

**OBJECTIONS TO PLANNING APPLICATION  
FOR MINERAL WORKING  
MIDDLETON LODGE  
NORTH YORKSHIRE**

Prepared by: **LEEMING ASSOCIATES**

For: **ENGLAND & LYLE**

**LANDSCAPE REPORT**

Job Number: **0708**  
Revision:  
Date: **Feb 07**  
Status: **Draft Issue**



## 1.0 Introduction

Leeming Associates have been appointed by England and Lyle (Chartered Town Planners) to consider the landscape issues associated with the planning application to carry out quarrying within the estate of Middleton Lodge.

In principle the restoration of the buildings and the development of a restaurant and conference facility in Grade 11 listed buildings are sympathetic to the historic parkland landscape. However the long term restoration proposals do not reflect the distinctive landscape character nor do they maintain the character or respect the structure of the historic landscape.

There appears to be a conflict between the aims of the project stated in the Environmental Statement (ES).

*‘A major aim of the redevelopment of the Estate... is to ensure that both the built and natural environment can be preserved, restored and enhanced. This applies to not only the fine buildings, but also the landscape in which those buildings reside.....The landscape design is crucial to the success of the future of the Estate and it will be designed to be visually attractive and to promote biodiversity.’ (p 3.6/85 & 5.8/500).*

However the main aim appears to be to provide a sustainable income and diversification for the estate.

The assessment of successful mitigation of a scheme is a subjective area in an environmental statement however in this case the baseline appears to be very clear. The site is wholly contained within an historic 18<sup>th</sup> Century landscape of distinctive character contributing significantly to the setting of Middleton Lodge. Against this background we do not consider that the proposed quarry garden and planting along the north-eastern boundary are appropriate as permanent restoration. These proposals replace the original landscape with a landscape character vastly different from the existing one. This choice of restoration is contrary to the guidance of the Countryside Agency and the aims of the project. Whilst restoration may be achieved with some integrity in the southern parkland and buildings on the estate, to the north and north east there has been no attempt to restore the historic landscape.

The value of the historic landscape setting to the listed structures has not formed the basis of the ES and all assessment and proposals assume that permanent, dramatic change will benefit the setting of the buildings. We strongly object to this assessment. The industrial activity of extraction and the proposed restaurant and conference facilities could undoubtedly produce economic gain for the estate. However the proposals for the landscape will have a lasting effect on the overall character of the setting which eradicate the essence of the historic parkland and will therefore have permanently adverse impact on the historic landscape.

## 2.0 Positive Proposals.

- Phase 2 restoration of the wildlife area with a *'lake, marginal planting and conservation grassland'* (p3.1/80) is acceptable however this should also reflect the parkland character.
- Proposals for restoration of the stable block courtyard *'to recreate the original, symmetrical layout of the stables'* (p3.4) are appropriate and sympathetic to the listed buildings and their setting.
- Car parking and adventure playground are proposed in an appropriate location surrounded by existing and proposed woodland reducing the visual impact of these elements.
- Proposals for a walled kitchen garden are sympathetic but the economic viability seems questionable.

## 3.0 Points of Objection

The main points of objection in relation to the landscape are:

### 3.1 Destruction of Parkland

The quarry and fountain would impose a new landscape character on the park obliterating the 18<sup>th</sup> Century parkland in the northern half of the estate and affect views to the north-east from within the site looking out and into the estate from the surrounding receptors.

The ES states that *'The parkland style of landscape associated with Middleton Lodge, with numerous mature trees scattered across grassland, is quite distinct from the more typical agricultural landscape that forms the remainder of the local area.'* (P2.5/79).

The significance of the house is described in some detail in the ES but the relationship and importance of the setting is not. The proposals should be led by conservation and restoration of the historic setting of the listed buildings.

### 3.2 Contribution of proposed quarry garden and fountain to sustainability

In the scoping section of the ES (section 5) English Heritage ask for *'The need for the development and what benefits would be gained for the historic estate and its buildings'* (p5.4/493).

We consider that the creation of a feature such as the quarry garden and fountain are not crucial to meet the aims of a sustainable income for the estate and are inappropriate as part of this rescue package for the estate.

### 3.3 Appropriateness of quarry garden and fountain features

We do not agree with the statement that '*Quarrying is essential to create the necessary topography for this proposed land use*' (p1.1). If quarrying must take place there is a choice in the topography of the restored landscape. The applicant has chosen a quarry garden, rock buttresses and scree slopes that we consider to be inappropriate in an 18<sup>th</sup> Century parkland landscape.

If a landscape is assessed to have no special character there may not be a case for restoration to the former topography and alternative features may enhance the area. However where a landscape has a '*distinctive character*' (p11.5) and provides a unique setting for listed buildings there can be no justification for imposing an industrial scar on the landscape that destroys the historic character.

The quarry garden and fountain are designed as a focal point in complete contrast to the surrounding landscape and this feature will not '*blend*' (p3.2/81) into the existing parkland. However the ES presents these features as positive mitigation to the negative visual impact caused by the extraction.

We would strongly object to the creation of the quarry garden and fountain which we consider to be inappropriate in this setting and fails to achieve beneficial visual mitigation. Restoring the landscape to its existing character is, in our opinion, the only option to fulfil the aim of restoration and avoid permanent adverse impact on the landscape.

The creation of these features results in un-necessary visual impact in addition to the visual impact of the voids left over after extraction which in the context of altering an historic landscape we would class as a permanent negative impact.

### 3.4 Inappropriate tree planting.

The proposed blocks to provide additional screening along the north east boundary are not in keeping with the character of the estate parkland. The boundaries to the estate were planted with specific contrived blocks of woodland to manipulate the views in and out of the estate. By block planting the boundary this subtle woodland design of the parkland is lost.

The proposal to plant with a high percentage of coniferous planting (p3.16/97) to provide a blanket screen around the boundary of the site is contrary to the historic design intentions.

The scatter planting of specimen trees through out the field in front of the Lodge and to the east of the proposed quarry garden is not appropriate and will further destroy the significant view from the lodge to the east.

### 3.5 Alternative restoration proposals

The ES considers alternatives against the *'main aims...to restore the stables and gardens and to provide long term sustainable support for the Estate'*(p5.7). However the alternatives have not been considered in the context of an historic parkland that *'makes a significant contribution to the setting of the mansion'* (p423 Appendix 2.1).

The ES does not consider full restoration to the park landscape following extraction and fails to recognise the value of the historic parkland.

### 3.6 Direct impact on setting of listed building and historic views

John Carr carefully orientated the Lodge to take advantage of views to the north and north east. Views from the Lodge have not been fully addressed in the ES and are discussed further in section 4.0 of this document. The ES does not address the impact of the fountain or oblique views from the south east corner of the Lodge.

As visitors approach from Kneeton Lane along the driveway the parkland was designed to give specific mid and long distance views to the north east and east across the parkland framed by blocks of planting. This historic view on arrival to the estate will be completely destroyed by the proposed restoration of rock faces, scree slopes and woodland planting associated with the wildlife area.

The ES does not provide sections from the public footpath (02.46/4) to indicate the change in landform, the height of the rock buttress (up to 10 metres Figure 3.10), scree slopes and the proposed buffer to protect the mature avenue trees.

#### 3.8.7 Scar on the landscape

The proposals appear to disregard the value of the parkland landscape and instead of achieving an objective to *'enhance'* the existing landscape the applicant has chosen to replace it with a landscape that cannot be disguised as anything other than an industrial void following extraction. In contradiction to the aims to preserve, restore and enhance (p3.6/85) the appearance of the site *'would alter [as] land uses would change....[with]...important new features'* (p11.16).

#### 3.8.8 Requirement for a visitor attraction

The ES states that *'The quarry void itself is central to the regeneration of the Estate'* (pg2.6/80). However the applicant states that the quarry garden is seen as secondary to the main businesses of restaurant and conference facilities (ref J. Allison letter to 'Adrian' dated 20.01.06).

We consider that the historic parkland and buildings are an attraction in their own right and the incongruous, dramatic feature of the quarry garden and fountain are unnecessary and inappropriate additions. The ES does not clarify whether the restaurant and conference facilities are economically viable with the void restored to the historic topography.

#### 4.0 Visual Impact Assessment.

As part of this report we have not re-assessed all specific views from private dwellings. Following a desktop study and site visit we would broadly agree with the identification of the extent of views into the site however we strongly disagree with the assessment of the level of impact of the restoration proposals on a number of these views.

Access to the estate was not possible and therefore assessment of critical views from the Lodge could not be verified.

##### 4.1 Assessment of change in the landscape

The ES appears to assume that the replacement of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century parkland with a garden created from industrial activity is beneficial and will '*enhance the landscape character of the area. Effects are assessed as moderate to substantial beneficial*' (p11.16). We would strongly disagree with this assumption and assessment.

The ES does not give any guidance as to how they have assessed the changes to the landscape character as beneficial or adverse.

As previously stated the proposed quarry garden, fountain and planting along the north-eastern boundary are considered inappropriate and will in our opinion be a permanent negative impact within an historic landscape not '*substantial beneficial*' as assessed in the ES.

##### 4.2 Assessment of impact on receptors

The assumption has been made in the ES that the landscape created as a result of the quarrying will be of the same integrity/character as the existing historic parkland. The ES has assessed no adverse impact whether slight, moderate or significant to any views from properties, public rights of way or roads.

All views to the north and north east of the site are assessed in the long term as having a moderate beneficial impact because the applicant has assumed replacing the existing landscape represents positive mitigation. We fundamentally disagree and consider that these elements destroy the existing landscape and will be a permanent adverse impact.

Of the seventeen viewpoints identified in the ES, six are given an impact of 'no change' and we would agree this is a fair assessment.

Of the remaining eleven, three are assessed as slightly beneficial and eight moderately beneficial. We would disagree with this assessment and assess five of these viewpoints as substantially adverse and six as moderately adverse due to the dramatic nature of the quarry garden and the inappropriate planting along the northern boundary.

If the option to truly restore, preserve and enhance the historic landscape had been proposed the historic landscape could be successfully restored in 10 to 15 years and the change would be imperceptible.

#### 4.3 Visual impact of the fountain

The ES fails to address the significant visual effect of the tallest fountain. At 50m high this will be visible by approximately 30metres above the top of the quarry and therefore will have, at the very least, a medium impact on the landscape.

The ES has chosen to assess the fountain as beneficial mitigation however by the criteria set in DETR 'Guidance on the methodology for multi-modal studies' the fact that this is a dramatic change from the existing '*parkland landscape*' (p11.7) and is '*uncharacteristic*' within the baseline parkland setting (DETR 'Guidance on the methodology for multi-modal studies table pg 11.4) this should be assessed as adverse. This fountain is intended to be highly visible and will not be assimilated into the backdrop of vegetation.

#### 4.4 Winter and summer view assessment

The visual assessment makes no distinction between winter and summer views which are significantly different.

#### 4.5 View from the Lodge

The ES states that 'Middleton Lodge itself does not have views of the proposed extraction area' (p11.13). There are no sections to illustrate this point. Access to the Lodge was not possible and therefore this could not be verified however from the desk top study we feel that this needs to be substantiated. It would be naive to assume that views from the lodge were only orientated due east. From the central bow window and the east end of the north east elevation of the house, with a panoramic views of at least 130 degrees, we suggest that the proposed quarry garden and fountain would be visible in part. (Refer section 3.6 of this report).

Sections from Middleton Lodge looking north and north-east from the Lodge's central bay window and the east end of house should be provided.

#### 4.6 Views from Public Footpath 20.46/6.

Viewpoint 11 (ref Fig 11.19) on this footpath fails to mention that this is one of the most significant views into the estate. The change in landscape character (stated in Appendix 2.1) is clearly visible with the parkland visually distinct from the surrounding agricultural land with woodland planted as contrived blocks to frame and manipulate the views from the Lodge and into the estate. Proposed planting along this boundary is inappropriate. (Refer section 3.6 of this report).

#### 4.7 Public Footpath 02.46/4

Although views are described in the ES (p11.12), from viewpoints 1 and 2 (figures 11.9 and 11. 10 respectively), Figure 11.7 Visibility Analysis does not indicate any views from footpath 02.46/4.

The context and views from this footpath along the route of the original 18 Century -avenue and driveway will be drastically altered. We strongly disagree with the assessment that

following full restoration the impact should be moderate beneficial (p11.20). Following restoration the current view of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century idle landscape will be replaced by a scarred landscape showing clear evidence of industrial activity with rock buttresses, scree slopes and bunds. The restoration proposals do not attempt to mitigate this change in the landscape character. (Refer section 3.6 of this report).

Sections from Kneeton Lane drive to north-east and east should be provided.

## **5.0 Design of the Quarry Garden**

The design of the quarry garden requires more detail in particular in relation to how the terrace profile would actually be achieved to suit the purpose of a visitor attraction.

The benched footpaths spiralling down will be compliant with the latest Disability Discrimination Act and will therefore be a regular 1:20 gradient (p3.13/94) with regular landings and handrails. This will give an engineered appearance to the footpaths and quarry walls. The paths will also need to be wide enough to allow maintenance vehicles down to cut the proposed hay meadow (p3.14/95). Further information is required to ensure that the rock profile can accommodate these terraces.

The quarry rock faces by their nature will have no or limited soil for planting and this will make '*luxuriant growth*' (p3.3/82) difficult to achieve. The profile of benching would have to be sufficient to support significant soil pockets for planting (p3.14/95). The sides of the quarry and those most visible from the north and north-east could remain permanently stark and obtrusive.

## **6.0 Other Design Concerns**

- 6.1 Existing quarry at Barton. There are no proposals for the restoration of this site although the ES suggests that activity will cease 15 years earlier than anticipated (p 3.18/98).
- 6.2 The ES fails to comment on the negative visual impact and degrading nature of the existing quarrying activity at Barton garage service and lorry park next to the A1 described purely as '*the other principal land use*'(p2.5/79). 15 years of similar activity will have a negative impact at closer proximity to the Lodge and be in direct conflict with the aim of attracting visitors into the estate.

## **7.0 Additional Information Required.**

We consider that the following information is essential to allow a more informed decision to be made on this application.

- 7.1 Soil and boulder clay (p3.9/92). The ES does not provide an analysis of the suitability for planting of the soils and overburden to be used for screen bunds. Heavy clay soils are not optimum growing medium for use as bunds and subsoil and topsoil may therefore need to be imported.
- 7.2 Sections to clarify impact on important historic views. The following sections should be provided:

- from Middleton Lodge looking north, north-east and east from the central bay window and east end of house
  - from Public Right of Way 02.46/4 along driveway from Kneeton Lane to north-east and east.
- 7.3 Clarification of protection of the existing avenue trees along the drive to Kneeton Lane and confirmation if any avenue trees to be felled to allow the access track to be constructed.
- 7.4 Public Right of Way 02.46/4. Clarification of the management of the footpath crossing in conflict with the access road to the quarry adjacent to The Farmhouse.
- 7.5 Visitor Forecasts (Appendix 10.3) Visitor attraction through-put is noted as 462. Clarification is required as to whether these are visitors to the quarry garden only or secondary and visitors already visiting the restaurant and conference facilities.
- 7.6 Historic Plans Appendix 2.1. The plans have not title or reference to relate plans to text.

## 8.0 Conclusion

During the period of extraction there will be a negative impact on the landscape within the Middleton Lodge Estate. However this impact is temporary and the result of a defined purpose. Our objection is to the features proposed that will permanently alter the historic landscape.

Our countryside is littered with the industrial scars and voids left behind after extraction and there are numerous examples of this industrial archaeology that took place in the last century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century a more sympathetic and enlightened approach to restoration should be expected.

We would recommend that a more appropriate restoration proposal would be to fully restore the landscape to its 18<sup>th</sup> Century character to '*preserve and enhance*' the setting for the listed buildings and compliment the development of restaurant and conference facilities in this historic landscape. Proposals should include a full management plan for the estate to re-establish significant views and manage new planting in keeping with the 18 Century parkland philosophy.