to mitigate the potentially adverse impact of the proposal.

6.5 Construction of a two-storey 40 bed care home in the south-east of the site

- 6.5.1 The final part of the proposal is for the construction of a two-storey, 40 bed care home in the south-east corner of site, accessed via the care village access road. This would have a small amount of associated parking and an all-weather footpath to its north and west respectively.
- 6.5.2 This area forms part of the inner setting as described in Section 5.4.
- 6.5.3 The position of the proposed development in the extreme south-west corner of the site, with intervening mature trees would likely allow for little more than partial views from the house.
- 6.5.4 The proposed construction of a two-storey care home would be a change in use to a more residential land use, however, as with the provision of c. 15 bungalows forming a care village to the east of site, this is not dissimilar to the changing land-use seen in the expansion of Ruishton Village c. 150m to the north-east.
- 6.5.5 It is therefore considered that this proposal would constitute a Low Adverse Magnitude of Impact in line with Table 2, as this would constitute a detectable impact which alters the baseline condition of a heritage receptor to a slight degree.
- 6.5.6 This would constitute a Moderate Significance of Effect, in line with Table 3.
- 6.5.7 This is mitigated to some extent by the location of this building beyond the key views from the house. This, combined with retention of all existing trees, will help retain some of the existing character of this part of the site.
- 6.5.8 As with the proposed provision of c. 15 bungalows forming a care village to the east of site, sympathetic design and construction using quality materials could help to further mitigate the potentially adverse impact of the proposal.

6.6 Summary

- 6.6.1 Taken as a whole these development proposals are considered to lead to a Minor to Moderate Significance of Effect on the setting of Woodlands Castle (in line with Table 3). This is because the majority of the development would be located within the outer setting.
- 6.6.2 Works within the inner setting are considered to be relatively light and to constitute a limited impact upon the key views from the property. Furthermore, proposed development at the north end of site will be closer to the outskirts of Ruishton than Woodlands Castle.

- 6.6.3 A key consideration throughout this Impact Assessment has been the degree of screening provided by the density and quality of the mature planting around the inner setting of the key heritage asset of Woodlands Castle. If this had not been in place, then undoubtedly the significance of effects of the proposed development would have been higher.

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7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1.1 As a Grade II Listed building, Woodlands Castle (including the adjoining stable block) is considered to be a heritage asset of National Importance (in line with Table 1) due to the good survival of both internal and external architectural and historic features as well as its landscaped grounds
- 7.1.2 The current design for the site does not propose any work to Woodlands Castle and its associated buildings.
- 7.1.3 The design proposals for the surrounding grounds of Woodlands Castle are considered to constitute a Minor to Moderate Significance of Effects (in line with Table 3). This is because it is considered that the proposed development would alter the setting of Woodlands Castle.
- 7.1.4 However, the proposed development will seek to retain existing tree lines and cover, as well as the southern view from the property. This will help to preserve the legibility of the overall site and soften the visual changes. Sympathetic design and material use would also help to mitigate adverse effects. The reversible nature of the proposed development also helps to reduce the perceived impact.
- 7.1.5 It should be noted that in Section 3.1 the proximity of archaeological remains dating from the Neolithic to the Roman period was raised. It is recommended that an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment be undertaken in advance of any formal planning application, in order to understand the potential for buried archaeological remains to exist on-site.
- 7.1.6 All recommendations will need to be approved by the local planning authority.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Planning Policy

Introduction

The following section highlights the key planning and legislative framework relevant to this project, including legislative framework, national planning policy and relevant sector guidance.

Statutory Protection for Heritage Assets

Current legislation, in the form of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, provides for the legal protection of important and well-preserved archaeological sites and monuments through their addition to a list, or 'schedule' of archaeological monuments by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. This necessitates the granting of formal Scheduled Monument Consent for any work undertaken within the designated area of a Scheduled Monument.

Likewise, structures are afforded legal protection in the form of their addition to 'lists' of buildings of special architectural or historical interest. The listing of buildings is carried out by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. The main purpose of the legislation is to protect buildings and their surroundings from changes that would materially alter the special historic or architectural value of the building or its setting. This necessitates the granting of formal Listed Building Consent for all works undertaken to or within the designated curtilage of a Listed Building. This legislation also allows for the creation and protection of Conservation Areas by local planning authorities to protect areas and groupings of historical significance.

The categories of assets with some form of legal protection have been extended in recent years, and now include Registered Parks and Gardens, and Historic Battlefields. While designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site is not a statutory designation under English planning law, such a designation is regarded as a material consideration in planning decisions, and World Heritage Sites are in practice protected from development that could affect any aspect of their significance including settings within the Site and a buffer zone around it.

National Planning Policy

The NPPF sets out government policy on the historic environment, which covers all elements, whether designated or not, that are identified as 'having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'.

One of the over-arching aims is to 'Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'. To achieve this, local planning authorities can request that the applicant describe 'the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting'. The level of detail required in the assessment should be 'proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'. It goes on to say that 'where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation'.

A key policy within the NPPF is that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be'.

With regard to non-designated heritage assets specific policy is provided in that a balanced judgement will be required having due regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset affected.

Paragraph 194 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a Grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional, while substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, should be wholly exceptional'.

Paragraphs 195 & 196 explain that 'where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss'.

It also advises that where a proposal involve less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset..

Local Planning Policy

Taunton Deane Borough Council - Core Strategy

The Taunton Deane Core Strategy was adopted in 2012. It sets the overarching vision for the Borough over the period up to 2028 and includes strategic and management policies for Taunton and the surrounding area. It includes the following relevant Strategic Objective from the current document is described below.

The Ruishton and Thomfalcon Neighbourhood Development Plan area was approved on 15th July 2016, but no document has yet been made publicly available.

Policy CP 8: ENVIRONMENT (abridged)

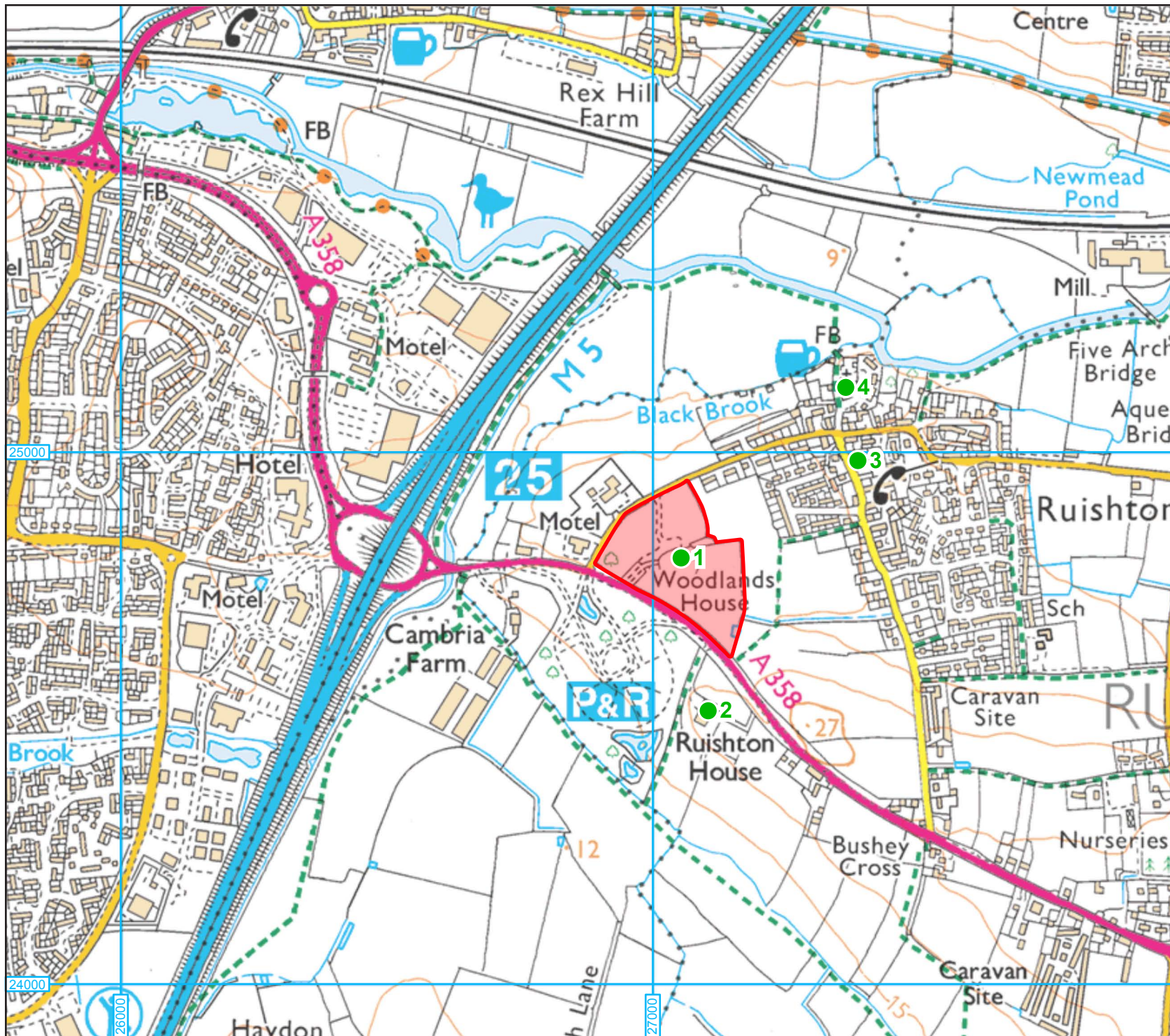
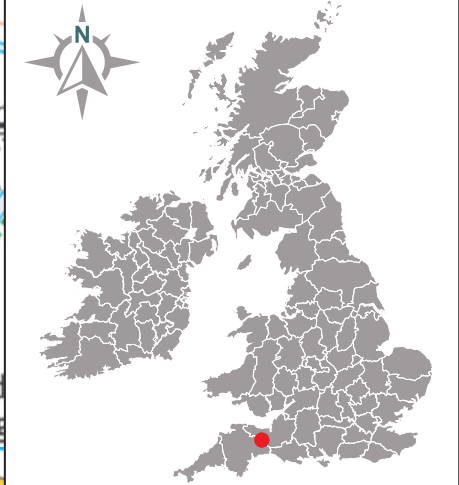
The Borough Council will conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment, and will not permit development proposals that would harm these interests or the settings of the towns and rural centres unless other material factors are sufficient to override their importance.

Unallocated greenfield land outside of settlement boundaries will be protected and where possible enhanced. Development within such areas will be strictly controlled in order to conserve the environmental assets and open character of the area. Development outside of settlement boundaries will be permitted where it will:

- be appropriate in terms of scale, siting and design;

- protect, conserve or enhance landscape and townscape character whilst maintaining green wedges and open breaks between settlements; and
- protect, conserve or enhance the interests of natural and historic assets.

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KEY

- Site Boundary
- 1 Woodlands Castle
- 2 Ruishton House
- 3 Acklands
- 4 Church of St. George

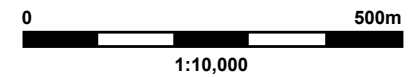


Figure 1: Site Location

Project: Woodlands Castle, Taunton

Date: 27/11/18

Job No: 60579

client

project
 WOODLANDS CASTLE, TAUNTON

drawing title
 SKETCH PROPOSALS FOR
 DISCUSSION USE

date	drawn	checked
04/18	DG	DG

scale
 1:1000 @ A3

for information

project no:	drawing no:	rev:
P1282	SK1	/



ADDITIONAL
 ENTRANCE

COURTYARD OF TIMBER
 FRAMED EMPLOYMENT
 UNITS

FUTURE
 ACCESS

CONFERENCE PARKING

NEW ACCESS ROAD

CARE VILLAGE -
 BUNGALOWS

WOODLANDS
 CASTLE

VIEWS

LANDSCAPED
 SETTING
 RETAINED

40 BED CARE
 HOME - 2 STOREY

A358

TO M5

TAUNTON GATEWAY P&R

TO ILMINSTER



AB Heritage Limited (Head Office)
Jarrow Business Centre, Rolling Mill
Road, Jarrow, South Tyneside, NE32 3DT
Tel: 03333 440 206
e-mail: info@abheritage.co.uk