

Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Appeals by Miller Homes Ltd and Escafeld Estates Ltd
Land at Crookes Road and Taptonville Road, Sheffield S10 2AZ
Planning Applications: 05/03130/FUL and 07/01379/CAC
Appeal Number: APP/J4423/E/08/2061372/NWF and APP/J4423/A/08/2061375/NWF

Summary Proof of Evidence

of

Joan Sewell BSc MA

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 My name is Joan Sewell. I am a landscape architect and landscape historian. Over the last 14 years I have specialised in studying the historic designed landscapes in and around Sheffield. This research commenced in 1993 when commissioned by English Heritage to carry out a Register Review of South Yorkshire. Also at this time I began detailed research into the historic designed landscapes of Sheffield to provide background information to inform UDP Policy BE21, with support from the University of Sheffield Research Fund. This involved the most detailed survey of the city's historic designed landscapes to date and included gardens, public and private, and parks and cemeteries and resulted in two key documents: A Strategy for the Heritage Parks & Green Spaces of Sheffield, produced in 1996; and Sheffield's Historic Parks & Gardens: UDP Policy Background Paper No 4, produced in 1998. These reports are acknowledged as innovative in approach and continue to inform strategic policy regarding the historic designed landscapes in Sheffield. From 2000 to 2003 I was a Register Inspector for English Heritage as part of the Public Parks and Public Cemeteries Review. I have written restoration management plans for a number of the city's historic parks and green spaces. I currently represent the Landscape Institute on the Sheffield Conservation Advisory Group.
- 1.2 I am opposed to the proposed development on the site of the Tapton Hall of Residence and Experimental Gardens and my evidence relates to the case for inclusion of a large part of this site on the Local Schedule of Historic Parks and Gardens in Sheffield. This is a summary of my main proof.
- 1.3 In the introduction I describe the continuing demise of the historic gardens in Sheffield and the important role played by UDP Policy BE21 in safeguarding such important historic designed landscapes. I suggest that the gardens of Tapton Elms and Pisgah House, although not presently included on the Schedule, should now be considered for inclusion. I suggest that the demise of walled gardens in Sheffield should give cause for concern and that they remain important historical signature features worthy of conservation. I describe the distinctiveness and character of the Broomhill Conservation Area and the special contribution made to it by historic designed landscapes.

2 SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 In this section of my main proof I review a sequence of maps, dating from 1795 to 1987, in order to highlight the changes through time that have contributed to the character of the area framed by Taptonville Road, Taptonville Crescent, Hoole Road, the grounds of Pisgah House and the grounds of Tapton Hall of Residence.

3 HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

- 3.1 In this section the key layers that have contributed to the character of the study area are summarised and consideration is given to the effect, positive and negative, of changes of layout or of features on the character and nature of the site, since the establishment of the layout shown on the OS ten feet to one mile map, 1889.
- 3.2 In this part of the analysis the surviving historic features are identified first through discussion of the general development of the character of this part of Taptonville Road and then in detail by identifying what features survive: from former fields/field boundaries/tree plantations; from the designed landscape of Hallam Gate house; from the designed landscape of Pisgah House; from the designed landscape of Tapton Elms; and C20 additions to the site.

4 SUMMARY OF ISSUES & VULNERABILITY

- 4.1 Factors that have adversely affected the character of the site in the past, that affect its significance now and factors that have the potential to affect its significance in the future are described in this section. These include: buildings and the designed landscape; housing density considerations; the compact nature of the site; and the loss and erosion of historic character and features.

5 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.1 In this section the significance of the site of the Tapton Hall of Residence and Experimental Gardens is highlighted. The site makes a distinctive contribution to the Broomhill Conservation Area. There are important historical associations with the Hobson family, a prominent local family in Sheffield. This green-space presents one of the largest and only surviving fragments of open space in this part of the city. This site is valued by the local community. Local opposition to previous proposed schemes demonstrates the level of interest in conserving this collection of historic designed landscapes. A mature and unusual tree and shrub collection is represented on the site. This is an important site for wildlife with the presence of, for example, protected species such as Great Crested Newts.

6 CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.2 In this part of the main proof I make general comments on the current proposals and discuss how appropriate the proposals are for this site. The following key observations are made: there will be a detrimental impact on the Broomhill Conservation Area; there will be loss of historic designed landscape; there will be a fragmentation of the historic designed landscape; the development is out of character and out of scale with the Conservation Area and represents over-development of a compact and sensitive site; there will be loss of mature existing trees; and there is the potential for damage to existing features and trees during the process of building works and with the introduction of services. In the second section I express a number of more detailed concerns regarding the proposals.
- 6.2 In this section proposed appropriate safeguards for the site are discussed. It is recommended that the historic designed landscape composite to be known as 'Tapton Elms, Pigsaw House and Taptonville Crescent' be added to the Local Schedule. This is justified with reference to a number of criteria such as scale and style, the survival of features, survival of the intention of the original layout of the former Tapton Elms gardens, the historical connections with the Hobson family and the significant group value of the composite collection of designed historic landscapes present. It is recommended that careful consideration is given to selecting appropriate trees to be designated with tree preservation orders. To address the issue of lack of a coherent approach to the stewardship of this area of land, it is recommended that a conservation management plan be prepared for the composite group of historic landscapes. It is recommended that at all stages of discussion regarding this high profile site the local community should be involved and consulted.

Joan Sewell

April 2008